What we carry, keep, and create: An urban intertribal community's survivance storywork navigating K-12 Indian education

by

Jennifer Lyn Bonilla

B.S., Haskell Indian Nations University, 2006
M.S., Emporia State University, 2015

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2025

Abstract

This qualitative study employs survivance storywork methods to document the stories of American Indian/Alaska Native families and community members' engagement with the Title VI and Johnson O'Malley (i.e., Indian Education) programs in the intertribal community of Lawrence, Kansas. This study collects and synthesizes the stories of these families to deepen our understanding of the ways this intertribal community mobilizes, navigates, and builds sustainable action within the context of Indian Education programs housed in a Eurocentric public education system. The findings and the recommendations of the study are presented through arts-based and Indigenous storywork using modalities of poetry and storytelling, along with inter-woven personal reflections and stories from the author as a member of this community. Built around the themes of what the participant storytellers carry, keep, and create, the storytellers from this intertribal community reveal the value of relationality, culturally sustaining practices, intergenerational collaboration, and sustained advocacy from intertribal communities in a manner that actively and intentionally build futures for Indigenous children. This study concludes with a creative exploration around sweetgrass, and how it might offer a useful metaphor for understanding and describing how community building unfolds through educational programing when operating in a unique urban intertribal environment.

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My motivation in seeking and completing this degree are the young Indigenous students I have the honor to know in my time as an educator - especially the members of the Billy Mills Middle School Intertribal club; your laughter and spirit carry me through each school year. I

cherish the memories we share and I hope every facet of our community can work together to create futures where you flourish. To say you are the future is an understatement; you are our hope and you are deeply loved and will be fiercely protected.

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Dedication

This is dedicated to the ones I love.

Dedicated to my children and my students.

And dedicated to the people I have lost along the way.

Beloved family whose character I strive to emulate every day.

Dedicated to Burgess and Millie

with love and faith.

Dedicated to Lance, Drake, and Rex

with laughter and wit.

Dedicated to Chybon

with gentle unrelenting kindness.

Dedicated to Holly and Jami

with unconditional love.

Dedicated to Marci,

a fierce protector

and gifted writer.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

I would like to tell you I got here on my own, arrived early and set to work bringing others with me but a good story should start and end with the truth. The truth is, I was late. I was too busy with the business of what I thought was living. I became a parent at the age of 17, again at 21, 26, and 34. All the while, in addition to being a parent, I was a student and now an educator in the United States public education system. A student of the system who became a teacher, a system that, despite my almost immediate resolve would be my life-long career, I knew from the start this system was not made for me and would never love and accept me. Education was the path I chose not because of what education gave to me but because of what I took.

I want to tell you the story of how I got involved in the Indian Parent Committee through Native American Student Services (NASS) in Lawrence, Kansas, home to an eclectic intertribal urban Indian community. The fact of the matter is despite being an educator, I did not become actively engaged in the parent committee until the global pandemic. When the world stopped, so did the demands on my time. Time is a currency that I often deal in as a parent and an educator. When the world shut-down I had nothing but time; I could log-in to that monthly parent committee zoom meeting, I could read through those by-laws, and I could learn the importance of engaging and infiltrating the public education system as an Indigenous parent and educator. Maybe this was my practitioner version of what Gaudry (2011) calls *Insurgent Research*? As he describes:

> Insurgent research is rooted within existing Indigenous methodologies in three ways: (1) by explicitly employing Indigenous worldviews; (2) by orienting knowledge creation toward Indigenous peoples and their communities; and (3) by seeing our responsibility as

researchers as directed almost exclusively toward the community and participants. (p. 114)

As the pandemic went on, I found myself more and more curious about the origins of this committee, of Indian education, and began searching for ways to learn more in hopes of better navigating the educational systems whose innerworkings seem to be out of our reach. Then, I began the Indigenous Educational Leadership Certificate program at Kansas State University and found a community dedicated to building Indigenous futures and taking systems meant to be our demise and bending them to our will.

I need to tell you that my Indigeneity did not inherently protect me from the colonization of my mind, or my pedagogical approach to teaching and learning during the genesis of my career in public education. It is with great humility that I confess when I first began attending the NASS Parent Committee meetings, I looked around at the few attending members and immediately began a deficit discourse in my mind:

Where were these families?

Didn't they care?

Didn't they know what was at stake with the lack of participation?

But, as Deloria Jr. and Wildcat (2001) expressed, "The original intent of Indian education was to wean the child away from his or her family, community, relatives, clan, and tribe" (p. 159). Did this trajectory ever stop or, despite claims and calls for engagement, is the machine of public education satisfied by the lack of involvement? Time, which makes fools of us all, was quick to show me what I already knew from experience, that whether or not Indigenous families show up at the designated time and place for a meeting they absolutely show up for their students - all while engaging in daily acts of survival and resistance, termed *survivance* by Ojibwe scholar

Gerald Vizenor (2008). I know these truths because I lived them, as a child watching my mother and grandparents work hard for us to survive all while making time to reach out to my teachers, offering to teach, share, or expand on whatever curriculum they were presenting regarding Indigenous peoples.

Can you tell I've moved through many stages of conceptualizing what my dissertation would look like, what my research would be? Initially I aimed to discover the reason for low attendance across these parent committees. However, I am no longer concerned with the "why" but rather hope to follow the path set forth by Turtle Mountain Ojibwe scholar, Meredith L. McCoy (2024), and build an archive of survivance stories from my community that champion and celebrate the work of families to "build toward robust Indigenous futures, as how we tell stories from our shared past shapes the futures available to us" (p. 2). Lawrence, Kansas is made of stories, many are known: Quantrill's Raid and the establishment of the Haskell Institute (now Haskell Indian Nations University), but many need to be retold and remembered by the community who can be strengthened by them. The stories are for us, for our future, and aid in our visibility and sustainability as we continue to traverse toward educational sovereignty.

Education and child-centered pedagogy existed long before westernized schooling. Indigenous peoples were responsible for the education of their youth since time immemorial. Reyhner and Eder (2004) describe pre-contact tribal nations as being linguistically and culturally diverse but with similar child-rearing practices. Training for survival, sustenance, tribal traditions, and play-as-learning were common pedagogical approaches among tribal nations. As Reyhner and Eder (2004) describe, "through ceremonies, storytelling, and apprenticeship, children learned the culture of their parents" (p. 14). Learning as a community, with parents and

caregivers leading the charge to shape the future of their tribal nations, a future that is deeply dependent on the well-being and education of Indigenous children.

Upon first contact, missionaries documented their bewilderment and criticisms of Indigenous child-rearing practices. Lack of discipline through physical punishment, scolding, and the inability to "refuse anything to a crying child" (Reyhner & Eder, 2004, p. 15) were observed. Reyhner and Eder (2004) channel the writings of Jesuit father Paul le Jeune to illustrate the criticism and contrary practices between Indigenous peoples and early European missionaries, with commentary such as: "The savages love their children above all things" (p. 15). The reverence and respect shown to children coupled with the influence of the culture and family eventually led Congress and the Indian Bureau to pursue a policy of total assimilation through western education (Szasz, 1999). Knowledge and its acquisition became weaponized in the hands of the United States federal government.

Grande (2004) echoes a reality, "Indigenous children into public and predominantly white schools was seen as a strategic means of propelling the process of 'Americanization" (Grande, 2004, p. 15). The history of Indian education by the United States government is a well-documented and concerted effort to annihilate Indigenous peoples through Federal Indian education policy, the guise of opportunity, and the agenda of assimilation (Szasz, 1999). Throughout the eras of federal Indian education policy, the mission of assimilation has been abundantly clear, beginning with the mission schools and subsequent boarding school era. The removal of Indigenous children from their families, the center of their identity and cultural ways of knowing, arguably continues today through public education. Szasz (1999) reports that by 1928, the year of the *Meriam Report* (1928), American Indian attendance in "public schools had already surpassed federal schools by a significant margin in number of Indian students enrolled"

(p. 89). The number of Indigenous students in public schools continued to grow with each passing decade, and currently 93% of Indigenous students are enrolled in public schools (NCES, 2021). Overall, the immersion of "Indigenous children into public and predominantly white schools was seen as a strategic means of propelling the process of 'Americanization" (Grande, 2004, p. 15).

Throughout these eras of reckless destruction at the hands of our self-proclaimed saviors and wardens, Indigenous communities have worked diligently to resist western influence and continue to imagine Indigenous futures, to survive. As mentioned previously, Vizenor (2008) termed *survivance* as the active role Indigenous people have played in regard to settler structures, a declaration of Indigenous presence, trickster humor, and ironic engagement with the very structures meant to be our end.

Quechua scholar and educator, Sandy Grande (2004) discusses in her seminal work, *Red Pedagogy*, the ways in which Indigenous communities have been deeply altered through "the forces of conquest, genocide, removal, colonization, imperialism, detribalization, urbanization, and relocation" (p. 2). Altered but not annihilated, this is Vizenor's survivance emphasizes the "active sense of presence, the continuance of Native stories, not a mere reaction or a survivable name" (Vizenor, 2008, p. vii). This sentiment of ongoing presence and continuance, echoed by Sabzalian (2019) and McCoy (2024), is central to this study of a midwestern Intertribal community, with a variety of nations and families braiding together the past to guarantee our futures. Through Indigenous methodologies, narrative arts-based writing, and the utilization of Denzin and Lincoln's (2018) "blurred genres" approach I hope to create what McCoy (2024) calls an "archive of survivance" (p. 3) for my community.

Lawrence, Kansas: An Intertribal Urban Community

Although home and community have meant many different places over the course of my lifetime, my present definition of community begins in Lawrence, Kansas. “Indian Country” will recognize Lawrence as the home of Haskell Indian Nations University, a tribal college with origins in the boarding school era as Haskell Institute. Places like Haskell birthed survivance, built to change us, lives needlessly claimed, and yet my experience at the heart of this intertribal community was one of awakening, joy, and kinship. The very antithesis of tearing families apart became a place where families began. If you search for “Haskell babies” (1890) you will find a photo from the Kansas Historical society which shows young children upon their arrival at Haskell Institute, heads freshly shaven and dressed in white, taken so young. Those babies are honored by the parade of young ones who now descend from relationships formed at Haskell. Indian Country often uses the term “Haskell Rascals”, which people from Lawrence and Haskell use to refer to the babies born during their parent’s tenure at the College.

Lawrence, Kansas, is a midwestern college town in the northeastern part of the state and serves as the county seat of Douglas County. With a population of approximately 94,934 as of the 2020 census, Lawrence is known for its cultural diversity, progressive values, and dynamic educational environment, largely due to the presence of the University of Kansas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2025). However, this city also has a significant historical connection to Native American history, partly because federally operated Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU) is one of the more well-known tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) in the country with four-year degree offerings. This unique historical context has contributed to Lawrence's development as a community that values inclusivity, social justice, and cultural preservation.

Because of HINU, Lawrence is home to a dynamic urban intertribal Native American community. HINU attracts Native American students from over 130 federally recognized tribes across the United States, including Alaska. The intertribal community in Lawrence is diverse, encompassing members from numerous tribal nations who bring with them a wide array of cultural traditions, languages, and histories. According to a 2020 report by the National Center for Education Statistics, HINU enrolls approximately 1,000 students annually, thus making Lawrence a unique intertribal hub. While there have been recent dips in enrollment, the last few years preceding this dissertation have seen renewed enrollment growth (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). The university plays a central role in fostering a sense of community among Indigenous residents by hosting cultural events, powwows, and educational programs that celebrate and promote Indigenous cultures. This vibrant intertribal presence contributes significantly to the city's cultural landscape and community spirit, emphasizing cultural exchange, education, and mutual respect (Haskell Indian Nations University, n.d.; U.S. Census Bureau, 2025).

Lawrence's unique urban context creates a unique setting for Lawrence Public Schools, and their Native American Student Services (NASS) programming. Lawrence Public Schools USD 497 NASS programming provides support through the Title VI Indian Education Program and the Johnson O'Malley (JOM) Program, focusing on the academic, cultural, and social development of Indigenous students. Title VI, a reference to the Every Student Succeeds Act and administered out of the Office of Indian Education in the US Department of Education, aims to meet the unique educational and cultural needs of Native American students. Simultaneously, JOM provides supplemental educational programs out of the Bureau of Indian Education in the Department of Interior (Red Corn et al., 2023). Historically leaders have used programs such as

these to supplement their budgets without providing unique services to Native students; however, over time these programs began to require an Indian Parent Committee to ensure that parents and families have a voice in shaping these services, helping to guide educational objectives. This district serves approximately 500 Native American students from over 100 different tribes, making the community highly diverse. The program's focus on promoting cultural pride, academic success, community involvement, and ensuring students receive culturally appropriate education (USD 497, n.d.).

Rationale: "Who are your Folks?"

This is the part where I tell you why the work is important and offer citations of those who came before me and provide a path for those who are yet to come. In truth, these exercises in academia used to frustrate me, until I realized the parallel between a rationale and the interactions I experience returning to Oklahoma.

When I was younger and not by my grandparent's side,
maybe I was playing in the Red Dirt,
maybe I was grabbing a syrupy sweet pow wow lemonade
that would ultimately sear my mouth closed,
an elder I didn't know would ask:
"Who's your grandparents?" or
"Who are your folks?"
To which I would proudly reply,
"I'm Burgess and Millie's granddaughter"

From my response, they knew not only who I was but where I came from, what that place was made of; they weighed and measured me and found I was family. I present to you the academic

equivalent of "Who are your folks?". These academic elders and ancestors, I'm proud to call my folks and I hope, through the work I continue to do, they will be proud to call me the same.

In the field of education, there is a substantial body of work on Indigenous education systems (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Tippeconnic & Tippeconnic Fox, 2012). For instance, *Red Pedagogy* by Grande (2015) and *Power and Place* by Deloria and Wildcat (2001) explore the ways in which Indigenous knowledge systems challenge Western educational paradigms. Emerging scholarship on urban Indian educational environments includes *On Our Own Terms* by McCoy (2024), which addresses Indian education through policy from a community-centered perspective, and *Indigenous Children's Survivance in Public Schools* by Sabzalian (2019), which examines Indigenous children's experiences within public school systems. Research on Indigenous parent and community engagement highlights the importance of these relationships in creating culturally sustaining educational practices. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) emphasize the critical role of culturally responsive schooling for Indigenous youth, while Reyhner and Eder (2004) further explore how partnerships between schools and Indigenous communities are essential to improving educational outcomes for Native students.

In addition to these scholarly works, practitioner materials such as those from the Bureau of Indian Education provide guidance on Indian education programming, particularly Title VI and Johnson O'Malley (JOM) programs. Title VI programs, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, aim to meet the academic and cultural needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students (Bureau of Indian Education, n.d.). Similarly, the JOM program, established to support Native students through educational assistance programs, has had a significant impact on Native communities (Bureau of Indian Education, n.d.). While these are well known educational

programs across Indian Country, there is minimal peer reviewed research on these specific programs or their parent committees.

Additionally, while there is some emerging scholarship at the intersection of rural and Indigenous education (Red Corn et al., 2024; Whitlow, 2024), there is minimal literature regarding the educational experiences of intertribal Indigenous students in urban settings (Fixico, 2000; Lees, 2016). Most existing research on Native education focuses on rural or reservation-based schools (Sabzalian, 2019). Few studies address how Indigenous students navigate public education in urban environments where intertribal communities face the challenges of maintaining cultural continuity in systems that often fail to recognize or accommodate their needs (McCoy, 2024). Additionally, while sovereignty is a point of emphasis in educational leadership (Red Corn, 2020), the way that sovereignty extends through urban programs based in public schools, particularly through parent committees, tends to not be an area of focus. Furthermore, there is also a lack of Indigenous educational theories, models, or frameworks that specifically speak to these intertribal urban educational contexts. Sabzalian (2019) reiterates the need for research focused on the success of Indigenous students "be designed and developed to understand what teachers know and don't know about Indigenous students' lives and Indigenous education in order to guide professional development" (p. 224) This lack of attention creates a critical gap in understanding how these communities support their children's education and maintain a sense of cultural identity in public schools.

When considering this literature, and the lack of literature focused on parent committees, there is academic value in conducting research that centers the experiences of intertribal Indigenous families in urban public schools. The greatest measure of value in the research done for, and with, my Intertribal community will ultimately be determined by the usefulness to the

community. Sabzalian (2019) argues, "To know what is of use to communities, educational researchers must utilize methodologies that respect the lives, needs, and aspirations of Indigenous communities, and adapt research agendas accordingly" (p. 225). Furthermore, focusing on the unique intertribal contexts of the Lawrence community and NASS public school programming, while combining perspectives and stories at this intersection, provides powerful counternarratives to descriptive statistics like Indigenous student graduation, achievement, discipline, and attendance. As I write and edit this dissertation, deficit narratives are being presented about the Indigenous students in our community based solely on these types of data and research (Hodison, 2025).

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the survivance stories of American Indian parents, family members[1], and community members' engagement with the Title VI and Johnson O'Malley (i.e., Indian Education) programs in Lawrence Public Schools. By focusing on these narratives, this study aims to deepen our understanding of urban Intertribal community and family engagement in a public school setting, while highlighting how these families and community members *mobilize*, *navigate*, and build *sustainable actions* within Eurocentric educational systems. Through participants stories, this allows us to deepen our understanding of how Intertribal community and family engagement contributes to the creation of an *archive of survivance* (McCoy, 2024).

[1] When referring to *parents/families* in the context of school engagement, this term is intended to be inclusive of all caregivers, recognizing that children may be raised by various family members, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, or other extended family members. In many communities, especially Indigenous communities with intergenerational households, family structures may differ from the traditional nuclear family model, and a broader definition acknowledges these diverse caregiving roles.

Research Question 1: How do the community and family engagement stories from participants illustrate *mobilization* within the context of the Indian education programs?

Research Question 2: How do the community and family engagement stories from participants illustrate *navigation* of educational systems in the context of the Indian education programs?

Research Question 3: How do the community and family engagement stories from participants illustrate *sustainable action* within the context of the Indian education programs?

Theoretical Frameworks

Broadly speaking, this research is informed by critical and Indigenous scholarship (e.g., Grande, 2008; Pewewardy et al., 2022; Smith, 2023) and culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogies (e.g., McCarty & Lee, 2014 Paris & Alim, 2017), as well as TribalCrit (Brayboy, 2005). Brayboy (2005) explains, "TribalCrit emerges from Critical Race Theory (CRT) and is rooted in the multiple, nuanced, and historically- and geographically-located epistemologies and ontologies found in Indigenous communities" (p. 427). Leaning into the narratives and stories, survivance storywork, which I describe below, as well as many of the broader Indigenous methods, emphasizes the power of our communities' stories (Archibald 2008; Vizenor, 2008) As an example, Brayboy's approach to theory optimizes and prioritizes stories as theory and how stories serve as the basis for how our communities work (Brayboy, 2005). This study is also informed by the landmark work of Ladson-Billings (1995), Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), which focuses on bridging culture and native language into research and pedagogy. The most recent evolution of CRP, which is now termed culturally *sustaining* pedagogy (Paris, 2012), pushes CRP further. Paris (2012) explains:

> Culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling. In the face of current policies and practices that have the explicit goal of creating a monocultural and monolingual society, research and practice need equally explicit resistances that embrace cultural pluralism and cultural equality. (p. 93)

While this work is informed broadly by Indigenous and culturally sustaining scholarship, methodologically, this work employs a combination of survivance (Vizenor, 1994), storywork (Archibald, 2008), and arts-based narrative inquiry (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Kim, 2016).

Survivance Storywork as Theory, Narrative, and Arts-Based Methodology

Vizenor's (1994) theory of survivance provides a powerful framework for examining the stories of an intertribal community navigating public education. Survivance, a combination of survival and resistance, transcends narratives of victimhood and positions Indigenous peoples as active agents in maintaining and asserting their cultural presence despite ongoing colonial pressures. Vizenor's concept emphasizes storytelling as an act of resistance and continuity, allowing Indigenous people to counter the erasure perpetuated by settler-colonial institutions, including public education. By focusing on stories of survivance within an intertribal community, my research methodology aligns with Vizenor's emphasis on Indigenous agency, highlighting how families, students, and educators strategically navigate and resist systems that have historically marginalized them. Through storytelling, these intertribal communities assert their presence, knowledge, and identity in public education, reconfiguring spaces designed for their erasure into sites of resilience and continuity (Vizenor, 1994).

This approach to research honors the lived experiences and voices of Indigenous people as central to the inquiry, rather than viewing them through a deficit lens often applied in

educational research. By framing the stories of survivance as key components of the methodology, the research not only documents the challenges faced by Indigenous families in urban public schools but also celebrates their strategies of resilience, cultural affirmation, and community-building. Survivance offers a lens to explore how intertribal communities collectively resist assimilationist policies in education while maintaining connections to their distinct tribal identities. It also helps demonstrate how these communities embody a continuity of Indigenous knowledge systems, which operate alongside Western education, ensuring their cultural survival for future generations. Through this framework, the research aligns with Indigenous methodologies that prioritize relationality, community, and the transmission of cultural knowledge (Vizenor, 2008).

As mentioned previously, this research also employs Indigenous storywork as a methodology, as a form of narrative inquiry. Indigenous storywork by Archibald (2008) emphasizes the significance of storytelling as a pedagogical tool deeply rooted in Indigenous cultural practices. Archibald demonstrates how stories serve as a method for teaching, healing, and cultural transmission, intertwining knowledge, ethics, and community values. In her approach, Indigenous storywork is not only about sharing stories but also about creating meaningful engagement that honors Indigenous epistemologies and ways of knowing, which include respect, reciprocity, and responsibility. Additionally, this also aligns with narrative inquiry. As Kim (2016) explains, narrative inquiry focuses on how stories, particularly personal narratives, are crucial for understanding human experiences. Kim presents narrative inquiry as a qualitative research method, allowing participants to reflect on their lived experiences through storytelling. Kim (2016) reminds researchers: “Narrative inquiry utilizes interdisciplinary interpretive lenses with theoretically, philosophically diverse approaches and methods, all

revolving around the narratives and stories of research participants" (p. 6). This approach acknowledges that stories are powerful tools for capturing complexities in social, educational, and cultural contexts, providing a framework for analyzing experiences in their sociocultural contexts.

Narrative inquiry also pairs well with arts-based approaches to research and inquiry (Barone & Eisner, 2012), which allows me to lean into the creative portions of storytelling. Arts-based approaches, as Barone and Eisner (2012) reveal, enable "others to vicariously reexperience the world" (p. 20). Through aesthetic and accessible mediums like storytelling, poetry, screenplays, dance, visual arts, and song, arts-based approaches "provide as means through which the world can be better understood and through such understanding comes the enlargement of mind" (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. xi).

In summary, these approaches highlight storytelling as central to understanding and exploring knowledge, with Archibald (2008) focusing on Indigenous perspectives and Kim (2016) offering broader applications of narrative as a qualitative research method. In this study, I aimed to initiate conversations on how these communities are served in K-12 public education institutions, providing visibility to Indigenous students and families navigating these spaces. The stories of Indigenous families and community members building community and embodying survivance in spaces and places that have historically been programmed for erasure provide powerful insights. These narratives center both cultural and academic knowledge, offering a foundation for identity and continuity for Indigenous futures (Wood, 2018).

Data Collection and Analysis

> *The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary. When mentioned in many indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it*

conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful. It is so powerful that indigenous people even write poetry about research. (Smith, 2012, p. 1)

Data collection and analysis challenged me before I found the above quote from Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012). Data collection, analysis, and coding made me cry. Had me in my feelings and in my research journal I was angsty and aggravated. I struggled with wanting to tell stories but not wanting to feel like an outsider. I wanted to learn more and hear the stories of others in order to work towards a collective good. I was enamored with the thought of combining arts and research. I have always considered myself a raconteur of sorts, a gift I knew without a doubt I possessed. I noticed very early on I always had the ear of my grandfather. A man of few words and little patience for those who spoke needlessly he often asked me to repeat my stories and would listen with such wide-eyed amusement, "you couldn't tell me nothing".

I was a Storyteller.

I wanted to tell the stories of my research. Then came coding. At that time in my life and in my academic journey, let's call it approaching full blown academic teenage angst, coding came along and felt like a black shawl on the brain. It felt judgmental, it felt antiquated. Reader, I rather than persist, nevertheless I resisted. Why couldn't I just love qualitative research and write poems and tell stories? Who was I to take the stories of those who I love dear and pull them apart, silo them into categories, weigh them, measure them, find myself wanting, I let this mentality consume me. I staged a rebellion amidst grief and juggling life and could not become unstuck.

In *Understanding Narrative Inquiry: The Crafting and Analysis of Stories as Research*, Kim (2016) echoes my immediate admiration for the craft of qualitative research: "It seemed to me that narrative inquiry was a perfect hybrid of research and art (literary art in particular) that

could satisfy my inclination for literature" (p. 1). I was here in the early stages, Kim goes on to share advice from qualitative researcher Amia Lieblich (2007) to be a "good" narrative scholar requires "maturity and experience and sensitivity to the people and to one's self, which takes years to develop" (as cited in Clandinin & Murphy, 2006, p. 642). Kim goes on to explain that the process is a journey, one that she is still presently on. In my attempt at coding qualitative data, I lacked this maturity and understanding of what responsibilities to the stories and Storytellers were.

My personal struggles with data collection and analysis aside, moving forward the stories and reflections by participants were analyzed to providing a narrative that braids together each participant's strand in order to surmise where the stories intersect. I interviewed parents and community members using semi-structured interviews, as well as informal conversations (Bhattacharya, 2017) related to stories that provided insights into what is working in the community.

The interviews were transcribed and then underwent multiple cycles of coding with ongoing use of analytic memos (Saldaña, 2021), each of which focused on a different component of my theoretical frameworks and research questions. Additionally, I consistently engaged in reflective journaling and analytic memos (Saldaña, 2021). True to narrative inquiry, after some narrative smoothing (Kim, 2015) and arts-based explorations (Barone & Eisner, 2012) throughout the data analysis process, findings are represented in narrative form using arts-based storytelling. Overall, stories and thought exchanges in academic spaces provide not only a greater understanding of participants but a broader access to the research once complete.

Subjectivities and Positionality

"Indigenous research is a humble and humbling activity" (Smith, 2012, p. 5).

born to Freda Jo in the summer of 1983

born for Burgess and Millicent Tapedo (other names for Home)

born for back gravel road driving

feet out the window, red dirt

born from stories

and for storytelling

and for laughter

born Jennifer

answers to: Jan, Jenny, Banana, Tiger, Tie, Banana Cakes

(reader, can you hear Oklahoma?)

born Kiowa-Apache, Comanche, Seminole, Creek, and Borinquen

A daughter, granddaughter, niece, sister, and mother, familial relations and relationships are deeply embedded in my daily comings and goings. My first community, although miles away from our ancestral homeland, Kiowa-Apache on Kaw-Kansa-Osage land, a family of eight packed tightly into a three-bedroom home birthed my subjectivities. Public education and the Indian Methodist Church established my subjectivities as a follower of Christ, life-long learner, and a firm believer in servant-leadership. Lawrence, Kansas a seemingly liberal yet still deeply flawed, midwestern town imprinted upon me political identities of Indigenous feminist and democratic socialist. School provided a consistency I desperately craved in childhood, after spending my formative years traveling around the world and attending army base schools. Geographically we could be anywhere in the world. Sights, sounds, and smells would be different but school was always the same. At school I could count on there being a teacher, classmates, recess, two meals and books. The decision to become an educator, another

subjectivity of mine, was born of this life experience. After public education I attended Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas. After years surrounded by predominantly white classmates and educators, Haskell was a life-altering experience, an affinity space of being in community with other tribal nation members and learning our differences but also being enveloped by sameness that included both joy and grief. My relationship to education, as an Indigenous woman of color, is one that I am constantly evaluating, oscillating between disruption and feelings of isolation and despair.

Research in this field is deeply personal to me; I see it as work that I can do for my community - the community I live and work in but also the greater community of Indigenous education in the United States. Limitations that I face include the amount of emotional and mental duress that can occur when investigating systems of harm both historically and present. This work requires me to be in constant reflection and to utilize prayer and traditional practices to protect my mental health and energy. Traditional schooling has come at a heavy and high price for Indigenous people, a reality I constantly reflect on. Couple this realization with the fact that not all knowledge acquired comes with a certification. Many Indigenous families and people are keepers of knowledge passed from generation to generation and hold value and place in academia. Furthermore, since time is a limitation, participants' recollection of past experiences, thoughts, decisions, and feelings depended on their ability to accurately recall emotions and circumstances from a past period, which may not always be clear.

As a novice critical qualitative researcher, it is paramount that I constantly reflect on my socio-cultural positionality throughout every phase of the research process and how I interact with my participants. Mapping my identities, both tangible and intangible, is paramount to conceptualizing my positionality (Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019). I identify as an Indigenous

woman-of-color, a member of the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma and of Puerto Rican descent. I am a middle-aged, brown skinned, cis-gender female, education professional, college educated, lower-middle class, able-bodied, and neurodivergent doctoral student. The unearned power and privilege I experience are in direct relation to being a person without a disability. When looking directly at how these powers and privileges impact my research, I am able to navigate with great ease the digital and physical research resources.

As an Indigenous woman of color, my primary interests and motivations are focused on improving Indigenous pedagogies, American Indian educational systems, community and family engagement, teacher education training, and Indigenous curricula. Considering Indigenous peoples come from 574 federally recognized Native Nations, and many other nations whose sovereignty is not acknowledged, my membership in the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma does not grant me more understanding or knowledge of other First Nations Peoples. I am also what is considered an "urban Native" having been raised in an inter-tribal community, in an urban setting, not a reservation. Another unearned power and privilege I benefit from comes with being a cis-gender female. Despite the privileges that are associated with gender conformity, all of my experiences with systemic injustices have been due to the color of my skin.

I've made it a goal to become more aware of inclusivity in my language and to examine ways in which communities I am collaborating with in the future choose to identify themselves and how they wish to be identified. When presenting my identity or speaking about myself I often interchange Indigenous/Woman-of-Color/First Nations or Member of the Apache Tribe. The one term I have long since abandoned is minority. I have many thoughts on the use of this word as a deficit label, but author Rashaad Lambert (2020), echoing the artist Prince, puts it best, "there is nothing minor about us" (Lambert, 2020, second para.).

Jacobson and Mustafa (2019) ask the reader to consider positionality as a tool to hold researchers accountable to the potential impact on the communities of focus, and scholarly and societal perception of these communities. I would add this level of accountability is also necessary in acknowledging the power of language in these studies in terms of language inclusivity and the identities of communities of color or people of the global majority. The intersection of my identities may help in my research with Indigenous communities, but being raised away from the ancestral homelands of my people and in an urban setting also needs to be considered when working with Indigenous peoples from rural or reservation areas.

The story of public education for Indigenous families often starts the same, with the boarding school philosophy – "*kill the Indian, save the man".* This approach attempted to obliterate Indigenous peoples from the United States by starting with their children. This truth makes the choice to seek education as an occupation one that I often grapple with, Writer and artist Eric Gansworth (2020), an enrolled member of the Onondaga Nation, succinctly captured this insidious plan in his novel-in-verse, *Apple: Skin to the Core: A Memoir in Words and Pictures*:

> *Boarding School Philosophy, Shorter, Simplified Edition: Practical Application*
>
> *Problem:*
>
> *Solution 1: Solution 2: Solution 3:*
>
> *Solution 4:*
>
> *Indians in communities will reproduce*
>
> *in both form and idea. If offspring cannot be stopped, disrupt culture. Kill them all, or remove all available food sources.*
>
> *Destabilize group identity by making group land base illegal.*

Where land base exists, sterilize fertile adults under the guise of current helpful medical care, until they vanish on their own, unaware.

Remove present juvenile offspring, incarcerate them long enough

to open possibilities for future manual labor resources. To minimize bloodshed, call incarceration an institution a "school", convince parents this is an Opportunity of a Lifetime for juvenile offspring.

If students attempt to return

(and they will)

and attempt to procreate with their own kind

(and they will)

the remnants of their culture will be so small,

so fragmented, they will have no choice but to build new lives drawn from the available current American cultural resources.

Optimally, within two generations, those slivers of their old cultures Will be so small, they cannot thrive, and assimilation will be complete.

Uncontrollable Variables:

those who decline the opportunity of incarceration

The presence of mirrors and the capacity for insight. Long-Range Plan: Repeat as necessary. Revisit in two generations' time.

Adjust accordingly. (p. 5)

What Gansworth (2020) hauntingly illuminates for readers is hundreds of years of pain and suffering imposed upon American Indians under the guise of education – an education that

sought to replace ways of knowing and being that were rooted in culture and place. I am part of that struggle, and so is this personal work.

Significance of Study

This study is particularly important because it highlights stories of survivance (Vizenor, 2008) and Indigenous peoples' active resistance and presence in the face of colonial structures that seek to erase their identities. By documenting the stories of survivance within urban intertribal communities, this research provides educators and policymakers with a framework for developing more inclusive and culturally sustaining practices that honor Indigenous knowledge systems in public school settings. This research also provides more depth in understanding how families sustain intertribal identities, create supportive networks within urban educational settings, and navigate public school environments that often fail to accommodate their cultural needs. These stories contribute to a deeper understanding of the ways Indigenous communities assert their presence and build a future for their children in urban settings.

Furthermore, as the population of Indigenous students in urban schools continues to grow, this research is timely and urgent as it brings visibility to the experiences of intertribal Indigenous communities in public schools. Indian education programs are born out of federal policy and budget allocations. Studies such as this one can provide insights for educators, policymakers, and administrators on how to better serve Indigenous students. It also contributes to the broader field of Indigenous education by highlighting stories of community-building, ensuring that Indigenous futures are not only acknowledged but actively supported in public education.

Overall, there is minimal peer reviewed, or what one might consider *scholarly,* literature addressing the intersection of parent and community engagement with intertribal urban Indian

education in relation to Title VI and JOM programming (more on this in the following chapter). In particular, there is very little research focused on the mandatory parent committee aspects of these programs. So, this study is limited by the lack of existing research specifically focused on urban intertribal communities in the U.S. public school system, making it difficult to inform deeper and more focused approaches to these lines of inquiry. The absence of a clear foundation makes it challenging to find supporting research. Yet, this study simultaneously stands to make an immediate contribution to the field.

This study also presents valuable opportunities due to my positionality. As an Indigenous educator who has both experienced and currently works within the U.S. public school system, I am able to build trust with participants by drawing on their shared cultural identity and the implicit knowledge that comes from working in education. Moving to trust with participants by leveraging both my cultural identity and the unspoken knowledge and schema that comes from working in education allows me to make connections with participants and create an exchange of knowledge and stories by not only collecting stories but sharing my own. This approach fosters meaningful connections and an exchange of knowledge, allowing the collection and sharing of stories to enrich the research.

Additionally, it is important to note that studies on urban intertribal environments may not be directly applicable to reservation or rural communities and should therefore be interpreted accordingly. Since very little research on Title VI and JOM programs exists, particularly regarding the parent committee requirement, this study provides valuable insights that could benefit the thousands of federal programs informing practice in urban Intertribal communities across the United States.

In summary, this study initiates conversations on how these communities are served in K-12 public education institutions, providing visibility to Indigenous students and families navigating these spaces. The stories of Indigenous families, educators, and community members building community and embodying survivance in spaces and places that have historically been programmed for erasure provide powerful insights. These narratives center both cultural and academic knowledge, offering a foundation for identity and continuity for Indigenous futures (Wood, 2018).

Throughout this work, Indigenous People, American Indian, Native and Native American are used interchangeably. In interviews and documents collected from first-hand accounts participants' use of general identifiers vary, with participants often opting for identifying with the name of the Nation they represent, for an example: I am a member of the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma. Table 1 defines additional terminology used in this study.

Table 1. *Terminology*

Term	**Definition**
Community Engagement	Community engagement refers to the mutually respectful, strengths-based interactions of education staff and families with community members and agencies at all levels. These partnerships support parents' roles as valued community members and their progress toward their goals for themselves and their children (Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework, n.d.)
Community Members	Local and regional members or citizens of Tribal nations who attend, advocate, organize, and support local youth and initiatives created for intended to support student their well-being and growth. These members can include former parents/families with

	students who have completed their K-12 education but are still actively engaged in the intertribal education community, as well as social and cultural events. .
Intertribal Community	Refers to urban or suburban areas with a large population of Indigenous people from varying tribal nations and affiliations.
Johnson O'Malley	The Johnson-O'Malley Program is authorized by the Johnson-O'Malley Act of 1934, and the implementing regulations are provided in Part 273 of Title 25 of the Code of Federal Regulations. As amended, this Act authorizes contracts for educating eligible Indian students enrolled in public and previously private schools. programs offered to American Indian and Alaska Native students vary and may include such programs as culture, language, academics and dropout prevention (Bureau of Indian Education, n.d.).
Parent Capacity	The degree in which parents are empowered and intrinsically engaged to support student learning and growth (Anderson, 2024).
Parent Committee	A parent committee or Indian Parent Committee, Parent Advisory Committee or Indian Education Committee consists of parents/guardians of student's eligible to receive Johnson O'Malley services. These individuals are elected to serve in an advisory capacity regarding the program for Indigenous students receiving services (Bureau of Indian Education, n.d.).
Parent Engagement	Transformational relationships between parents and schools about listening, two-way communication, collective decision-making and problem solving, and building parent capacity as leaders and organizers within the school, their families, and the greater community (Anderson, 2024).

Parent Involvement	Transactional relationship where the schools hold the power, set the tone, plan the activities (Anderson, 2024).
Parents/Families	In Native American Student Services, two federal grant programs, Title VI and Johnson O'Malley, are led by a director who works as a liaison between families and the school district in addition to managing the grant. Parents interact through the program committee, but parents and extended family members also interact with the program through those official avenues, as well as public facing program events and planning.
Title VI	Federal grant funding tied to ESSA intended to address the unique academic and cultural needs of American Indian and Alaska Native children. The program is aimed at supporting services that (1) are responsive to the unique cultural, language, and educational needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students and (2) help these students meet academic standards. School districts, tribes, Indian organizations, Indian community-based organizations, and Bureau of Indian Education schools receiving this grant are required to consult with parents and local tribes in the effort to shape grant-funded services that supplement and enrich regular school programs. (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.)
Urban Indian	Members who currently reside outside of federally defined tribal lands in U.S. cities. The National Urban Indian Family Coalition (NUIFC) (2022) defines an Urban Indian as "individuals of American Indian and Alaska Native ancestry who may or may not have direct and/or active ties with a particular tribe, but who identify with and are at least somewhat active in the Native community in their urban area" (p. 7).

Summary

I utilized a survivance storywork approach to narrative and arts-based inquiry to help fill the gap in the literature related to intertribal urban Indian education and parent committees associated with Title VI and JOM programming. This study is informed by the work of academic ancestors in Indigenous methodologies. In listening to the personal stories and reflections of individuals involved in the NASS parent committee, I offer stories to deepen our understanding of these unique intertribal urban Indian education contexts. In the following chapter I present an in-depth overview of relevant literature.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

I imagine I wrestled with the concept of a literature review in the same way as Opaskwayak Cree researcher and author of *Research is Ceremony*, Shawn Wilson (2008). In the chapter, *Can a Ceremony Include a Literature Review?* Wilson discusses the conflict of articulating his Indigenous paradigm of research as ceremony and the requirement of academia to include a literature review. Wilson concludes that just as writing in a narrative tone gave his work cultural relevance, the literature review was a relevant way to speak back to the culture of academia. Furthermore, the way in which a literature review builds upon the work of others, academic elders and ancestors so to speak, the literature review inherently provides relational accountability that an Indigenous research paradigm.

I aspire to write research in a way that is aesthetic, artful, and accessible to my community, my family, and my peers. Arts-based research encapsulates these criteria while maintaining the rigor and respectability that academia requires. Where does a literature review fit into the arts? Where does it fit in storytelling? According to Barone & Eisner (2012) all art begins in a similar space of research review:

> …prior to the crafting of the work of arts-based research, in a kind of preproduction phase, as with many novelists, playwrights, actors, and nonfictional Storytellers, who research their characters and the contexts of their lives. To do so, they may engage in activities such as the following: the reading of archival and historical documents … (p. 48)

I offer to you a literature review and historical background chapter that aims to, as Tuhiwai Smith (2012) urges, to know the past as a "critical pedagogy of decolonization" (p. 36). Indigenous readers proceed with care as the atrocities and injustices that we often consume in an

effort to decolonize take a toll. What we know in the history of our spirits and bodies is that we are asked to recount, and to provide context and understanding for others. Smith (2012) encourages Indigenous researchers to begin to read and interpret present problems despite struggling to find ourselves in the text.

Assimilation Nation: A Brief History of U.S. Federal Indian Education Policy

The educational opportunity, many of us Indigenous scholars now know to be genocide, guised as good intentions set out through policy is the focus of this brief historical section. The origins of public education in the United States are rooted in the deculturization, assimilation, and attempted annihilation of Indigenous People. Szasz (1999) explains:

> The federal government pursued a policy of total assimilation of the American Indian into mainstream society. Recognizing the vast difficulties in achieving this goal, Congress and the Indian Bureau adopted a plan to remold the Indian's conception of life, or what came to be known as his "system of values" (p. 8).

The Indian's system of values was expressed in the education of their children and in their attitude toward the land. Consequently, these assimilationists chose to attack these two concepts as the major targets of their campaign (Szasz, 1999). However, it is important to note that education for Indigenous peoples did not begin with colonization. Deloria (2001) reminds us that, traditional knowledge was acquired and passed down for centuries. Knowledge of seasons, science, culture, survival, and learning to be in community and contribute positively were common educational principals among Tribal Nations.

Through legislation, under the guise of aid, the United States government began the systematic attack on Tribal Nations. The National Congress of American Indians (2020) created a primer on United States Relations with Indigenous People and identified seven eras in United

States and Tribal Nations relationships: 1) The Colonial Period 1492-1828, 2) Removal Reservation and Treaty Period 1828-1887, 3) Allotment and Assimilation Period 1887-1934, 4) Indian Reorganization Period 1934-1945, 5) Termination Period 1945-1968, 6) Self-Determination Period 1968-2000, and 7) Nation-to-Nation Period 2000-Present. Each period is wrought with its own unique challenges and accompanying legislation to control Indian education, illustrating Szasz's (1999) proclamation: "The remolding of Indian education to conform to white cultural values could not be achieved by a single piece of legislation" (p. 8). This section serves as an introduction to these periods and the policies and legislation of each time period that shaped federal Indian education for years to come.

This historical section deals specifically with the Indian education policies and legislation of the United States federal government. Education existed throughout North American tribes well before the arrival of European colonists. Pre-colonization, Reyhner and Eder (2004) report that despite the amazing diversity that existed among tribes in language, beliefs, and ways of survival, many documented similarities in child-rearing practices. These practices included educating children on agricultural practices and tribal knowledge through ceremony, storytelling, and apprenticeship. Deloria and Wildcat (2001) explain the wealth of knowledge possessed by Indigenous peoples of the natural world was dismissed. Educating Indigenous children away from their traditions and families became an essential part in assimilation and extermination.

Although the following historical context presents the cruel and disparaging ways in which the United States government weaponized education in each period and periods to come, Indigenous futures are being planned, prayed for, and built by Indigenous communities and families. McCoy (2024) echoes this hope for this future:

> Native families, however, we chose to constitute and define them are sacrosanct, with fundamental rights to determine the best interest of their children. Indigenous families-despite colonial challenges and violences-have always and will always fight to advance Indigenous futures and protect Indigenous youth. (p.12)

McCoy (2024) also describes the following, as if about to embark with us through this journey through time. She advises:

> These are crucial stories to tell, as we remember Indigenous families not only under the onslaught of colonial harms but also as strategic, savvy, loving, and fiercely protective of one another. As we listen carefully for the voices of those who have fought before us, their stories of survivance speak to their skill and resolve in the face of ongoing threats to Indigenous well-being. (p. 12)

With this in mind, below I offer an overview of the time periods mentioned above, using the structure created by the NCAI (2020) in their *Tribal Nations and The United States: An Introduction*, synthesized alongside other relevant literature.

The Colonial Period 1492-1828

The National Congress of American Indians (2020) identifies the colonial period as the first era of interaction between the United States government and Tribal Nations. The United States government's relationship with Tribal Nations was fundamentally driven by a systemic desire to seize Indigenous lands, regardless of the human cost. Initially, European colonial powers such as Spain, France, and Britain engaged with Tribal Nations through a mix of trade, alliances, and conflicts; however, these interactions were exploitative and aimed at territorial expansion. Following independence, the United States government intensified these expansionist policies. These treaties and policies were often negotiated under duress or deceit and frequently

violated once they served their purpose of land acquisition. The Doctrine of Discovery, a legal principle established by European colonial powers, played a significant role in these efforts. This doctrine held that European nations could claim lands they "discovered" and that Indigenous peoples had no ownership rights to these territories, only the right to occupy them (American Indian Law Alliance, 2024). This principle was used to justify the dispossession of Native American lands by deeming them as merely occupants without sovereignty over their own lands. Methods such as military confrontations, exemplified by the Northwest Indian War against the Shawnee and Miami, and legal manipulations like the Doctrine of Discovery, were employed to dispossess Native Americans of their lands. This period saw substantial land loss for tribal nations and set a precedent for future policies aimed at further displacement and assimilation. One significant policy was the Civilization Fund Act of 1819, (McCoy, 2024; Red Corn et al., 2023) which allocated funds to missionary groups to establish schools aimed at "civilizing" Native Americans. Additionally, various treaties included provisions for education, such as the Treaty of Fort Wayne (1809), which promised educational resources in exchange for land cessions. Missionary schools, supported by these funds and treaties, played a crucial role in early Native American education by promoting English-only literacy, Christianity, and European-American customs. Despite these relentless pressures, tribal nations continuously resisted, striving to preserve their autonomy, culture, and territories amidst systemic oppression and relentless expansion by the United States. It was during this period the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was established in 1824. The BIA played a vital role in administering federal policy towards Native Americans, including education. It oversaw the establishment and operation of off-reservation boarding schools designed to assimilate Native American children, ushering

federal Indian Education policy into a new era (McCoy, 2024; Reyhner & Eder, 2004; Szasz, 1999).

Removal Reservation and Treaty Period 1828-1887

As Szasz (1999) explains, several key acts, treaties, and institutions played pivotal roles during the Removal, Reservation, and Treaty Period from 1828 to 1887:

Indian Removal Act (1830): This legislation authorized the forced relocation of Native American tribes from their ancestral lands to territories west of the Mississippi River, facilitating westward expansion.

Treaty of Fort Laramie (1851): Defined Native American territories and set the stage for the establishment of reservations. While primarily focused on land rights, its implications for education included confining tribes to specific areas.

Dawes Act (1887): Also known as the General Allotment Act, this policy aimed to break up tribal lands by allotting parcels to individual Native Americans, encouraging agriculture and assimilation. Education was linked to this policy through boarding schools like the Carlisle Indian School.

Carlisle Indian School: Founded in 1879 by Richard Henry Pratt, Carlisle became a model for off-reservation boarding schools. It enforced strict assimilation policies, prohibiting native languages and cultural practices, aiming to "kill the Indian and save the man."

In the 1878 Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, educating Indigenous children was seen as the swiftest path to civilization but such education could only occur, according to the report, if the children were removed from the influence of their parents and their camps (Reyhner & Eder, 2004). The boarding school era was ushered in as an opportunity but

left many families broken as their children never returned or returned deeply wounded, wounding generations to come. Environmental researcher and activist, Dina Gilio-Whitaker (2019) laments: "This legacy cannot be overstated, and a growing awareness of intergenerational and historical trauma recognizes the social and psychological implication that histories of genocide and colonialism have had on American Indian populations" (p. 49). Gansworth (2020) retells his grandfather's experience at Carlisle Indian Industrial School, a federal Indian boarding school:

> When children arrived at the school, they discovered their packed bags were irrelevant. Their hair was cut, traditional clothes swapped for military uniforms, moccasins for boots. They had no way of knowing, climbing on those trains to Carlisle, or Hampton, or Haskell, or any of the other 397 schools, that even before those scissors came out, many had to check their identities and anything that made them Indians at the gate, like overcoats their host considered a hindrance (pp. 11-12)

Allotment and Assimilation Period 1887-1934

This period begins with the settlers' increasing desire for land and the push to assimilate Natives into mainstream American life leading to the General Allotment Act of 1887 (also known as the Dawes Act). The Dawes act dictated the forced conversion of communally held tribal lands into small parcels for ownership by individual Natives. More than 90 million acres—nearly two-thirds of reservation land—were taken from tribal nations and given to settlers, most often without compensation to tribal nations. (NCAI, n.d.)

In 1928, *The Problem of Indian Administration*, or the *Meriam Report,* was published condemning the allotment policy and the poor quality of services provided by the Department of the Interior's Indian Office. This report also urged protection for Indian property and

recommended “Indians be allowed more freedom to manage their own affairs” (Reyhner & Eder, 2004, p. 207).

Reyhner and Eder (2004) summarize the report findings, concerns, and calls for reform:

- Lack of correlation between curriculum and realities of reservation life
- Care of children found inadequate
- Emphasized the need for preservice training of Indian Service employees
- Found the food deficient in quality, quantity, and variety
- Questioned the use of students as laborers.

Despite the findings of the *Meriam Report*, change and reform would be slow moving. Land grabs, residential boarding schools, subjugation through education and demands for reforms for the Indian Administration make the assimilation goal of this period clear. Advocacy for Indigenous students to attend public schools came about at this time through the *Meriam Report*. This shift, according to McCoy (2024), was about “cultural control” (p. 47).

Indian Reorganization Period 1934-1945

During the Indian Reorganization Period from 1934 to 1945, federal Indian education policies underwent a transformative shift towards supporting tribal self-governance and cultural preservation (NCAI, 2020). The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, or the Wheeler-Howard Act, was pivotal in this regard, emphasizing the restoration of tribal autonomy and the promotion of Native American languages and cultures within educational frameworks. This period saw increased federal funding for schools operated by tribes, allowing for curricula that integrated traditional knowledge alongside Western education (Szasz, 1999). The aim was to empower Native American communities to manage their own educational systems and preserve their distinct cultural identities. Additionally, efforts were made to improve educational facilities and

teacher training programs on reservations, reflecting a broader recognition of Indigenous rights and the importance of culturally relevant education in fostering community resilience and pride. While many of those aims are still unrealized, it symbolizes a significant shift in thinking away from assimilationist policies and curricula.

Termination Period 1945-1968

Between 1945 and 1968, United States federal Indian education policies were significantly influenced by the policy of termination, aimed at assimilating Native American tribes into mainstream American society by severing their special relationship with the federal government. Szasz (1999) explains this era saw the enactment of pivotal legislation that reshaped Native American education and identity for generations: This era was marked by the Indian Relocation Act (IRA) of 1956, which encouraged relocation of Native Americans from reservations to urban areas for employment opportunities but disrupted traditional community structures and cultural practices. Many relocated individuals faced challenges adapting to urban environments. Benefits of this Act included the provision of vocational training, financial assistance, and housing subsidies to facilitate integration into urban life. Szasz (1999) also speaks to the negative impacts of the IRA on cultural identity - "In the city they were unable to 'melt' into the non-Indian culture, yet they had also 'lost touch' with their own culture" (p. 165)

Self-Determination Period 1968-2000

Between 1978 and 2000, United States federal Indian education policies underwent a significant evolution, marked by efforts to empower tribal nations and enhance their sovereignty over educational systems (NCAI, 2020). This period began with a shift away from termination policies towards recognition of tribal self-governance and cultural preservation. The Rough Rock Demonstration School on the Navajo reservation set a course and provided a blue-print for other

tribally controlled schools and educational sovereignty. A community centered initiative and effort, the school provided education for children and adults in the community as well as stimulated the local economy in times of recession (McCarty, 1989).

The establishment of the Office of Indian Education, within the U.S. Department of Education in 1972, aimed to address disparities in educational access and outcomes for Indigenous students. The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 was paramount in this transformation, allowing tribes to assume control over their educational programs previously managed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). This legislation enabled tribes to develop curricula that integrated traditional knowledge and languages, fostering cultural continuity within educational settings; the act laid the foundation for greater tribal autonomy in shaping educational priorities and strategies tailored to the specific needs of their communities. In regard to public education, the act established a requirement for parent involvement and input creating what we now know as Indian Parent Committees (McCoy, 2024; Red Corn et al., 2023; Szasz, 1999).

The Self-Determination Period marked a pivotal phase in federal Indian education policy, laying the groundwork for continued efforts to strengthen tribal sovereignty and promote educational equity and excellence within Native American communities. Throughout the Self-Determination Period, federal policies increasingly emphasized collaboration and consultation with tribal leaders in the educational decision-making processes. Initiatives such as the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978 provided funding and support for tribal colleges and universities, enabling these institutions to offer culturally relevant education and training programs (Red Corn et al., 2023). Despite these advancements, challenges persisted, including inadequate funding, disparities in educational resources between tribal and non-tribal

schools, and the ongoing need for culturally responsive teacher training and curriculum development (McCoy, 2024).

Nation-to-Nation Period 2000-Present

From 2000 to today, significant legislation has been enacted to improve education for American Indian students in the United States (NCAI, 2020). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 included provisions for American Indian education, emphasizing accountability and aiming to close achievement gaps. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 replaced NCLB and provided greater flexibility for states while continuing to focus on educational equity, including specific measures to support American Indian students. ESSA "requires timely and meaningful" tribal consultation in order to build trust and better support the unique educational and cultural needs of Indigenous students (NIEA, n.d.a.) Additionally, the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act, reauthorized in 2019, supports the revitalization and maintenance of Native American languages, which is integral to cultural and educational identity (Red Corn et al., 2023). The Tribal Colleges and Universities Improvement Act, part of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, aims to strengthen tribal colleges, providing resources for infrastructure, academic programs, and financial aid. These legislative efforts and the exercise of educational sovereignty underscore a commitment to enhancing educational opportunities, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting academic success for American Indian students.

In conclusion, the genesis of federal Indian education policy is riddled with both success and failures, for both the United States government and Indigenous Peoples. There were attempts throughout history to reform policies and atone for the cruelty brought upon tribal nations. In 2021, the United States Congress established the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian

Boarding School Policies (Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act, H.R.5444). This act recognized that boarding schools for Indigenous peoples were adopted for the sole purpose of deculturalization (Spring, 2024). The boarding school commission worked to investigate the impacts and ongoing effects of Indian boarding school policies, with recommendations for the federal government to make amends for the trauma caused. The repair and true progress, however, has always been orchestrated by Indigenous communities and families. McCoy (2024) explains:

> Stories of reimagining colonial funding, repurposing school campuses, holding settler governments accountable, establishing new school boards, occupying buildings, stretching and influencing legislation, and building relationships with politicians, with the press, and with each other. (p. 146)

Indigenous peoples continue to endure and meet the future, while navigating new policies, public education, and visibility. Despite the historical challenges and policies created for their destruction, Indigenous peoples fought hard to maintain, revitalize, and reform education with sovereignty and autonomy.

Overview of Literature on Urban and Intertribal Education Contexts

Education at the hands of the United States government set out to destroy Indigenous peoples and culture through the assimilation and termination of our children. As the boarding school era came to a close and policy after policy aimed to erase Indigenous peoples oscillated between success and failure, public education began to emerge and from it more assimilative practices.

Historical Context

The policies of the United States government during what is commonly referred to as the relocation era, set in the Termination period, included providing living stipends and incentives for members of tribal nations to relocate to urban areas (NCAI, 2020). Once again, the United States government disguised assimilation as opportunity, attempting to integrate Indigenous families into city life with the hopes of immersion by escalation. New territories brought new issues and some new opportunities, with many cities seeing the genesis of American Indian community centers to serve Indigenous families in need.

The Snyder Act of 1921 saw a rise in Indigenous students' attendance of public schools than government boarding schools (McCoy, 2024; Szasz, 1999). Increases in public school attendance gave rise to racism experienced by Indigenous students and families by schools who were all too eager to receive federal monies with no clear measures of accountability to the students they were charged with providing an education for. The 20th century saw cornerstone court cases to support Native students' rights to public education provided by the state (e.g., *Piper vs. California*, *Grant et al v. Michaels et al*). In response to these landmark cases, Congress passed the Johnson O'Malley Act of 1934 (JOM) authorizing the federal government to enter into contracts with states and territories for services such as education, health, agriculture, and welfare. Without oversight of these finances many schools collected money without considering the best interest of the students who were under their care. Widespread misuse of JOM funds were soon reported.

Impact Aid and Johnson-O'Malley programs have significantly influenced public education for American Indian students by providing essential funding and support tailored to their unique educational needs (McCoy, 2023; Red Corn et al., 2023). The Impact Aid program,

established in 1950, provides financial assistance to local school districts that lose property tax revenue due to the presence of tax-exempt federal property, including Indian lands. This funding helps to offset the costs of educating American Indian students and ensures that schools have the resources needed to provide quality education (U.S. Department of Education, 2021); however, much like JOM funds, Impact Aid was utilized at the discretion of school districts who often served their own interest and looked to benefit only the white students and families by using the funds in their general school budgets (Szasz, 1999).

Cultural Identity and Urbanization

As Indigenous students were being funneled into public schools, another important piece of legislation for the purpose of assimilation was taking place. The Relocation Act of 1956 was a policy of the federal government passed by Congress to encourage Indigenous workers to move from reservations to cities (Indian Relocation Act of 1956). Indigenous workers began relocating with their families into large cities such as Chicago, Denver, and Minneapolis. The children of these families would then attend non-native public schools in large urban communities where they were further isolated and immersed in the doctrine of United States public education. As with many policies of the federal government, this legislation ushered in the Termination period, where the federal government ended services for many tribes causing economic devastation, forcing members of tribal nations to move elsewhere to provide for their families, and further expanding Native students' participation in public, off-reservation schools (McCoy, 2024).

Relocation as a continuation of assimilation may have been the genesis of many Indigenous families' experiences with urban living and public education. Although families like mine did not have a direct relocation story, the policies of the federal government ultimately led to economic disparities on reservation or allotment lands or in tribal communities. My

grandfather, Burgess Tapedo (Kiowa), brought his family to live in Lawrence, Kansas because of a job opportunity as a counselor at Haskell Indian Junior College, formerly Haskell Institute and presently Haskell Indian Nations University, in the summer of 1990. Burgess, a veteran of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, utilized the G.I. Bill benefits, obtaining a degree in counseling from Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford, Oklahoma. Tapedo moved his family to Lawrence, Kansas and added Kiowa to the hundreds of tribal nations that resided in the midwestern city. The Tapedo family is one of many families Haskell brought to the community of Lawrence, like many others in this intertribal community. Lawrence quickly became a home community.

Overall, the unique educational needs of American Indian students who attend public school have been the focus of legislative action beginning with the Civilization Act and continuing with the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975. This effort continues through programs such as Johnson O'Malley and Title VI, which have evolved over time to require parental oversight and tribal consultations to ensure the funds are being used appropriately and not being rolled into the general fund and used for non-Native students.

Overview of Title VI and Johnson O'Malley Program Literature

As I made my appointment to visit with our librarian, I was excited to do some searches and systematically see what I could find with key terms such as Title VI, Johnson O'Malley, parent committee, and some of those go-to jargon terms people often call "Indian Ed". Armed with works by Indigenous education scholars, Sabzalian and McCoy as a foundation, I needed to locate more works that focused solely on public education in Urban Intertribal contexts, particularly in the traditional "peer-reviewed" journal contexts.

Search Terms:

"johnson o'malley" "community engagement"

"johnson o'malley" intertribal community

Nothing.

I searched on:

"Title VI" "Indian Education"

Clicked the "peer reviewed" filter box

I was reminded of the movie Spaceballs (Figure 1) from my childhood…

"We ain't found shit"

Figure 1

Note. Spaceballs (1987) of troopers "combing" the desert and coming up empty handed.

The meeting turned up exactly what I imagined, nothing. However, it was helpful to have another librarian validate what I had experienced in my own search. Although I'm not an academic librarian by trade or training, I know a thing or two about a thing or two. The plan moving forward was to find literature that spoke to parent and community engagement in generalities and to lean into the existing practitioner documents. Despite the lack of resources available concerning Johnson-O'Malley and Title VI programming there was a substantial amount of information available in the practitioner context.

History and Purpose of Title VI & Johnson O'Malley Program

The U.S. Office of Indian Education (OIE) administers the Indian Education Program under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Title VI, Part A), to support Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), Indian Tribes and organizations, post-secondary institutions, and other entities in addressing the unique educational and cultural needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students. Led by a Director who reports to the Assistant Secretary, the OIE aims to:

> Ensure Indian students meet challenging state academic standards; promote knowledge and understanding of Native communities, languages, histories, traditions, and cultures; and equip teachers, principals, other school leaders, and staff to provide culturally appropriate and effective instruction and support to Indian students. (Bureau of Indian Education, n.d., para. 2.)

The Title VI Program and the Johnson-O'Malley (JOM) Program are key federal initiatives aimed at supporting the education of American Indian and Alaska Native students. Title VI, originally part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and later amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), provides financial assistance to meet the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of Indigenous students (Office of Indian Education, 2019).

The Johnson-O'Malley Program, established by the Johnson-O'Malley Act of 1934, authorizes contracts for the education of eligible American Indian and Alaska Native students in public and formerly private schools. This program operates under an educational plan approved by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) that addresses the needs of these students. The Johnson-O'Malley Supplemental Indian Education Program Modernization Act became Public Law 115-

404 on December 31, 2018. This requires contracting school districts to provide a count of eligible Indigenous students, as well as how the funds are used. Failure to do so will result in loss of program funding. The programs provided include cultural, language, academic, and dropout prevention initiatives. Eligible applicants include tribal organizations, Indian corporations, school districts, or states with qualifying students. These students must be enrolled members of a federally recognized tribe or have at least one-fourth Indian blood and be between ages three through grade 12, with priority given to those living on or near reservations (Bureau of Indian Education, 2020). The JOM Program allows for contracts with states, school districts, and tribal organizations to provide supplemental educational programs for Indigenous students (Office of Indian Education, 2022). Both programs aim to promote cultural heritage and identity while enhancing educational outcomes for Indigenous students through targeted support and community engagement initiatives.

Impact of Title VI on Indigenous Education and Community Engagement

Title VI has had a significant impact on Indigenous education by promoting cultural awareness and inclusion within schools. This program provides resources for developing culturally relevant curricula, professional development for educators on Indigenous histories and cultures, and support for parental and community involvement in schools (Bureau of Indian Education, 2019). By fostering environments that respect and reflect Indigenous cultures, Title VI helps bridge the gap between schools and Indigenous communities, enhancing engagement and educational outcomes. However, this program faces challenges, such as inconsistent implementation across school districts and insufficient funding, which can limit its effectiveness (Bureau of Indian Education, 2019).

Challenges and Criticisms

Despite their intended benefits, both the Title VI and JOM programs have faced criticisms and challenges. One criticism is that the funding provided through these programs is often inadequate to meet the diverse needs of Indigenous students across different regions and communities (Bureau of Indian Education, 2019). Additionally, there is a concern that these programs may not always align with the specific cultural and educational priorities of local Indigenous communities, leading to a mismatch between the programs' offerings and the actual needs of the students they aim to serve (Lowe et al., 2019). Furthermore, the bureaucratic processes associated with accessing and managing funds can be cumbersome for many tribal organizations and school districts, which may lack the administrative capacity to fully utilize these resources.

Effectiveness and Outcomes of Supporting Indigenous Education

Despite these challenges, the Title VI and JOM programs have been instrumental in supporting Indigenous education by providing critical resources and fostering partnerships between schools and Indigenous communities. Studies have shown that schools that effectively utilize Title VI and JOM funds tend to have higher levels of parent and community involvement, improved cultural competence among educators, and better educational outcomes for Indigenous students (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). These programs help create educational environments that are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of Indigenous students, contributing to their academic success and cultural preservation. However, continued advocacy for increased funding, flexibility, and community-driven approaches is necessary to enhance the effectiveness of these programs in supporting Indigenous education.

Professional Organizations: NIEA and NJOMA

Many Title VI and JOM program leaders are heavily involved in the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) and the National Johnson-O'Malley Association (NJOMA). NIEA is dedicated to advancing comprehensive educational opportunities for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students. Its mission is to promote educational excellence, cultural integrity, and opportunities for these students through advocacy, partnerships, and educational initiatives. NIEA supports Indigenous students in public education by advocating for policies that respect and integrate Native cultures and languages into the curriculum, providing professional development for educators, and facilitating community engagement to ensure educational environments are inclusive and supportive of Indigenous students. By championing these efforts, NIEA works to improve academic outcomes and preserve cultural heritage within the education system (National Indian Education Association, n.d.).

Additionally, NJOMA is dedicated to advocating for the educational needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students. Its mission is to support and promote the effective use of Johnson-O'Malley funds to ensure that these students receive the culturally relevant and comprehensive education they deserve. NJOMA's vision encompasses fostering educational environments where Native students can thrive academically, socially, and culturally. The association works to empower communities by providing resources, training, and advocacy to enhance educational opportunities and outcomes for Indigenous students (NJOMA, 2023).

School Community Engagement in Indigenous Communities

Lowe et al. (2019) underscore the necessity of culturally responsive practices in fostering meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities. Their systematic review identifies that "schools that incorporate Indigenous cultural knowledge, practices, and values into their

curricula are more successful in building trust and partnerships with Indigenous communities" (p. 257). This aligns with the broader literature on family-school-community partnerships, which underscores the importance of recognizing and valuing the cultural assets that communities bring to the educational process (Stefanski et al., 2016). Such culturally responsive practices are essential for creating more inclusive and supportive environments that honor the unique identities of Indigenous students and their families (Lowe et al., 2019).

Despite this growing body of research on school-community relationships, there remains a significant gap in the literature specifically addressing the experiences of Indigenous families, particularly those living in intertribal urban communities. The existing research often fails to consider the unique cultural, social, and historical contexts that shape the lives of Indigenous families from various tribes who reside in urban areas (Lowe et al., 2019). This oversight can lead to a one-size-fits-all approach that does not account for the diversity and complexity of intertribal urban Indigenous communities, which are often composed of members from multiple tribal backgrounds, each with distinct cultural practices, languages, and traditions (Lowe et al., 2019).

Addressing this gap in the literature is crucial for developing more effective, inclusive, and culturally relevant educational practices that genuinely support the educational success and well-being of all Indigenous students. As Green (2018) and Stefanski et al. (2016) emphasize, successful partnerships require a deep understanding of the specific cultural contexts and needs of the community. Without this understanding, schools are likely to implement engagement strategies that do not resonate with the experiences of intertribal urban Indigenous families, thereby perpetuating a cycle of disengagement and mistrust (Green, 2018; Stefanski et al., 2016).

School-community engagement refers to the collaborative partnership between educational institutions and the communities they serve, aiming to improve educational outcomes and foster community development. This engagement is characterized by a mutual exchange of resources, knowledge, and support, emphasizing shared responsibility in the educational process (Green, 2018). Effective school-community engagement is built on the premise that schools are not isolated entities but integral parts of the community ecosystem. Such partnerships involve parents, local organizations, businesses, and community leaders working together to support student achievement and holistic development (Epstein, 1986). In Indigenous contexts, school-community engagement must also include culturally responsive practices that acknowledge and incorporate Indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and cultural traditions to create inclusive learning environments (Lowe et al., 2019).

Despite the importance of school-community engagement, several challenges and barriers hinder its effectiveness, particularly within Indigenous communities. One major challenge is the historical and ongoing mistrust between Indigenous communities and educational institutions, often rooted in the legacy of colonialism and the traumatic experiences of the boarding school era (Green, 2018). Additionally, there are logistical challenges, such as geographical isolation and limited access to resources, which can restrict the ability of Indigenous families to participate fully in school activities. The lack of culturally relevant curriculum and the underrepresentation of Indigenous staff and leadership in schools also contribute to the disconnect between schools and Indigenous communities (Lowe et al., 2019). These barriers underscore the need for schools to adopt more culturally sensitive and inclusive approaches that actively involve Indigenous voices in the educational process.

Successful models of school-community engagement in Indigenous contexts are characterized by genuine collaboration, respect for cultural differences, and a commitment to shared decision-making. Lowe et al. (2019) identify several best practices, such as developing culturally responsive curricula that incorporate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives and establishing advisory councils that include Indigenous community members to guide school policies and practices. Other effective strategies include creating flexible opportunities for parental involvement that accommodate the unique circumstances of Indigenous families and fostering strong, trusting relationships between educators and community members. These practices not only enhance educational outcomes but also promote a sense of belonging and respect, which are crucial for the well-being of Indigenous students and their communities.

Indigenous Parent Engagement

Parental involvement is crucial in Indigenous education because it significantly influences student achievement, cultural continuity, and community engagement. Research indicates that when Indigenous parents are actively involved in their children's education, there is a marked improvement in academic outcomes, as well as a stronger connection to cultural identity and heritage (Anderson, 2024; Epstein, 1986). Parental involvement also fosters a sense of belonging and trust between schools and Indigenous communities, which is essential for creating a supportive learning environment. In the context of Indigenous education, parental involvement extends beyond conventional school activities to include the transmission of cultural knowledge, language, and values, which are integral to the holistic development of Indigenous students (Lowe et al., 2019). This involvement helps bridge the gap between home and school, ensuring that education is relevant and reflective of Indigenous ways of knowing and learning.

Several factors influence Indigenous parental involvement in education, including historical, socio-economic, and cultural dynamics. Historically, Indigenous communities have experienced mistrust towards educational institutions due to the legacy of colonialism and the detrimental impacts of policies like the boarding school era (Green, 2018). This mistrust can create barriers to parental involvement, as families may feel alienated or unwelcome in school settings. Additionally, socio-economic challenges, such as poverty and limited access to resources, can impede parents' ability to participate fully in their children's education (Anderson, 2024). Cultural factors also play a significant role; schools that do not respect or incorporate Indigenous cultural practices and languages may inadvertently discourage parental involvement (Lowe et al., 2019). To enhance engagement, it is vital for schools to acknowledge and address these factors, creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for Indigenous families.

Cultural competence is critical in fostering effective parental involvement in Indigenous education. Schools that demonstrate cultural competence are more likely to establish meaningful relationships with Indigenous parents by recognizing and valuing their cultural backgrounds and practices (Stefanski et al., 2016). This includes integrating Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into the curriculum, respecting traditional practices, and providing culturally relevant support services. Cultural competence helps bridge the gap between home and school, ensuring that Indigenous parents feel respected and understood within the educational setting. Furthermore, it encourages educators to adopt a holistic approach to teaching that aligns with Indigenous ways of knowing, which can positively impact student engagement and learning outcomes (NCSSLE, n.d.). By fostering cultural competence, schools can create environments where Indigenous parents feel empowered to contribute to their children's education, thereby enhancing overall educational experiences.

Community empowerment is a vital aspect of fostering Indigenous parental involvement in education. When schools actively engage Indigenous communities and empower them to participate in decision-making processes, it promotes a sense of ownership and responsibility towards education (Schutz, 2006). Empowered communities are better positioned to advocate for culturally relevant educational practices and resources that reflect their needs and values. Moreover, community empowerment helps to dismantle hierarchical structures within education, promoting a more collaborative and inclusive approach that values the voices and experiences of Indigenous families (Lowe et al., 2019). This approach is essential for building trust and ensuring that educational initiatives are genuinely responsive to the needs of Indigenous students and their communities. By prioritizing community empowerment, schools can create sustainable partnerships that foster meaningful parental involvement and support the educational success of Indigenous students.

Considering Gaps in the Literature, Thus Far

Despite recent advancements, the literature on parent engagement still lacks adequate representation and analysis of Indigenous perspectives, narratives, and experiences within educational settings. This gap underscores the importance of a culturally responsive and community-centered approach to studying parent engagement in Indigenous contexts. The current study addresses this gap by employing narrative inquiry and survivance storytelling frameworks to explore and amplify Indigenous voices, values, and practices related to parent engagement in education.

Indigenous Frameworks for Educational Praxis and Research

> *"The development of theories by Indigenous scholars which attempt to explain our existence in contemporary society has only just begun" (Smith, 2012, p. 39).*

In this section, I offer an overview of Indigenous frameworks relevant to educational praxis and research. I begin with an overview of Decolonizing Methodologies (Smith, 2012), followed by a summary of TribalCrit (Brayboy, 2005) and Red Pedagogy (Grande, 2015). I then offer a summary of Pewewardy et al.'s (2022) *Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model*, *Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogies* (McCarty & Lee, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2017), along with Red Corn's (2020) capacity building model for *Liberating Sovereign Potential.* While theories and frameworks such as these generally inform this work, I conclude this section with a summary of Survivance storywork (Archibald, 2008; Vizenor, 2008), which more specifically informs this research.

Decolonizing Methodologies

> *"The past, our stories local and global, the present, our communities, cultures, languages and social practices-all may be spaces of marginalization, but they have also become spaces of resistance and hope" (Smith, 2012, p. 4).*

Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2012) provides a critical examination of Western research paradigms and their impact on Indigenous communities. Smith argues that traditional research methods have often been tools of colonization, contributing to the marginalization and exploitation of Indigenous peoples. She advocates for research methodologies that are grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems, values, and priorities. Decolonizing Methodologies emphasizes the importance of Indigenous self-determination in research and the need for methodologies that respect and empower Indigenous communities. Smith highlights the necessity of collaborative, community-based approaches that prioritize Indigenous voices and perspectives, aiming to decolonize knowledge production and promote social justice (Smith, 2012).

Smith (2012) represented Indigenous research through the metaphor of ocean tides. Modeled after the Māori four directions, the chart names the directions as processes: decolonization, healing, transformation, and mobilization. These processes can be integrated into practices and methodologies. Survival, recovery, development, and self-determination are major tides that are represented in the chart. According to Smith, these are the "conditions and states of being through which Indigenous communities are moving" (p. 116). Smith acknowledges the broad and ambitious scope and intent of the Indigenous research agenda but is rooted in the social responsibility in the good of mankind, that research should be reciprocal clearly beneficiary, rather than extortionary and harmful.

TribalCrit

''Baby, doesn't she know that our stories are our theories?" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 426)

Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) is an extension of Critical Race Theory (CRT) tailored to address the specific experiences and challenges of Indigenous peoples in the United States. Developed by Brayboy (2005), TribalCrit focuses on the intersection of race, culture, and colonialism, highlighting how historical and contemporary policies have systematically marginalized Native communities. It emphasizes the importance of sovereignty, self-determination, and the reclamation of Indigenous knowledge and practices within educational systems. TribalCrit critiques the traditional CRT framework for not adequately addressing the unique socio-political and historical contexts of Indigenous peoples, arguing that colonialism and its ongoing impacts are central to understanding their experiences.

A key aspect of TribalCrit is its focus on storytelling and Indigenous epistemologies as valid and vital sources of knowledge. It challenges the dominant Eurocentric perspectives in academia and advocates for the inclusion of Indigenous voices and perspectives in research and

education. TribalCrit also underscores the significance of land, acknowledging that Indigenous identity, culture, and knowledge are deeply connected to ancestral lands (Brayboy, 2005; Brayboy 2021). This framework calls for educational practices that recognize and integrate Indigenous cultural practices, languages, and traditions, promoting a more equitable and culturally responsive educational environment for Indigenous students (Brayboy).

Tenets of Tribal Critical Race Theory

1. Colonization is endemic to society - Colonialism is a pervasive force that continues to impact Indigenous peoples.
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 their identities.
4. Indigenous peoples have a desire for tribal sovereignty, self-determination, and the right to govern themselves.
5. The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens.
6. Governmental policies and educational practices must be viewed in historical context to understand their impact on Indigenous peoples.
7. Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples.
8. Stories and oral knowledge are valid sources and can serve as both data and methodology.

9. Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work toward social change. (p. 92)

Overall, Brayboy's (2005) TribalCrit has been used widely in research focused on Indigenous educational contexts for the last couple decades, with these tenets creating a sharper focus for various forms of inquiry.

Red Pedagogy

Red Pedagogy, developed by Grande (2015), is a framework that integrates Indigenous knowledge systems and critical pedagogy to challenge colonial and oppressive educational practices. It emphasizes the importance of reclaiming and revitalizing Indigenous cultures, languages, and epistemologies within educational settings. Red Pedagogy critiques the dominance of Western educational paradigms and advocates for the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives to promote social justice and equity. This approach seeks to empower Indigenous students by fostering a deeper connection to their cultural heritage and addressing the socio-political contexts that impact their education. Red Pedagogy is not just a method of teaching, but a political act aimed at decolonization and the transformation of education to serve Indigenous communities' needs and aspirations (Brayboy, 2005; Grande, 2015).

Grande implores teachers and students "to be willing to act as agents of transgression, posing critical questions and engaging dangerous discourse" (p. 250). Red Pedagogy provides seven precepts to aide in the answering of this call.

1. "Red Pedagogy *is primarily a pedological project*…" (p. 201).
2. "Red Pedagogy *is fundamentally rooted in Indigenous knowledge and praxis*…" (p. 201).
3. "Red Pedagogy is *informed by critical theories of education* …" (p. 201).

4. "Red Pedagogy *promotes an education for decolonization*" (p. 201).
5. "Red pedagogy *is a project that interrogates both democracy and indigenous sovereignty…"* (p. 201).
6. "Red pedagogy *actively cultivates praxis of collective agency*" (p. 201).
7. "Red Pedagogy *is grounded in hope*" (p. 201).

Grande's Red Pedagogy is ultimately about engaging the inherent power of community and sustaining that power to build hopeful futures for colonized peoples.

Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model

"Ultimately, this resurgent approach to decolonizing oneself and systems builds on the time-tested values of our history in efforts to create a postcolonial future" (Pewewardy, 2022, p. 3).

The Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model (TIPM), developed by Pewewardy and colleagues (2022) is a framework designed to decolonize and transform educational practices to better serve Indigenous students. TIPM emphasizes the importance of integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, cultural values, and community practices into the educational process. The TIPM model consists of four dimensions

- Dimension 1: Contributions Approach
- Dimension 2: Additive Approach
- Dimension 3: Transformation Approach
- Dimension 4: Cultural and Social Justice Action

This model advocates for the active involvement of Indigenous communities in the development and implementation of educational policies and curricula, ensuring that education is culturally relevant and responsive to the needs of Indigenous learners. TIPM also focuses on the

empowerment of Indigenous students by fostering critical consciousness, promoting self-determination, and challenging the systemic inequalities and colonial legacies present in mainstream education.

Culturally Sustaining Revitalizing Pedagogies

Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy (CSRP) (Paris & Alim, 2017) developed by scholars: Tiffany S. Lee, Teresa L. McCarty, Django Paris, and Samy Alim, aims to sustain and revitalize Indigenous and historically marginalized languages and cultures through education. CSRP builds on the concept of culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy by not only acknowledging and incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into the learning process but also actively supporting the maintenance and growth of those cultures and languages. This pedagogical approach seeks to resist the assimilationist tendencies of traditional education systems and instead promote educational practices that affirm and sustain the cultural and linguistic identities of students (McCarty & Lee, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2017). It emphasizes the importance of community involvement, the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, and the critical examination of power structures within educational contexts to foster equity and social justice (Paris, 2012).

Liberating Sovereign Potential

Liberating Sovereign Potential developed by Red Corn (2020), aims to empower educational leaders within Native nations to reclaim and enhance educational sovereignty. The Liberating Sovereign Potential model encourages leaders to adopt a broad systems-thinking approach centering cultural and governance systems unique to their Tribal Nations. The framework calls for iterative processes of assessing educational landscapes, fostering professional growth, and advocating for system development and alignment. Leaders are

encouraged to incorporate Indigenous education frameworks and philosophies to cultivate a community of practice that nurtures ongoing learning and connectivity among professionals. Leaders are asked to consider the following layers all while recentering Native nations culture and governance systems and creating a healthy community of practice across all respective learnings systems:

- Assess the landscape and identify community assets that already exist within the community,
- Foster professional growth to enhance teaching and leadership skill sets found across the community's educational systems, and
- Engage in ongoing systems development and alignment.

This approach is designed to shift educational systems away from assimilationist practices toward those that honor and integrate Indigenous cultural and governance values, thereby fostering an environment Indigenous students can thrive in a manner aligned with their heritage and sovereignty (Red Corn, 2020). While seemingly relevant to this project, this model's emphasis on sovereignty of Native Nations does not align as well with an urban Intertribal context.

Survivance Storywork

Gerald Vizenor named Survivance.

Before,

she wandered

nameless through time

and bore every burden WE, her people, had.

She took our pain and fear

and spun it,

wove it,

sung it,

sewed it,

beaded it,

shaped it,

danced it,

wrote it,

into laughter, into joy.

Time marched on

she learned her name

And the people learned her name

and she grew stronger.

Survivance storywork combines Vizenor's (1994) concept of survivance, Indigenous persistence through humor and ironic engagement, and structures of settler colonialism with Archibald's (2008) storywork methodology to research and write back with our own stories in order to navigate, infiltrate, and ultimately dominate systems meant for our control. Archibald (2008) shares the importance and foundational component of storywork, sharing: "Sharing what one has learned is an important Indigenous tradition. This type of sharing can take the form of a story of personal life experience and is done with a compassionate mind and love for others" (p. 2). Storytelling, according to Archibald, is our "eye of understanding" and was lost through colonization, assimilation, residential, and public schooling. (p. 13) Storywork's seven principles

are the framework of Archibald's method: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy (p. ix) These are explained further in the next chapter.

Archibald and Vizenor have laid a path to follow and McCoy (2024) has extended a call for this work:

> My hope is that the stories…invite the telling of other stories as we continue to gather these archives together. In witnessing these robust and ongoing histories of Indigenous strategy, I hope we see their survivance as a constant in the history of Indigenous engagement with settler schooling. (p. 146)

McCoy (2024) calls it an "archive or survivance" and Smith (2012) challenges Indigenous scholars to go even further and develop our own theories in order to "give us space to plan, to strategize, to take greater control of our resistance" (p. 40). This is discussed from a methodological perspective in Chapter 3. Moving forward, this notion of *survivance storywork* is a central focus in this research as I work to create an *archive of survivance* in an urban intertribal community.

Chapter 3 - Methods

Introduction

Stories have always been my chosen medium of joy, resistance, information, explanation, and collaboration. McCoy (2024) declares,

> "stories connect us to each other, to our shared pasts, and to our dreams for the future. Like a portable archive that we carry with us in our minds and hearts, we seek out stories for guidance on questions we're not yet sure how to answer." (p. 3)

Stories are the foundation of this study. Through the stories and recollections of families and Indigenous community members, in an intertribal urban setting, I highlight experiences of engagement, collaboration, and cultural resilience. I focus on stories related to Johnson O'Malley and Title VI programming, often referred to as Native American Student Services (NASS).

This research study sought to collect new and relevant data, or stories, while engaging with Indigenous community members to analyze, highlight, and report on experiences of community and collaboration through storytelling. As mentioned in the previous chapter, I aimed to create an *archive of survivance*, or as McCoy explains:

> As we remember and share them, as the stories themselves remember, build, and prophesy worlds, as they remind us of and link us to the people to whom we are accountable, they shape our decision making and become the foundation for our intuition. The stories we hear and share, often over and over again, form the values that shape who we are and how we move in the world." (p. 3)

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the survivance stories of American Indian parents, family members'[2], and community members' engagement with the Title VI and Johnson O'Malley (i.e., Indian Education) programs in Lawrence Public Schools. By focusing on these narratives, this study aims to deepen our understanding of urban Intertribal community and family engagement in a public-school setting, while highlighting how these families and community members *mobilize*, *navigate*, and build *sustainable actions* within Eurocentric educational systems. Through participants' stories, this allows us to deepen our understanding of how Intertribal community and family engagement contributes to the creation of an *archive of* survivance (McCoy, 2024).

Research Question 1: How do the community and family engagement stories from participants illustrate *mobilization* within the context of the Indian education programs?

Research Question 2: How do the community and family engagement stories from participants illustrate navigation of educational systems in the context of the Indian education programs?

Research Question 3: How do the community and family engagement stories from participants illustrate *sustainable action* within the context of the Indian education programs?

Indigenous Research Methods

As described previously, Tuhiwai Smith (2012) describes the word research as "probably

[2] When referring to *parents/families* in the context of school engagement, this term is intended to be inclusive of all caregivers, recognizing that children may be raised by various family members, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, or other extended family members. In many communities, especially Indigenous communities with intergenerational households, family structures may differ from the traditional nuclear family model, and a broader definition acknowledges these diverse caregiving roles.

one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary" (p. 1). According to Smith,

> There are a number of ethical, cultural, political and personal issues that can present special difficulties for Indigenous researchers who, in their own communities, work partially as insiders, and are often employed for this purpose, and partially as outsiders, because of their Western education or because they may work across clan, tribe, linguistic, age, and gender boundaries. (p. 5).

Smith goes on to say, "…indigenous research is a humble and humbling activity" (p. 5). This humility in research approach further solidifies the sincerity of practice, as described in Tracy's (2010) Big Tent criteria for quality in qualitative research.

Indigenous research methodologies encompass a diverse range of approaches grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems and perspectives. Doing research *with* communities, not *on* communities. Smith's work emphasizes the importance of decolonization, community engagement, and ethical considerations within Indigenous research practices. Indigenous research methodologies prioritize decolonization by challenging colonial legacies, power dynamics, and research practices that perpetuate marginalization (Smith, 2012).

Indigenous Knowledge Systems center Indigenous ways of knowing, including oral traditions, cultural practices, and holistic worldviews. Community Engaged Scholarship and Collaboration with Indigenous communities is fundamental, ensuring that research processes are respectful, reciprocal, and beneficial to the community (Smith, 2012). Shawnee Chief Ben Barnes (2022) calls back to what Métis Canadian Indigenous studies scholar Adam Gaudry describes as *insurgent research* - applying this concept to Community Engaged Scholarship, research based in Indigenous communities and Indigenous knowledge, both of which are relational at the core.

Bringing your work home is a concept Smith (2012) spoke of in her introduction to *Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education: Mapping the Long View.* Smith described the plight of Indigenous scholars leaving academia with the hopes of doing work in their own communities. Smith states that bringing one's work home involves several elements, for starters bringing oneself home. I am home. Despite never physically leaving my urban Intertribal community, the portal of academia changed me and returned after coursework, research, and with each slam of my laptop. I am a different person. Ethical considerations are deeply, purposefully, and naturally connected into Indigenous research methodologies. Smith (2019) poses questions for returning home:

- How do you want your work to speak?
- Who do you want your work to speak to?

These questions guide my research and writing. Indigenous research methodologies uphold ethical frameworks rooted in respect, cultural sensitivity, and the rights of Indigenous peoples. These methodologies embrace diverse research methods that align with Indigenous epistemologies, such as participatory action research, storytelling, and community-based approaches. By integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, decolonizing research practices, and prioritizing community involvement, Indigenous research methodologies contribute to more equitable, inclusive, and culturally relevant research outcomes within Indigenous contexts.

Overview of Arts-Based Narrative Inquiry: Indigenous Survivance Storywork

Arts-Based Research and Narrative Inquiry, reframed here as *Indigenous Survivance Storywork* are powerful methodologies that employ expressive qualities and center on storytelling. Barone and Eisner (2012) explain,

> Arts based research was—and is—an effort to utilize the forms of thinking and forms of representation that the arts provide as means through which the world can be better understood and through such understanding comes the enlargement of mind. (p. xi)

Simultaneously, narrative inquiry (Kim, 2016) focuses on the collection, analysis, and interpretation of stories or narratives shared by individuals or communities. It emphasizes the importance of personal and collective narratives in understanding experiences, perspectives, and meaning-making processes. Connelly & Clandinin (1990) echo the importance of stories and add collaboration between the researcher and participants in the storytelling and restorying process. In a very similar manner, I utilize Vizenor's survivance (1994; 2008) and Archibald's storywork (2008) to align better with my unique urban intertribal community contexts.

Indigenous storywork is deeply rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and survivance (Vizenor, 2008) storytelling practices, emphasizing cultural continuity, intergenerational learning, and community resilience (Sabzalian, 2019). Indigenous storywork highlights the resilience of Indigenous cultures and communities in preserving and sharing stories that reflect historical experiences, cultural values, and aspirations. This methodology prioritizes the transmission of cultural knowledge, language revitalization, and intergenerational learning through storytelling and narrative practices (Archibald, 2008).

Narrative Inquiry and Indigenous storywork are guided by ethical frameworks that respect Indigenous protocols, consent, and intellectual property rights. They prioritize collaborative and respectful research relationships with Indigenous communities and knowledge holders. Smith (2012) speaks to "'researching back' in the tradition of 'writing back' or 'talking back' …a knowing-ness of the colonizer' and a recovery of ourselves, an analysis of colonialism, and a struggle for self-determination" (p. 8). Narrative inquiry and arts-based methods reframed

as Indigenous storywork provide participants with the opportunity to “talk back” and the researcher to then “research and write back” to past harmful narratives.

Standards of Quality

In this study's context, standards of quality were considered, thereby holding the researcher accountable to the work and community. The seven principles of Archibald’s (2008) Indigenous storywork weave together to create an iterative process through cultural teachings.

1. Respect: emphasizes honoring the knowledge, culture, and experiences of Indigenous peoples.
2. Responsibility: being accountable to the community and to the knowledge shared within Indigenous contexts
3. Reciprocity: fostering a mutual exchange between the researcher and the community.
4. Reverence: holding a deep respect for the spiritual and cultural dimensions of Indigenous knowledge.
5. Holism: a comprehensive approach that addresses the intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects of learning and knowledge-sharing.
6. Interrelatedness: the recognition that all aspects of life—people, animals, land, and the cosmos—are interconnected
7. Synergy: the positive energy and strength that arises when people and ideas come together in a collaborative way.

Archibald (2008) explains the importance of these principles in relation to knowledge acquisition and learning:

> According to these teachings, important knowledge and wisdom contain power. If one comes to understand and appreciate the power of a particular knowledge, then one must be ready to share and teach it respectfully and responsibly to others in order for this knowledge, and its power, to continue. (p. 3)

Archibald (2008) gathered these principles from cultural knowledge and teachings of elders, with the desire to "demonstrate that Indigenous knowledge systems could be investigated from and Indigenous perspective with rigor acceptable to the academy" (p. 5). While Archibald's (2008) principles play a central role in this work, Tracy's (2010) "Big Tent" approach to qualitative research is also relevant.

Tracy articulates eight specific quality criteria that aim to encompass diverse qualitative research methodologies and paradigms:

1. Worthy Topic
2. Rich Rigor
3. Sincerity
4. Credibility
5. Resonance
6. Significance
7. Ethicality
8. Meaningful coherence

As Tracy (2010) explains, "A parsimonious framework for qualitative quality can help us communicate value for our work to a variety of audiences" (p. 2). Variety of audience is also paramount in determining the intent and quality of study, as Kim (2016) reminds researchers, "anticipating the broader audience of your work" beyond the smaller, more critical scholarly

audience can provide much needed motivation for the narrative inquiry/arts-based researcher (p. 254). Tracy's "big tent" approach, when applied to this study, provides not only a measure of quality but a level of accountability for present and future research.

Tracy describes the worthiness of the topic as "Research that is counterintuitive, questions taken-for-granted assumptions, or challenges well-accepted ideas is often worthwhile" (p. 4). Although research in and about Indigenous communities, especially in regard to education, is nothing new, the worthiness of this study lies in the community engaged scholarship and Indigenous methodologies employed. Furthermore, little research exists on this important aspect of Indigenous education in the United States. Research regarding Indigenous students and families in public school is minimal despite the fact that 93% of American Indian/Alaskan Native students attend public schools (NCES, 2021). Rich rigor is demonstrated by a depth of narrative approach to gathering information, narrative inquiry, and Indigenous storywork methodology for gathering stories from participants. Sincerity is achieved by my transparency with participants, in my subjectivity statement, and the inclusion of my research journal entries in the data which document the process and any challenges or successes along the way. As you will see, because I am a member of the community, I blend in my own perspectives to increase transparency but also add depth to the story.

Perhaps the most telling characteristics of sincerity, according to Tracy (2010), are empathy, kindness, self-awareness, and self-deprecation (p. 6). This very attitude of humility, leaning toward self-deprecation is commonly acknowledged when Indigenous community members, like myself position themselves to speak. When not yet considered an elder, this admittance of place in the greater hierarchy of things is paramount in our communities and a key factor in quality, according to Tracy. Credibility is achieved by "demonstrating the

trustworthiness and believability of the research findings through various means such as crystallization, member checking, and thick descriptions" (Tracy, 2010, p. 7). Thick descriptions, showing the reader-not telling, are provided through the storywork narrative framework. Originality is achieved by the contribution of new insights, perspectives, and interpretations to the existing body of knowledge in the field. Ensuring that the research findings resonate with participants' experiences, perspectives, and contexts, and reflecting authenticity and depth in data interpretation also guarantee resonance. Significance in this study is evidenced by the gaps in the literature and the possibility of catalytic validity, encouraging participants to action.

Ethicality is demonstrated in the form of adhering to ethical principles and standards throughout the research process, including obtaining informed consent in a culturally sustaining manner, protecting participants' confidentiality, and the collaborative manner in which results were analyzed and shared. Above all else I am accountable to this community through constant reflection and discourse with participants. Finally, meaningful coherence was ensured through logical connections, consistency, and clarity in the research design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes, enhancing the overall coherence of the study (Tracy, 2010).

Research Site

The Intertribal community of Lawrence, Kansas's relationship with Lawrence Public Schools USD 497's Title VI Johnson-O'Malley (JOM) program, commonly referred to as the Native American Student Services program was examined and reflected on in this study. The USD 497 NASS program serves Indigenous students within the district, providing culturally relevant educational resources, support services, and opportunities. The demographic profile of the program reflects the diverse Indigenous student population within the district. The program caters to a substantial number of Indigenous students enrolled across various grade levels within

Lawrence Public Schools USD 497. Indigenous students from diverse tribal backgrounds are represented in the program. The program supports Indigenous students from elementary through high school, ensuring continuity of cultural support and resources throughout their educational journey. Cultural programming and activities within the Title VI/JOM program aim to foster cultural identity, pride, and awareness among Indigenous students. In addition to cultural enrichment, the program provides academic support services, tutoring, and resources tailored to meet the unique needs of Indigenous students. The program encourages active participation and engagement of Indigenous parents, families, and community members in supporting the educational success and well-being of Indigenous students since its beginning in 1972. The program aligns with broader district initiatives to support Indigenous students in achieving academic success, high school graduation, and pursuing post-secondary education or career pathways.

Participant Selection

The categories of individuals that were recruited for this study are parents/families and community members. They are defined as follows. Individuals fitting the following descriptions must also be tribal citizens and agree to review stories and narratives and/or artistic representations (i.e. Findings) collaboratively.

Parents/Families: With the unique, often intergenerational, composition of Indigenous families, parent/caregiver was extended to include families, which would encompass the extended family dynamic and provide clarity as well as respect and attribution for all those involved in the child rearing process. These individuals may or may not be directly involved in the grant mandated parent advisory committee, as many parents and families also get involved through public facing events and planning.

Community Members: Local and regional members or citizens of Tribal nations who attend, advocate, organize, and support local youth and initiatives created for their well-being. These members can include former parents/families with students who have completed their K-12 education, yet remain active in the community at educational, social and cultural events.

Purposeful Sample

Kim (2016), in summarizing the plight of qualitative researchers in identifying the magic number of participants, suggests an appropriate sample size could range from six to 12 participants, provided thematic redundancy is present after six interviews. Kim goes on to explain that in determining a sample, emphasis should be placed on the quality rather than the quantity of the interviews. An Indigenous scholar of Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux ancestry, enrolled member of Pasqua First Nation, Kovach wrote *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (2021). Kovach echoes Kim (2016) with an Indigenous lens on sampling with intention. Kovach writes, "... (Indigenous) researchers undertaking qualitative studies are advised to recruit based on what people can bring to the study, as opposed to doing random sampling" (p. 58). As Kovach (2021) explains, this study of my community "sought depth rather than breadth, and so a small sample group of six research participants was chosen" (p. 56) The six participants selected for this study (listed in Table 2) were informed by this approach, and with multiple rounds of member checking provided adequate data without overburdening the Storyteller participants.

Approaching my community with reverence and respect, I was provided the opportunity to present my research purpose and questions to the Native American Student Services Indian Parent Committee during our monthly meeting. Parents, along with children and JOM staff were

in attendance as well as parents and community members attending online. I reiterated the time commitment, my flexibility in meeting whenever their schedule permitted, and the opportunity for participants to withdraw at any time during the process if they wished. I was overwhelmed by the encouragement and willingness to participate by Indian Parent Committee members. NASS staff also created a Facebook post sharing a synopsis of the research and provided my contact information for those interested in participating. I also reached out through existing relationships to identify possible participants, mainly inquiring with the families of my Intertribal Club members. These existing relationships and access to the parent committee are described in greater detail in the next section as I explore the impact of my role in the community on the research.

Membership Role in Community and Inside-Outsider Dynamics

As a novice researcher in a community, I have called home for decades, I needed to examine my research goals thoroughly and regularly and collaborate closely with my participants to maintain both my roles as researcher and community member. I have many roles in this community, which include citizen, parent, board member, librarian, teacher, colleague, and friend. My goal is not only to sustain these roles and relationships but strengthen them through community engaged scholarship.

Table 2. *Storytellers*

Storyteller	Role in Community
Cherie	Current parent committee member, former student
Tommy	Current parent committee member, educator former program director
Joy	Community member, former parent committee member, cultural educator
Darcie	Current parent committee member

Louise	Current parent committee member, former student
Eric	Community member, former parent committee member

As Smith (2019) describes:

> An Indigenous researcher needs to know so much more than that. It comes back to how you position yourself, how you understand yourself, your intentions and capacity to work in a good way, your skills at negotiating complexity and your ability to work in relation with community, with land and water, with a wider sense of the world. (p. 13)

My intentions were to collaborate with my participants to collect the stories of community, engagement, and cultural resilience in relation to the Native American Student Services program stewarded by Lawrence Public Schools. The Storytellers pseudonyms are Indigenous storytellers and authors (more details on this in the next chapter). As these stories were gathered it is my hope that the stories serve as reminders and calls to action for the building of Indigenous futures in our community. Stories can heal, inform, guide, and build or as McCoy (2024) powerfully states: "how we tell stories from our shared past shapes the futures available to us" (p. 2).

Additionally, as you will see in the following chapter, I have included personal reflections and anecdotes through the lens of visiting with my grandparents. I have done this to use my unique insider-outsider positionality to deepen the story, while also allowing for some transparency and an arts-based storywork aesthetic.

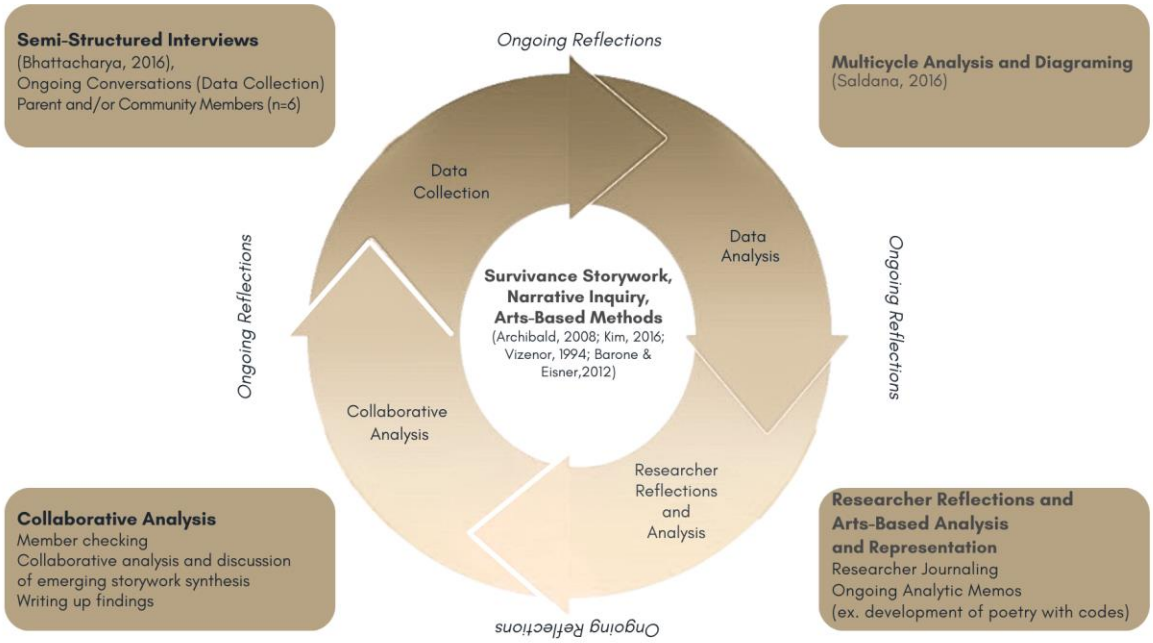
Data Collection

Data collection consisted of multiple semi-structured and informal conversation style interviews (Bhattacharya, 2017) over the course of four to six weeks. While three interviews were planned, since all are working parents, some being single parents, it was difficult to schedule times without overwhelming them or burning them out. Therefore, none of the

participants had a straightforward three rounds of interviews. Instead, with each I had one to two longer in-depth interviews, sometime with breaks in between, varying between 90 and 180 minutes total, along with follow up phone calls and texts throughout. In other words, considering I have existing relationships with these participants it was more like a sustained and ongoing conversation over four to six weeks, with continued conversation through the member-checking process when they reviewed and commented on my findings. While I explain the data analysis and representation in more detail below, Figure 1 shows how this was an iterative and cyclical process.

Figure 2

Data Collection and Analysis



Semi-structured interviews were conducted with community members to elicit their perspectives, experiences, and insights regarding various aspects of their cultural identity, challenges, and aspirations (Bhattacharya, 2017). Informal interviews occurred when more structured interviews seemed to be making the participants uncomfortable in any way. Regardless, these interviews were designed to allow flexibility in questioning while ensuring key topics related to the research objectives were explored in-depth.

These methodologies were held together through the artform of storytelling. Wilson (2008) speaks of moving through Indigenous data collection methodology with a reference for the process as a ceremony:

> Sometimes when you are doing research, you don't want to come with a set of questions. Especially to an Elder. So, you enter into a conversation. And hopefully they will let you use a tape machine or allow you to take notes. (p. 111).

I incorporated Archibald's storywork methodology with an emphasis on listening and collaborating with Storytellers in data collection. Research journaling and participant debriefing were used to provide accountability and reflection before, during, and after the research process was complete (Bhattacharya, 2017). Archibald's (2008) storywork methodology was used as a framework and reference in developing the overarching research questions and interview questions, the intent and focus was to develop questions that embodied seven principles of storywork: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy. (p. ix).

Data Management

The data collection process and analysis operated in cyclical fashion, see Figure 1, starting with list of participants, semi-structured conversation and storywork methods, cultural celebration exploration, participant analysis, follow-up conversations and closing with more collaborative analysis. The analysis was heuristic in nature with the intent to discover the learning – not to be given answers but to be taken to a place where understanding occurs.

Data Analysis and Representation

In *The Fundamentals of Qualitative Research*, Saldaña (2011) explains while connecting to his previous work:

> Qualitative research has evolved into a multidisciplinary enterprise, ranging from social science to art form. Yet many instructors of research methods vary in their allegiances, preferences, and prescriptions for how to conduct fieldwork and how to write about it. I myself take a pragmatic stance toward human inquiry and leave myself open to choosing the right tool for the right job. Sometimes a poem says it best; sometimes a data matrix does. Sometimes words say it best; sometimes numbers do. The more well versed

you are in the field's eclectic methods of investigation, the better your ability to understand the diverse patterns and complex meanings of social life. (pp. 177–178).

Saldaña also describes the practice of code "adding to the research story" (p. 103) and not diminishing it, which is what I was fearful of doing in my practice. My coding approach was flexible depending on what stories I heard from participants. Examples of how I approached data analysis are provided below.

Utilizing Saldaña's (2016) Coding *Manual for Qualitative Researchers* as a guide and sacred tome, I began with the coding strategy of Holistic Coding. Saldaña channels Dey's description of holistic coding as an attempt "to grasp basic themes or issues in the data by absorbing them as a whole rather than by analyzing them line by line" (Dey, 1993, p. 104). The method is a preparatory approach to a unit of data before a more detailed coding or categorization process through first or second cycle methods. For each storyteller's session, interviews were recorded and transcribed. Notes, analytic memos, and reflections after the sessions were included in the margins of the transcripts, as is expected in qualitative research (Bhattacharya, 2017; Saldaña, 2016). Initially the transcripts were imported into the NVivo software but my desire to work in the data so as not to miss a moment outweighed the convenience of the program, I proceeded to create word documents and employ in vivo coding methods manually, as well. It was here that words and phrases started to resonate and repeat. A rhythm or cadence, a note of laughter, a change of tone, the poetry was present and clear with each listen of the interviews. For example, the following outline of codes and categories were representative of the eventual theme: "What We Carry: Narratives of Community Mobilization".

Early Exposure

- "I became familiar with the program as a child…"

- “Well, I knew about them (Title VI/JOM) from when I lived in Wisconsin, the Ho Chunks were in on it because all of a sudden, I had new basketball shoes.”
- “My mom worked for Native American Student Services as a Title VI tutor.”

Called in to Community

- “And then I started getting invited in to do different things with the (Indian Education) program as a community member, like teaching dance classes, teaching beading classes… and so I volunteered my time before I had kids. I think I would have stayed involved no matter what.”
- “I definitely think that something needs to happen with getting the parents there. Just reaching out. Maybe even personally like, give me a damn call list. I’ll call them.”
- “I'll say, my first real understanding that Lawrence title six when the former director invited us to a meeting and I was just like, ‘oh, crap, we actually have a meeting? Like, let's go!’”

Balance

- “...when I find a balance of work and life then I can see myself doing everything I can.”
- “I’m still a community member, I still go to the parent meetings, that type of stuff, but then just try to be involved in the community events. So that's always a fun balance, but I definitely to try to make time to be in the community wherever that may be.”

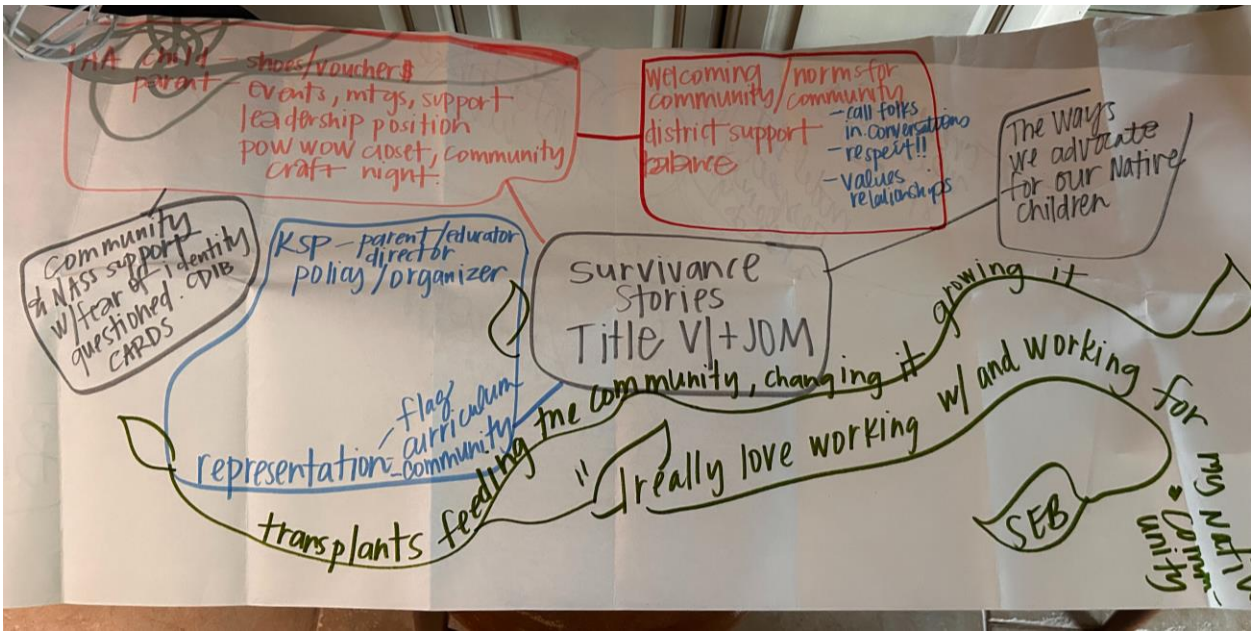
- “Well, I like how they have the Zoom if you can’t make it in person, to keep them informed and if you can’t make it, you can’t make it…”.

After developing coding structures such as these, they became the foundation for beginning to restory participants experiences, but this continued to evolve with subsequent layers of analysis, such as pattern coding concept mapping.

Pattern Coding, which Saldaña (2016) classifies as a second cycle method, is a way of grouping these summaries into a smaller number of condensed categories, themes, or concepts. Grouping initial codes into more meaningful units, proved invaluable for uncovering themes, trends, and relationships within the extensive qualitative data (Saldaña, 2016). By applying this method to the data, I was able to discern recurring stories and overlapping experiences. Saldaña's technique facilitates a deep analysis of how educational strategies and outcomes have transformed, highlighting significant developments and persistent challenges. Through pattern coding and diagramming (Bhattachayra, 2017; Saldaña, 2016), I mapped the complex landscape of parent and community engagement in Indian Education and K-12 public schooling in Lawrence, Kansas and its impact on various stakeholders - often times mapping, spreading out rolls of my son’s easel paper to literally draw the connections and illustrate the patterns I was recognizing (see Figure 3)

Figure 3

Mind Map of Emerging Patterns



Additionally, thematic coding involves identifying and interpreting patterns or themes within the data, enabling researchers to construct a comprehensive narrative or understanding of the core topics being studied, and is useful for synthesizing large volumes of qualitative data (Saldaña, 2016). In arts-based narrative research, thematic coding can be utilized to identify patterns that emerge in mood, tone, and feeling and to create artistic representations of these emerging patterns.

Saldaña (2016) also emphasizes the benefits of keeping analytic memos or journals during the coding process. Analytic memo writing documents reflections on coding processes and code choices; how the process of inquiry is taking shape; and the emergent patterns, categories and subcategories, themes, and concepts in the data—all possibly leading. I found this process to be the most rewarding, especially immediately after the conversations with

Storytellers. I was able to reflect, create questions for future exploration, or simply start to craft the artistic representations of the Storyteller's words.

Once all coding cycles were complete, rich and thick narratives of my community's stories, our own *survivance archive,* remained. Smith (2012) predicted the work, preparation, growth, and cycles of emotional turmoil I've gone through to get to this point:

> There is certainly a history of research of indigenous peoples which continues to make indigenous students who encounter this history very angry. Sometimes they react by deciding never to do any research; but then they go out into the community…They are referred to as project workers, community activists, or consultants, anything but 'researchers'. (p.17)

Saldaña (2021) guided me through my critiques of coding. According to Saldaña, "Coding is neither a philosophy nor a way of viewing the world; it is simply a heuristic for achieving some sense of clarity about the world from your data and your deep reflections on them" (p. 23). I can find the patterns, the beauty, and the poetry in words of my community. I believe that I have done these things in a way that honors the people and places I call home without fear, guilt, or trepidation.

Data Representation

A quote that continues to resonate with me when I consider research in my community is: "If knowledge is formed in a relationship, it can't be owned" (Wilson, 2008, p. 114). After the data were analyzed I took the stories and crafted narrative through an arts-based approach. These stories highlight community, collaboration, and cultural resiliency, which may take the form of poetry, short story, or oratory performance. Furthermore, Kim (2016) suggests that through the data analysis transition to narrative representation, there is a process of narrative smoothing that

occurs to reach an aesthetic. In addition to narrative smoothing, Kim calls for the presence of coda in closing research, much like the musical coda, or finale, or rather, "research that reverberates in the mind long after the story is over" (p. 229); research with a "signature" that justifies the importance of the work (p. 230); research that reaches our audience and invites them to contribute to the conversation; research that "plants the seeds of social justice" (p. 237) and lastly research that sets the researcher apart as a Storyteller. To this aim, in the findings section (Chapter 4) I utilize a variety of aesthetic, arts based storytelling techniques, and forms of poetry, such as free verse, two-voice, acrostic and found poetry, utilizing quotes from the Storyteller's transcripts. Additionally, to work with the poetic aesthetic, I also veer from typical APA recommendations for formatting images, as well. Barone and Eisner (2012), reiterate the power of representation through poetry, shaping language to convey meaning:

> This absence of operationalism in poetry and in literature has never been a condemnation of their uses in sharing meanings and in providing powerful insights in the world. The form has to shape the meaning as much as the meaning of a statement must be formed so that it fits the circumstance (p. 163).

Therefore, in the following chapter you will see how I channel storywork and arts-based methodology, as I hope to provide an aesthetic that was accessible, but simultaneously representative of the storytellers lived experiences.

Indigenous Humor

If humor is absent from a research session, then one could question the validity of the information shared… (Archibald, 2008, p. 68).

Laughter and the presence of humor during the research process is imperative to research in, by, and for Indigenous peoples and communities. Archibald (2008), author of *Indigenous*

Storywork, naming humor as a measure of validity not only articulates humor's place in Indigenous methodology but provides an accessible and inclusive means for participants, researchers, and readers to engage in the evaluative process. Vizenor (1994) warns of all that is lost in the "hegemony of histories" (p. 83) when Indigenous people are reduced to stoic caricatures in the" ruins of representation" (p. 12). Vizenor (1994) surmises that "the resistance to tribal humor" is a way to conserve the tragic as a common theme in our people's assumed dominance and elimination (p. 83). Humor then becomes a necessary attribute to relay the reality of Indigenous resistance and survivance.

> Laughter over that comic touch in tribal stories would not steal the breath of destitute children; rather, children would be healed with humor, and manifest manners would be undermined at the same time (Vizenor, 1994, p. 83).

Humor as validity, quality measure, and credibility. Humor as a gateway to understanding and a pathway to knowledge sharing. Archibald (2008) promises, "Those who hear and appreciate the humor are given hope for healing if they need it" (p. 68). Kongerslev (2020) invokes Vine Deloria's *Custer Died for You Sins* (1969), to illustrate humor as community building, "because humor heals, offers empowerment, and unites" (p. 265) Many tribal nations exist in the United States with their own stories of humor and comedic resistance but there are also the jokes, punchlines, and anecdotal stories that connect and unify us across nations. Indigenous humor and Indigenous storytelling work in concert to provide clarity, to teach a lesson, to admonish, to ground, and to bring joy.

Ethics

Indigenous research methodology is inherently ethical with checks and balances to acknowledge and honor the humanity of all participants. On ethics in Indigenous research

methodology, Smith (2012) argues that the most ethical practice is reflexivity, the constant and critical practice of examining critically the researcher's own analysis of their processes (p. 138). Smith also reminds the insider/outsider researcher like myself, of the energy, commitment, and protocols of respect that are required to conduct ethical research. This is a reminder of the heavy burdens of duty already being carried on by these community members, many raising families and working on surviving. To be ethical, research need not add to these burdens but be tempered by realistic assessment of the community's resources and the participants personal responsibilities (p. 141)

With this in mind, all of this work was reviewed by Kansas State University's Human Subjects process to ensure high quality ethical protocols, while also keeping Indigenous community research ethics as a high priority. Additionally, while it is not possible to keep the unique urban intertribal identity of Lawrence Kansas un-identifiable, Indian education programs in this area have enough participation and diversity of people who have been connected to these contexts, that it is reasonable to keep their specific identities hidden through the use of pseudonyms. Additionally, arts-based approaches and narrative smoothing allowed me the opportunity to modify particular details to ensure participant identities remain unknown, even if the community is identifiable.

Summary

Chief Ben Barnes (2022) considers community engaged scholarship as a necessary tool to continue the growth of Indigenous peoples, he writes: For Indigenous people and our communities to continue to thrive, both culturally and politically, we must nourish our roots (p. 63). This research aims to nourish the roots of my urban Intertribal community, to feed, water, and nurture with stories of the past to speak hope for the future - stories of community, cultural

resilience, and collaboration in the face of colonial powers who for centuries have silenced our voices, who want us to forget. Through scholarship and relationship building, this research hopes to remember and, in the remembering, see for our community a joyous future.

Chapter 4-Findings

You tell stories because they keep you alive. Stories keep alive the hopes, aspirations, and dreams of the tribe, just as they did in the old days. What is so unusual about that?

Gus Palmer, 2003

I miss my grandma and grandpa

Every day.

I want to tell them about what I am doing.

Tell them stories about my students,

how they-

rip it,

how they-

make me laugh.

I want to ask them to pray for them,

for me.

These last chapters are a conversation with them,

stories for them,

poems,

prayers,

and updates.

I'm sitting at the family table, and as I scroll through the photos of my memory, I realize a descriptor intended for poetry, for drama, for good storytelling, is actually true: My grandpa's chair at the head of the table always faced east. Facing east to greet the sun which he always promised would rise no matter the adversity our family faced, facing East to fellowship with the

creator upon his return. Grandma by his side or up at the counter or lounging close in the living room hollering at us to' talk louder' so she could hear. The table is set with a seasonal cloth under a plastic covering. There are wandering grains of salt that season my forearms. The table is large and there is plenty of room for you.

Sit.

Listen.

"Tiger," he says, "How's school?"

I realize now my grandpa often asked me how school was, not work.

For most of my life I have been doing both.

"My school or work school?" I would ask.

As he gently splits open a sleeve of saltine crackers with both hands, he gestures to the bag with my laptop which I carry everywhere now: "Tutters, says you're doing research."

I am doing research. I'm collecting stories.[3]	The purpose of this study is to explore
Stories about Native families in Lawrence	the survivance stories of American Indian family and community members'
and how they work together with the district's	engagement with the Title Vi and
NDN Ed program to not just survive the	Johnson O' Malley programs in Lawrence
Whiteness of schools but to thrive	Public Schools.
while building community	

[3] This is the beginning line of a two-voice poem. Written in parallel columns the poem is intended to be read by two voices. If the lines match up the voices are reading at the same time. This poem is intended to illustrate how I would articulate my research purpose in questions conversationally, while the voice of academia continues to run through my mind it is secondary to the conversational tone I would use with my family.

and growing strong families.

I hope these stories will help schools and folks in education understand the strength of our families and in turn
remind our families in Intertribal communities of their strength and how we can keep going for our children.
Within and without this system.

By focusing on these narratives, this study aims to deepen our understanding of urban intertribal community and family engagement while in a public school setting, while highlighting how these families and community members mobilize, navigate, and build sustainable actions within Eurocentric educational systems.

Collecting stories is what I'm doing but research sounds hoss, doesn't it? "Putting on the dog" as grandpa would say for the academics, but what I am doing is what we have always done. So here I go…

As I went back through the stories, I was looking for three things: 1) mobilization, 2) navigation, and 3) building sustainable action, which you will find have been themed around *What We Carry* (Mobilization, RQ 1), *What We Keep* (navigations, RQ 2), and *What We Create* (building sustainable action, RQ 3). Here I offer the archive of survivance from my participant Storytellers through the lens of sharing these stories with my late grandparents. This allows me to incorporate some of my own reflective thoughts and stories (such as those above) for reflective transparency. But also, I'm part of this community, and while my thoughts aren't the focus of this study, they're inherently attached to the stories my community has entrusted me with, so I offer them to help deepen the narrative and simultaneously offer my subjectivities for

the reader to include in their interpretations while also staying true to the narrative storywork aesthetic. I start here with a poetic introduction of my participant Storytellers.

Meet the Storytellers

No pan-Indianism,

not a monolith,

not the same,

not so different.

In-ter-tribal

Transplants

Aunties and Uncles,

Mothers and Fathers,

Uprooted

by force,

by family,

by choice

and by circumstance.

How did y'all get here?

How did we get here*?*

These Storytellers gave their time, hopes, fears, joys, and memories to my exploratory study and engaged in conversations and storytelling about their experiences with the Title VI and Johnson O'Malley, Indian Education programs. This section introduces the primary voices whose stories, experiences, and insights form the foundation of this chapter. Named for Indigenous Storytellers Cherie Dimaline (Metis Nation of Ontario), Tommy Orange (Cheyenne

& Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma), Joy Harjo (Muscogee Nation), Darcie Little Badger (Lipan Apache), and Eric Gansworth (Onondaga), these local raconteurs honor us by sharing their stories. Each interviewee brings a unique perspective shaped by their history, roles within the community, and personal experiences with the Native American Student Services (NASS) program and the broader educational landscape in Lawrence, Kansas.

Cherie

Cherie grew up in Lawrence and attended Lawrence Public Schools. Cherie has three children of her own, two of whom are school-aged. She is also auntie to nieces and nephews in Lawrence and across Indian Country. Cherie was my first interview and of all the participants, she is the individual I have known the longest. Cherie, like me, is a product of Lawrence Public Schools. Cherie was born and raised in the intertribal community of Lawrence, Kansas. Like me, Cherie is an east-side of Lawrence kid, raised in the ever-growing community's original neighborhoods with streets and sidewalks made of brick and cobble stone, old growth trees, horse hitches, underground railroad sites, murals, and the beauty, and badge of honor, that comes with living on "that" side of town. Cheri comes from a large extended family who also has a history of working at Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU). Cherie's initial involvement in NASS, the earliest she could remember, was as a child. Her mother, a parent committee member in the 1980s, attended meetings and took advantage of the voucher program for school shoes and athletic fees. Cherie's initial encounters were transactional- money for shoes, activities. Money to navigate the financial needs of raising children. Advocacy was limited in those days, Cherie only heard about the Native American club when "they gathered the Native American students" to talk about college. It was the last day of school; it was her senior year.

Tommy

Tommy and his wife are educators and are raising four school-aged children in Lawrence's intertribal community. He's a returning Lawrence transplant who voyaged south from his original home in the northern plains to play basketball at Haskell Indian Nations University, an experience that Tommy described as "amazing" due to the community he was able to experience across tribal nations. A born educator and leader who has given his time to serving Indigenous families in the public education sector for close to a decade, Tommy's advocacy often begins in his own child's classroom. Tommy shared stories of his own journey through understanding the importance of engagement in the Title VI and JOM programs as a parent, educator, and program leader. Tommy's stories were woven together with his dreams of Indigenous curriculum reform, relationship building across tribal nations and school districts administrators and building community through "showing up for one another", as well as calling non-Native educators to participate in Lawrence's Intertribal community events to learn and build lasting relationships. Tommy and his wife are both Haskell alums who maintain strong ties to the school. In addition to their work in the Intertribal community, the family spends their time supporting, mentoring, and engaging with Haskell student-athletes.

Joy

Joy is a longtime Lawrence resident who relocated from Oklahoma with her husband in the late 1980s for a job opportunity at Haskell Indian Nations University. A mental health professional by trade and cultural educator by calling, Joy and her husband, also an educator, began their family in Lawrence, raising two children while caring for and mentoring countless Indigenous youth in their respective professions. Despite Joy's children growing up and out of the NASS program, Joy continues to contribute to the NASS community. Joy could be your

auntie, probably *should* be your auntie; you could use the guidance and the endless supply of relatable and aggressively specific Instagram reels to both convict and crack you up. We need aunties, especially in Intertribal communities, to ground us in who we are and humble us when we start acting *someways*[4]. Joy entered the community in the late 1980s and, despite having no children at the time, immediately began contributing to the Intertribal youth of Lawrence through teaching pow-wow dance and beading classes.

Darcie

Darcie is a returning transplant community member who originally came to Lawrence in 2013 with her husband and then-infant daughter, in order to attend HINU. Soft spoken but fearless, Darcie's initial move to Lawrence was a leap of faith and an exercise in trust. Knowing few folks upon her initial arrival, Haskell and the surrounding intertribal community welcomed them with open arms. Darcie credits the intertribal community and support at Haskell for their most recent return: "...(E)very year (since we left) we would say, we gotta go back. We miss it." Darcie is a new and enthusiastic parent committee member with brilliant ideas of how to strengthen the NASS program. Darcie and her husband have three children attending Lawrence Public Schools.

Louise

Louise is a born and raised resident of Lawrence, by way of parents who fell in love in South Dakota. Louise offers a deep historical perspective on the intertribal community and the NASS program. Her family's long history in Lawrence, beginning with her parents' move to the area for employment opportunities at Haskell, provides valuable context for understanding the

[4] Non-Native readers see: big-headed, arrogant, cocksure. Some ways can also mean stuck-up, backwards, it's a catch all, catch most, catch these hands adjective.

community's evolution. A former NASS student, Louise has been a consistently involved parent for years. Louise extends her community involvement to her child's intertribal club regularly providing snacks, contributing to potlucks, and braving the middle school landscape as a field trip chaperone.

Eric

Native humor should be experienced by every human being at some point in their lives or else, I would argue, they have not experienced joy in its purest form. Uncle Eric is the funniest person you know, or maybe, never met— a quick-witted wordsmith who will terrorize you and hype you up in the same breath. A longtime Lawrence transplant by way of Haskell Indian Nations University, HINU the invisible string. Haskell, NDN Country's own six degrees of Kevin Bacon, brought Eric to Lawrence, Kansas and this place has never been the same since. If the concept of community was human, it would take the form of Eric. He shows up with a smile and laugh to every event in our Indigenous community looking for ways to lend a hand. A father of four but an uncle to all, he shows up for our Native kids and embodies the village approach, quick to congratulate your child on the honor roll or lovingly chastise them for skipping school. Eric is another returning Lawrence transplant: "...I left, and I came back." Everyone's uncle and community hype-man, Eric has called Lawrence, Kansas, home for over two decades. In this time, he has raised three children through the public-school system and has begun the process again with his youngest child.

The Stories

Grandma, I read through the green folder of your poems and stories in preparation for this chapter. Do you remember the morning I made you breakfast, Eva came over and you read the whole folder to us? Eva who came to us from Big Sky Country, a sister I met at Haskell, who

you quickly made a granddaughter in the old way. I know you remember that morning, because I saw what you wrote about that day, it was special for us too. Some folks say, stuff like, 'I wish I would have known at the time' or 'I had no idea that was a special moment' but dang- they must be just goofy because- I knew that morning.

The sun shone brighter, the bacon was crisper, and ole Hank Williams Sr. on the kitchen stereo sang prettier than ever before. We laughed, smiled, and reminisced about places we had never been and people we had never met. "That ole time feeling" that Hank sings about was in the room with us. You opened your mouth to read and we were immediately there with you crawling out of your dorm window at Chilocco boarding school in the 50s, the place you called your second home. It's a starry Oklahoma night and we run the grounds just to meet and be held close, if only for a little while, by a nameless beau. You read another and our skin was damp with sweat, and we were sipping a cold bottle of Coke outside Dirty Shame.

Grams, I hope the stories that follow have the same impact on my readers. I hope they see themselves in the accounts and anecdotes. I have so many stories to share, but my professor told me that it 'helps streamline communication to the committee and the readers' if align my research questions in order to help structure and create themes and categories... So, the stories are broken up into three themes,

- *What We Carry: Narratives of Community Mobilization (Research Question 1), which highlights the participants expressed need for life balance, the presence of baggage, and the need for invitations into community to mobilize.*
- *What We Keep: Stories of Cultural Resilience through Navigation (Research Question 2), which highlights the cultures we come with, our intertribal status, and resiliency.*

- *What We Create: Stories of Sustainability (Research Question 3), -- a Sustainable future through the children, made stronger by participation in community.*

So, Grams, sometimes I am telling the story, and sometimes the Storytellers are spinning the yarn, and sometimes it's all of us weaving an archive of survivance together. Additionally, sometimes the Storytellers are generously offering their thoughts, fears, hopes, and dreams for the future which I have crafted into poems, prayers, or stories– or rather, gathered and compiled their thoughts and reassembled them. Regardless, every story is for you and Grandpa, every line, metaphor, simile, allegory, and alliteration. All the exposition, transitions, and resolutions are for you.

What We Carry: Narratives of Community Mobilization (Related to RQ1)

What We Carry

We carry everything in one trip

Baby on hip,
homemade poster board in hand,
it reads:
"Pow Wow Lending Closet"
tote bag overflowing with
hand
me
down
shawls,
ribbon,
and material that maternal hands
will turn to magic.

Figure 4

Burgess Tapedo and great grandchild Bo.

We carry our own upbringing

and the hopes and desires

of something better for our children.

“I feel like my daughters can be confident in the classroom,

the idea

or the hope

is to have them be just as confident or comfortable when they go outside of the

classroom

and be comfortable with who they are.

For me, that was definitely not the case.

I didn't grow up in a traditional home,

my dad never really mentioned

our culture

our language

or anything like that.

My dad just didn’t want to talk about it,

and he never had.

So I am,

trying

to change

the course of that

by bringing culture to the home,

freely talking about it …

the idea is that they're okay to talk about it in class."

We carry our families,

to pow wows,

to community dinners,

to program meetings,

to school,

and back home, again,

to the rez-

to the city-

to the dirt roads.

Weaving together pieces of each other along the way.

We carry each other.

"I think we've really benefited through the closeness of it,

the glue that it's become to really bind,

some families that wouldn't necessarily, even cross each other's paths…

in Lawrence

it brings a sense of community, social awareness, social perks,

which are, you know, pretty vital for a community like ours.

We are a different community, you know?

Go to Idabel, Oklahoma,

Choctaws.

Go to Carnegie, Oklahoma,

a lot of Kiowas, you know?

So yeah, there's native communities, but they're usually the same tribes,

same thinking,

tribal politics…

I think that's vital and really bringing people together-

and not just bringing them together,

giving them something

to fight together for

a sense of community here…"

Grams and Grandpa, I titled this section, What We Carry, to highlight the stories of participants that illustrated mobilization. The intentional action of organizing, encouraging, and carrying one another to take collective action in pursuit of a common goal. Everyone told stories of mobilization and What We Carry when we engage in community. The carrying was literal: children, tote bags, pow wow regalia, sewing machines, ribbon skirts, crock pots, and bottles of water. Yet, the act of carrying was also figurative: our past, our bias, work, life, responsibility, care for others, and each other. All this carrying invoked the image of all the caregivers I know-and love-the ones who carried me, and therefore "mobilized" which in turn mobilizes the family, community, and students that I'm now responsible for carrying. Yet, the carrying can overwhelm us, and can fill and drain us all at once. We find ourselves carrying what we can to continue the act of mobilization, yet…

If we carry too much of the work and not enough of our family, we lose balance.

If we carry too much on our own, we lose ourselves.

If we can find a way to carry what we can, to help others carry when they can't then we can find that balance, keep our footing, and carry on.

So here I offer stories shared by the Storytellers about carrying others

– along with all the things.

While also looking for balance

while carrying so much

and the importance of carrying others

by inviting them in and calling them into community with personal invitations.

"When I find a balance…":

Cherie's current experience with Native American Student Services is as a parent committee member. She feels as though NASS has grown since she was a student, that "it interacts with the community more," and she attends meetings with her children giving them the opportunity to learn "what activities are available and what the (grant) money is used for". Community is ever-present in Cherie's stories, community is what brought her to be involved, and community is what keeps her active. When discussing her involvement, Cherie explained that seeing other parents be involved and excited about the work "made me feel excited, too". Cherie is realistic about a single person's involvement and is transparent about how life can often move us in directions where our time may not be as flexible. Cherie went back to school, carried and welcomed another child; her family grew, and she changed jobs. Through all of these changes she kept involved as much as she had the capacity to; sometimes that was dropping off food and sometimes it was simply keeping up on emails. She describes, "...***when I find a balance*** of work and life then I can see myself doing everything I can." This quote by Cherie moved me the most because I can fill pages and pages with what I have seen her do in our community, for our children.

What She Carries

Everything.

All at once,

into the gymnasium

there will be no multiple trips to the car.

Grand Entry is approaching,

Mama's got this.

Left hand: a dance bag, a rolling suitcase with her daughters' dance regalia-

somehow through physics I have yet to understand,

her car keys, a package of wet wipes, and her phone.

Right hand: the small hand of the world's cutest grass dancer.

She's Mama, she's auntie, she's braiding hair, and passing out snacks.

She's got an extra shawl for you to dance, she's brought her own children's hand-me-downs so your tiny tot can show off their moves.

She's carried me.

With prayers, with kindness,

and warm meals when a loved was lost.

She carries our grief to the table and demands that we eat, because we need our strength.

All this she does while carrying herself with

grace, wisdom, and a welcoming spirit.

The balancing act of caring for our families, ourselves and our communities can leave us feeling wanting in one area or another, as Tommy expressed in a similar sentiment: "I'm still a community member, I still go to the parent meetings, that type of stuff, but then just try to be

involved in the community events. So ***that's always a fun balance***, but I definitely to try to make time to be in the community wherever that may be."

Community is mentioned in various contexts almost 300 times in the collective interview transcripts. Each Storyteller has some connection to Haskell Indian Nations University which, through terrible labor pains, gave birth to Lawrence's intertribal community. Cherie's involvement was motivated by the enthusiasm of other parents, as she describes:

> "I would say the thing that inspired me was just seeing other parents willing to help also. Like when you were a part of the parent committee and you might actually still be, but I seen that you were excited to help and that another community member was able to help, and they were excited about it. When- other people were excited, that really made me feel excited, too…"

The Storytellers were mindful of the unique position participating in community work in an Intertribal community, like Lawrence, and the respect required to be in community for the success of our Indigenous students. Tommy explains where to start:

> I think you just keep on showing up. Showing up for the students and families. I think that's super important to show them that, you know, you're here to support, you know, their kids, but then also your kids as well. And I think that you have to do that in a very respectful way, you know? Bring elders into the room, bring families together. And also listen to the families, they're part of the community, too, so their voice matters too. But we have to keep it respectful (laughs). I think that's a huge piece too. We come from different areas we definitely ***carry different baggage***. So, I feel like it's a part of you bringing wherever you're located, ***you bring a part of your rez wherever you're at to Lawrence***. There might be good. There might be bad. So, I think if you can (laughs)

successfully navigate that in a respectful way that everybody's voice is like honored. I think that's pretty cool. That's a start.

Carrying baggage can often have a negative connotation, but my people carried healing and medicine, and we continue to do so just as all of these participants came to the unique intertribal community of Lawrence and Haskell in search of something or come from a family that made that decision at some point. Tommy is asking us to consider *What We Carry* from our home communities and bring it, the good and the bad, to our Intertribal community and use it, teach with it, learn from it and through it all- showing up for our students and families. As we remember *What We Carry*, this consideration must also be extended to others. What are the members of my community carrying and how can we help one another carry that weight? Before we can engage in acts of respect and reciprocity, we must build our communities capacity and increase the number of regular active parent committee participants. Many hands to make light work, to take the load off one another, to build capacity, and sustainability. In order to do this, we call out to our community.

Interviews with the Vampires: Being Called into Community as a Gateway to Mobilization

Engaged through relationality, all of the Storytellers recounted an instance of being called into community, by community. A way we carry each other. There is something to be said about an invitation in Indian Country, like vampires who need to be verbally invited into community before crossing a threshold, and that invitation is not an email or a social media post but an invitation to enter, the sincerity and gift of being asked is an honor and a requirement to building lasting relationality. Being *called into community is something* Joy experienced early as a newcomer to Lawrence. Even with no children she was welcomed quickly and called in, she shared:

> "And then I started getting invited in to do different things with the (Indian Education) program as a community member, like teaching dance classes, teaching beading classes… and so I volunteered my time before I had kids. I think I would have stayed involved no matter what."

When the invitation is missing, participation and perspective can be lost. Louise laments the low numbers of parents who regularly attend NASS parent committees and believes so strongly in the power of the personal invitation. Louise explains:

> Parents need to be more involved, how we go about doing that? I have no idea. I honestly don't know. I don't want to say like, soliciting, (laughs) but having people at pow wows. Just having a little booth, you know? It's just an idea to maybe have a little table there and be like 'hey, are you here at USD 497? We need parent support. We need you to come out and if you can't, we also have just a zoom. All you have to do is get on and listen. If you want to comment, if you have a good idea, we'd love to hear them.' like that, that's it. It's like connecting.

Louise goes on to emphasize the importance of a personal call-in, and her engagement in the programs keep her focused on growing more parent participation: "I definitely think that something needs to happen with getting the parents there. Just reaching out. Maybe even personally like, give me a damn call list. I'll call them."

Being called, and answering that call, in a community that so many tribal nations consider home was a consistent strand in everyone's stories of initial engagement with the Lawrence Public Schools' Indian Education program. Sometimes that call was internal after seeing friends or family members engage, other times the call was a personal invitation from

someone already actively participating. Regardless, our Storytellers have answered and are looking for ways to call others in to do the same.

The Storytellers recounted for me what is required for mobilization in a place made up of so many Tribal Nations. Where, despite our respective people's place of origin, we have made this place our home and quickly got to work building community. The stories of *What We Carry* remind us to be proud of the baggage, the bundles, the medicine that we carried with us to this place. The stories tell us that we don't have to carry alone and that carrying one another through community call-in creates stronger communities. The strength is necessary, the connection is vital, and the endurance is required to create a future for generations to come. *What We Carry* makes way for *What We Keep,* the ways we move together and in support of our children through the Eurocentric public education system and maintain our identity, our dignity, and thrive in systems that were meant for our erasure.

What We Keep: Stories of Cultural Resilience through Navigation (Related to RQ2)

A Poet's Prayer

Grandpa,

every day I think about

the only fear I have ever heard you express aloud.

Us being "brown for no reason"

Despite us not speaking Kiowa,

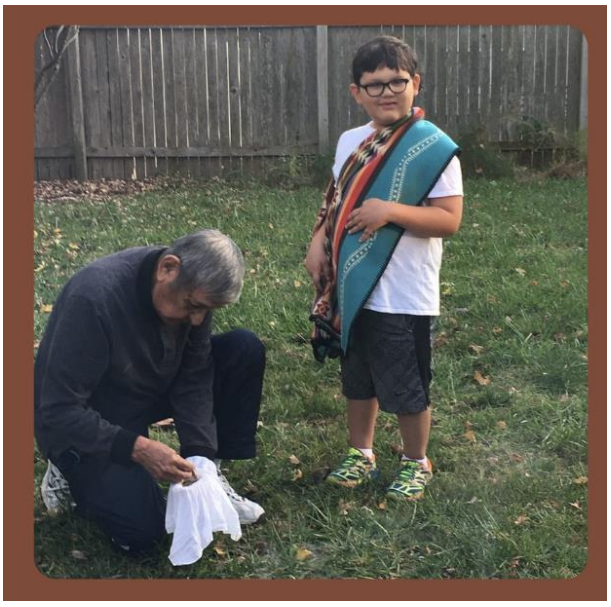
you never prayed for us any other way

I heard someone back home,

behind a pulpit,

Figure 5

Naming Ceremony



so, you know they weren't blowin'[5]

say

that your prayers were the prettiest.

They called you a poet.

Would you have liked that?

Tutters is going to language class online,

can you imagine that?

I miss those prayers,

the ones spoken over boiled eggs and salt pork,

the ones spoken over new babies,

and the ones spoken over spirals of cedar smoke.

I try and remember the ways you kept,

the ways you spoke aloud and the ones you modeled.

I know what you meant, about

being "brown for no reason".

We are coming back to who we were

who we are supposed to be.

Languages are coming back, land too.

In this place, that you made our home,

we are working hard to teach the children,

the ways we have in common,

---

[5] Non-native reader, or reader who has never conversed with an Oklahoma Native, blowing/blowin' is defined as bold faced lying. Tall tale telling, exaggerating, stretching the truth, you get the picture.

to protect them from teachings that

try to erase, minimize, and caricaturize them.

We try to keep them learning, singing, dancing.

You prayed eyes closed, hat off, head bowed, voice steady,

starting and ending

in deepest gratitude to our Creator.

These folks I interviewed prayed eyes open, head up, voice steady

starting and ending

in the dreams they have for their children.

Âhò

Grams and Grandpa, stories of advocating for Indigenous students were among the most prevalent and passionate topics discussed, whether the students in question were the Storyteller's channeling our communities' children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, pupils, or the Storyteller themselves. What We Keep is about the ongoing navigations and negotiations by Storytellers and their families in trying to keep our dignity, our culture, and relationships with both Indigenous histories and Indigenous futures. Storytellers emphasized several modes of confrontation and discomfort, which prompted them to sometimes keep things to themselves, keep advocating, ...

Confronting Stereotypes: "Pocahontas Chose This"?

Parent advocacy while navigating predominantly white schools was illustrated in Eric's story of confronting harmful narratives in his daughter's high school Native American History course. Eric's daughter sent him a text alerting him to the stereotypes the teacher was espousing to her class. This prompted Eric to swiftly seek the teacher out:

So, while it was fresh, I was like,

did you say,

'Pocahontas chose this?

'well, that's what I thought…'

Certain people,

they cling on to what I call "white man savior syndrome".

They don't want to know the real situation

because that doesn't make their perspective shine in the brightest light.

So, I just was like,

Hey,

if that's your personal opinion,

keep it to yourself,

I'm here because you offended somebody

and their friends,

other native friends

that are in the class,

and the fact that you had female native Americans in your class

and you still said that

shows a lack of judgment

that needs to be put into perspective."

Listening to Eric made me remember my own daughter's experiences in public education and in community theater spaces. Too young and too often my daughter would keep encountering those who refused to recognize her humanity and their refusal's role in our erasure.

Keeping her head high she spoke up when her theater company insisted on performing Peter Pan, complete with caricature Indians. I have a photo from the day she spoke; her and her grandmother took the stage in the smaller black box theater and side by side they gave a master class in visibility, the harm of stereotypes, and the responsibility of the arts to do better. They changed the neverland "Indians" to tie-die clad hippies - a small victory. The fight continued in her high school Native American Studies class – a class that was celebrated as progress for Native students learning opportunities. She would leave the class each day angry to the point of tears, and any attempt she made to advocate on her own would be shut down with the air and attitude of superiority. An untouchable teacher, so the frustration got to the point where we called in reinforcements: Her grandma offered to speak to the teacher, yet was talked over, talked at, and talked down to. An elder[6], a knowledge keeper, a matriarch, was treated with contempt by an educator armed with a twenty-year-old textbook, with no mention of Indigenous futures. A textbook only interested in who we *were*.

Tommy had a similar story as a parent advocate. Fall means parent teacher conference time for Lawrence Public Schools. School has been in session for a little less than nine weeks, and parents are called in to meet with their student's classroom teachers to discuss progress and goals for the year. After hearing about progress reports, upcoming assessments, and social studies curriculum, Tommy asks his child's teacher about their curriculum for teaching about Native tribes, especially in Kansas. Quickly, it becomes clear that the teacher doesn't teach anything about Indigenous people but that she is willing to accept help, Tommy's demeanor is key, as a trained teacher familiar with the teacher's preparation, he centers empathy as he goes in to bridge building-advocacy-educator mode. He then provides the teacher with lesson plans and

[6] Please, don't tell my mama I called her an elder.

directions for engaging her students in a study about Indigenous peoples in Kansas, especially the tribes that presently have headquarters in the sunflower state. He engages, and keeps on advocating...

“We’re actually here, We’re real, We’re now.”

“Hey, do you guys talk about tribes in Kansas?”

The teacher responds first with what Tommy described as the “deer in the headlights look”

No.

Eyes sheepishly cast down.

I don’t…

Before the teacher can

offer an excuse,

an explanation,

or an apology

Tommy sits up straighter in the plastic elementary school chair.

He keeps his patience.

With respect, reciprocity, and an infectious enthusiasm

that heals any hurt or guilt the teacher may feel.

He begins to speak, encourage, and teach.

Advocacy begins.

Let me tell you where we are from.

Who we are.

Who our people ARE now in this moment.

Parent quickly shifts into educator mode,

a mode most Natives are familiar with

from a very a young age.

The teacher listens,

asks for help. Resources? Links?

The parent provides.

Where others see systems, he sees

People.

Relationships.

"We're actually here", he says.

"We're present."

"We're now."

In addition to resources, Tommy provided the classroom with the flag of his tribal nation. Open discourse and the willingness to support anyone ready to learn has been Tommy's modus operandi since his children started school. Tommy keeps teaching and keeps advocating for all students. "I want to know how you (classroom teachers) are teaching about Native American people in general. Are you doing the basics? We're a past tense people? We're not even alive? I just wanted to see where my (child's) teacher was coming from." The end result is confidence for his own children and other Native students in the community. The responsibility to others and

the reciprocity that exists with the partnership Tommy has built with his child's teacher will benefit the entire learning community. By taking the time to share knowledge and stories with one educator Tommy disrupts the tired narrative that Natives are a people of the past and encourages one educator to open her eyes and see the community in the present, in the faces of her students.

Cherie also shared a recent story of how her family navigates the Eurocentric school system, especially in the recent political climate. News from across Indian Country about tribal members' citizenship status being questioned created fear and panic in many Indigenous communities. Being brown meant potentially being harassed by immigration officials and the possibility of detainment. Cherie felt like the Intertribal community of Lawrence "stuck together in that moment," and allies in the public schools and the NASS program eased her worries by assuring her that her children were safe at school. *What We Keep* is each other safe, through times of adversity and turmoil.

Ode to the Auntie

Authentic. A protector, confidant, and conspirator,

Unapologetic. The judge, jury, and executioner.

Necessary. A matriarch, a life-line, a life-force.

Teacher. A coach, counselor, and comedian.

Indigenous. An activist, pow-wow champion, and author of your favorite stories.

Educated. Master of "the ways" both old and new. Listen and learn.

Volunteering her time for decades to the cultural enrichment of other folks' children, Joy became deeper involved by collaborating with the Native American Student Services program director to start an Intertribal Club at a local middle school. She explained, "I was realizing we

have a lot of Native kids in that school," while fondly recalling that her first cohort of club members was exclusively boys. Despite the high energy and rambunctious nature of the students, club time was coveted each week, and they "learned how to bead, how to cook, and learned language." Carving out this sacred and safe affinity space for Indigenous students amidst the daily assimilation agenda of public education is paramount to maintaining and growing cultural identity.

> "I learned that it ran the entire spectrum. We had kids that maybe knew what tribe they were but didn't really know much about it to kids that were fully enculturated, then we had kids that grew up in the city. We had kids that had relocated here and had gone to reservation school, we just ran the gamut."

Stories often intersect in community and here is where Joy's story braids together with Darcie's, to become a part of a greater story in Lawrence, of folks creating spaces for Indigenous youth to learn and exist authentically. In another middle school across town and across time, Darcie's stories centered on visibility, community, and the experiences of her children, especially her oldest child, a middle school student who found support, community, and family in their school's intertribal club.

"They get to teach, share, and learn."

A returning relative,

she keeps coming back.

Darcie and her family reintegrated into the community,

this time as a family of four.

She beckons her family, her friends, to follow.

The place they called home often lacked-

"Let's see, In South Dakota it was very one way,

one race way,

That makes it kind of challenging

to get more involved

and less welcoming."

They keep dreaming

Of this place since they've being away

this place, where so many Nations reside,

this community where they remember-

welcome.

Now that they are here, they begin to ground themselves in this place.

Root themselves by joining in and taking part.

The harvest of being in community is evident in the experiences of her children,

The fruits of community care.

"Their experience with NASS would be the feeling of having a school/community family

what I mean by that is

they can express

and be who they are

as a Lakota/Dakota person.

As they are surrounded by other tribes,

they get to teach, share and learn."

Darcie dreamed of and longed for Lawrence, Kansas, while she was back home. After living in the intertribal community and experiencing the connectedness, Darcie knew she wanted

that experience for her own children and shared how JOM programs like intertribal clubs help her daughter's successful transition to middle school. When asked what story she would share about her children's experience with NASS Darcie replied:

> "The story I would tell them is how at (my daughter's middle school) they have an intertribal club; my daughter loves it. Every week she looks forward to getting together with the club. The staff is great, they ask how each student is doing, if they are having issues, they are there to help. They go on field trips, have pizza parties, give awards, get to express their native culture and have an end of year celebration."

Intertribal clubs have been present in Lawrence Public Schools since the late 1960s. The "Honor the Circle Club" was a fixture at South Junior High, now Billy Mills Middle School (BMMS). I'm deeply connected to its current form, as the club at BMMS is a labor of my heart, co-sponsored with an Apsaalooké educator. I see it as the most important bullet point on my CV.

Joy shares this passion for Intertribal clubs and explains their importance: "…those clubs are really necessary to help generate that interest in who they are, and where they come from and also to provide some guidance and direction of where they can get that information about themselves."

It's a dedicated time and affinity space for young Indigenous youth to exist and learn how to be in community, all while building on our three club tenets: representation, respect, and reciprocity. *We keep* emphasizing these core values in intertribal ways. Yet, the R we don't talk about might be the most important: Razzing. When listing the benefits of Intertribal clubs Louise reflected on her child's experience at her school's club:

> "I'm glad (my child) has the intertribal club there. It's like that makes them feel like 'hey, I'm part of something in this school, maybe I'm not a part of anything else, but I'm a part

of this, this feels good, and I like being around. you know, my peers and also their native too.' They're roasting and all the fun stuff, these guys are starting on (terrorizing) me and I'm like, (laughs) that was a good one."

Intertribal clubs and the stories of the parents, families, and educators that benefit from and sustain the programs illustrate *What We Keep* when we commit to building community, culture, tradition, and relationships.

Grandpa and Grams, I can't help but think about how What We Keep beautifully narrates the lengths community members go to for all of our children. Although in the moment advocacy is meant to keep their child, their student, their family member safe, it is this work we do for ourselves that creates ripples of awareness and keeps our intertribal community visible. In other words, these intertribal contexts, through shared values, allows us to keep moving these cultural ways forward – and they're so powerful the work beyond the context of one nation alone. Yet we also encourage them to keep ahold of their specific tribal values, so they can keep moving them into the future. These moments of advocacy also remind the students that they are kept safe by teachers, friends, family members, and club sponsors who want to see these glorious futures. All the while this act of keeping allows our young people and folks new to our community to witness firsthand both the responsibilities and benefits of being in community. It's a repetitive lesson in mobilization, that duplicates when consistently witnessed in cyclical fashion – for children, and adults in the community.

What We Keep, then, makes way for What We Create which is a stronger sustainable community where intergenerational members are actively engaged through collaborative and restorative approaches. The seeds we plant that we may not see grow but that we can water and feed while we are here, whether they were brought here through the ongoing process of

navigation and negotiations of settler colonial structures in state run public schools, or whether the transplants of those seeds came several generations back through the early years of Haskell Indian Nations University. Regardless, we keep those memories and replant those seeds – and new ones - for future generations.

What We Create: Stories of Sustainability (Related to RQ3)

This time, I'm a child.

In truth that is how they've always seen me

so that is how I appear to them.

It's summertime in Carnegie, Oklahoma

the sun is setting and we ride,

to nowhere in particular.

Dirt roads

lead me back home.[7]

Can I tell you that the sound of tires crunching

and the kicking up of dust

make both my eyes and mouth water?

What can I say,

iron runs low.

But I digress.

We ride. Three of us,

side by side by side,

in the cab of a white pickup truck.

Figure 6

Gramps and Me

[7] Lyrics from Tia Woods, Dirt Roads.

Creating memories,

memories that continue to carry me,

memories that keep me grounded.

Small feet dusted in red dirt hang out the window

and I tell them what I learned…

Grandpa and Grams, you lived here a long time. I wonder if you agree. This place is both homeland and home. A temporary stop that tethers itself to individuals and becomes a part of their family histories. The Storytellers were born here or born again through Intertribal communion on the very grounds that their great grandparents resisted to tread. The Storytellers credit community and the family feeling that this place presented. With no tribal offices, no headquarters, no meeting hall, no community center both Haskell and the USD 497 NASS program became the settler colonial tools we used to build something for ourselves, for our children. There is gathering and community building, art education, cultural programming. There are parents leading the charge to push back against erasure and classroom curriculum that attempts to keep us invisible. There is dancing, singing, growing, and sharing of knowledge and resources. The building requires all of us to participate, in some capacity, while honoring each other's need to step-in as well as stepping back, to rest, to recuperate, and to rejoice in What We Create together.

Nu Shooz

Grandma, you knew the power of new shoes.

Transformative.

Affirming.

Life-Changing.

I remember trying a new pair on,

sitting on the strange, mirrored stool,

Come here, let me see where your toe is.

Walk down and back.

You telling the little ones,

these look fast,

let's see,

show me!

We wore them out of the store,

our old beat-up shoes in the new box,

never to be seen again,

the box would make another appearance

at Christmas.

Heavy with tube socks and Doritos.

These folks, these Storytellers

they had shoe stories.

It's how they first remember

'they would give us like a voucher for shoes.

they covered the gym shoes

the Ho Chunks were on it- because all of a sudden

I had basketball shoes!

We would get - we would get school supplies; we would get Payless shoes…

You know, we weren't super poor, but

we were poor,

because there was seven of us.

So, for us to get that voucher every year was like, ahhhhhh, you know?

and then when you could get something else,

like sandals or something…

All but one Storyteller had initial engagement with Title VI/JOM programming as a child, remembering vouchers for sports and shiny new Payless shoes – small but impactful opportunities *created* by our ancestors ongoing advocacy. As the Storytellers grew and had children of their own, they reengaged as parents, being called in to join the work by family, community members, program leaders, and friends. The program is not perfect and is very much a part of the greater settler colonial project of utilizing education for erasure, but the Storytellers continue to rework opportunities created for them generations previously (e.g., JOM programming started in the 1930s) and repurposed these programs to suit their needs and to reimagine greater futures for their children. The creation of opportunities, then, becomes a generational exponent for Indigenous futures.

These next stories are creation stories. Stories that teach a lesson, that tell a joke, that give a warning, and a promise of what could be. How do we continue to *create* community? How do we call others into community with us? How do we *create* spaces where many hands make light work, and we all have the capacity to fight another day?

"Keep on Showing Up"

The Storytellers each shared their initial motivations for involvement in the USD 497 Indian Education programs. Some were called in by community; in addition to a personal invitation, some followed the lead of their parents and families. The low participation numbers

for parents across the district were a concern of the Storytellers. Joy offered a possible reason for low attendance: “I think their (attendance is) spotty just because of just the current environment people, the families are working. A lot of them are working two jobs.” Creating opportunities beyond school for their families.

Cherie mentioned the need to create clearer protocols for meetings and member behavior. A solid set of norms of how folks are welcomed, onboarded, and how meetings are run would provide a structure and a template for intertribal community relationship building. She elaborated, “it needs to be enforced and addressed in writing… so everyone knows in advance to be welcoming”. Funding, volunteers and “commitment from the community” as well as “commitment from the program participant’s parents” make a “team effort” to continue to build the program up for long-term sustainability. Visibility of both community insiders and outsiders is important to Cherie in order to let the community know about what is available and let outside community members get involved.

Cherie spoke of the consequences of bringing personal conflicts into the community circle: “I think that could be a barrier for some folks to be like: you know what? This isn't really for me because I don't want to have to deal with this person.” As a longtime community member, who has served the Indigenous community in Lawrence in a variety of capacities, Joy offered her philosophy for handling conflicts.

It was here I briefly paused the interview and recording because in all my time knowing Joy, I would have never imagined she had a beef with anyone. I know that seems naïve and maybe as though she was on a pedestal but she was consistently called on and could be seen engaging with every corner of our community. Her work in the mental health field also may have clouded me from seeing her as complete person and not this matriarchal deity who I imagined

had no beef with anyone. To some degree, this was true, Joy had no beef because she didn't care for it. I guess you could say she was a vegetarian in this respect. From what I knew, her specialty was creating welcoming and joyful environments.

Joy shared a story while I sat mouth agape in the coffee shop about a community member who had treated her child unkindly. I would have never known, I have seen them show up for one another and I have seen them auntie cackle in corners of community events.

> "I want my kids to know that you don't have to like someone to respect their work and to be able to collaborate with them. To me, it's really important as a Native community for us to support each other because there's so much inner fighting and because of stuff like that, because you have a seething resentment against somebody and I don't want to contribute to that. So, I don't know, if that's my duty, my sense of responsibility to community, to continue community building."

Regarding the infighting that can be present in communities, Eric had this to say:

> "Well, first of all, we would- we would all need to get rid of our own personal egos. We have to get away from our own insecurities and come together as a community. Which, again, we have a rich Native American community. We've got to break free of whatever generational tribal chains that we have that are not just binding us but separating us and come together us and come together as quote-unquote a 'tribe' and um and just realize Whitney Houston was right, you know, *the children are our future*, and that's what we need to focus on. And let them lead the way but in order for them to lead the way, we need to show them this is how you lead away."

There it is, Whitney Houston was right, what we have known all along but not directly applied to this facet of educational sovereignty practices. Indigenous people intentionally sowing the seeds

of knowledge for our children. Showing the children, the way, each of the Storytellers were shown how to be in community and in turn were taking their children, bringing them along and showing them so one day, as Whitney via Eric said, they can lead the way.

Bring Them: Indigenous Youth as the Succession Plan

When Louise Laughs

When Louise laughs, I want so badly to be a better writer
to be able to code each audible sound and syllable.
In this stage of my life, I can identify the Western Meadowlark by its calls,
I think.
I think I could find Louise across a prairie as well.
Louise laughs a love letter to Native auntie laughs and Indigenous joy.
Louise is someone you want to make laugh and keep laughing.
Like all of us, the laughs range from:
I just told you something fairly traumatic and sad,
gah, that's embarrassing,
laughing so I don't fight someone,
and my favorite
the "bar joint laugh" named by my grandma Millie
"Save your 'bar joint laugh' for the movie 'Bar Joint Laugh'
I'm currently writing that screenplay.
Louise started our conversation with a story,
and it's one of my favorites because
as Natives do,

she delivered truth

so plainly

it landed like one hell of a punchline.

"We were all born here in Lawrence,

at Lawrence Memorial Hospital,

all seven of us."

(laughs)

Louise arrived at our interview on a cold, overcast midwestern morning on time and with her oldest daughter in tow. Her daughter is a quiet but consistent and thoughtful member of our Intertribal Club. Bringing her was maybe for convenience, maybe she wanted to get out of the house, away from younger siblings but the bringing along was important to me and in a way, truly an honor and gift. Taking our children with us wherever we go to teach them, without preaching, this is how you are in community; this is how you build bridges, extend branches, plant seeds, water gardens, whatever metaphor you want to use. Cue Montel Jordan:

"This is how we do it".

Louise laughed throughout our conversations. Sometimes those laughs were attached to the recounting of a childhood memory, a story about her own children, or the idiocrasy of the way whiteness shows up in the workplace (meetings as pow wows, memos as smoke signals, "Indianisms" the original microaggressions). A lifelong resident of Lawrence, Louise offers a deep historical perspective on the intertribal community and the NASS program. Her family's long history in Lawrence, beginning with her parents' move to the area for employment opportunities at Haskell, provides valuable context for understanding the community's evolution. Her mother was a long-time tutor for NASS, which gave Louise early exposure to the program.

1980-something

"...She would travel around to each school and tutor kids.

All USD 497,

for years,

like years,

until she got sick

and then she couldn't really be there.

Her van had all of her, you know,

crates and her tutoring supplies.

'Don't touch those!'

When Louise reenacts her mother's chastisement, I am immediately transported into their family van. It's the late 80s or the early 90s, to a human born in years starting two thousand and, it's all the same isn't it? A dedicated mother and former school teacher, traveling from school-to-school during the day to tutor Lawrence's Native youth and in the afternoon collecting her own kids from their respective schools and activities to tutor them at home.

It's May in Kansas, so the humidity and heat make the van feel like a sauna. Brothers and sisters jockey for position in the back, sticky arms and legs vying for their own space. As they drive down the road, the wind blows their long hair into their faces and to the chagrin of all, each other's faces. When her mother turns a corner, the crates slide back and forth and in them crisp pieces of paper, sharpened pencils, a myriad of markers and colored pencils, and before Louise's arm can fully extend and reach for the calculator in the crate her mother, without looking in the back or missing a beat, calls to them: "Don't' touch those!"

Louise's family has a legacy of community involvement, specific to the USD 497 Title VI and Johnson O'Malley program. Louise was called to community work by the example of her mother, a dedicated, focused, and tireless educator who, in addition to providing home tutelage to her seven children, tutored most of Lawrence's Indigenous students in the late 80s and 90s. A van full of kids and crates stuffed to the brim with flashcards, school supplies, and worksheets to bridge the gap, build fluency, enhance comprehension, and ushering a new generation of leaders.

Louise epitomizes *What We Create* through her engagement and the engagement of her children in their school's Intertribal clubs. Louise is the sweetgrass that grows by seed, not impossible but requires the right conditions, usually a parent plant that was there first leaving seeds behind as inheritance. The groundwork set by her mother all those years ago brings to light how we as an Indigenous community truly build sustainable action, thus building capacity for our futures, our youth as the succession plan. *What We Create* with them, for them, will guarantee that they continue that work for those to come and in the memory of those before us.

Joy's passion was planted in her by her parents when she was young because of course our aunties and uncles were once, and maybe in some ways always will be, youth. Joy and her siblings were indeed the succession plan of her folks: "I had great models for parents. My dad was a community activist from day one, so I grew up seeing that, all of his community activism, his education journey and how he progressed through the state of Michigan, and through the BIA and then my mom, she was a community activist as well". Joy's own community involvement and advocacy is being instilled in her own children as she brings them along to participate in NASS community events: "… when my kids got old enough, they just loved going to the school supplies thing (distribution) and all the different activities. Then they were volunteering, packing up the school supplies, and helping distribute them when they got older." Joy is mentoring young

dancers to build community through culture all while building their confidence and identity of belonging:

> "I was a member of the American Indian Dance theater. So, I know what all of everything it takes to get out on stage and perform in front of people. and I know how hard that is, but then I also know how rewarding that is and that just builds character, it builds resilience and it just strengthens in someone that will allow them to put themselves out there in front of people to- to educate and to show who they are. I think one of the things that I think can sustain long term is our little dance group. I don't know how many years we're going on now. I know we are pre-pandemic, but I think we've been going for a good six or seven years."

Tommy described his upbringing as non-traditional and he had no childhood recollection of Title VI/JOM support. Despite this, his philosophy for community work and raising his children reflects the "bring them" mentality, or rather, *create community*. Tommy and his wife are creating their own legacy with their children:

> "That's, you know, that's, you know, the young kids being together, um and, you know, my girls see NASS families out in the community and they say hi to each other that's something that I just try to teach them, you know? To respect everybody and try to have a conversation with other NASS families. The end of the day, you want NASS families to support each other and respect each other, that's something that we've taught our girls. To me, that's a part of being in the community, identifying and being able to, you know, have those relationships at a younger age."

Grams and Grandpa, through this dissertation process the broad concept was weaving itself into the stories without me truly noticing as I zoom out around the word "sustainability" in my research question: Sustainability is bringing children into work, because they are the work. Bring them and show them how to be in community and create community. Show them the work folks across tribal nations are investing into them because they are worth investing in. Show them that despite differences, and 'seething resentment' we can work together against the common enemies of settler-colonialism, indigenous erasure, deficit narratives, and antiquated narratives of who they are supposed to be. Indigenous youth as our greatest treasure and succession plan as our future but also bringing them in to the work of the present.

As I write this there is a viral trend that has appeared in the stories of Indigenous activists, influencers, and content creators with the caption: "Almost forgot this is the point." And damn near 45,000 words, hours of stories, of writing, and of trying to remember I almost forgot this is the point. They came for our children, they took our children, they harmed and murdered our children for speaking, singing, praying, and dancing, and who were those children but our grandparents and their parents. Who are we but the children who were less likely to speak our languages, unable to pray like poets. Of course, it's through them that we continue to carry, to keep, and to create a future.

This collection of stories, these gifts that have been shared with me has me thinking about a "framework". An outline to share, taking all our stories, and braiding them together, with the tension that comes from binding us together. The goal of this framework is to learn what we had to carry to get here, what we kept, and how other intertribal communities can follow and create their own.

Three Generations[8]

Three questions.
Mobilize.

Three Strands.
Gather in equal.
parts.
The fragrant aroma

wafts and promises
to protect and preserve.

Three generations.
Grandparents
Grandchild
Little Siblings,
not great-grandchildren.
Little sister. Little brother.
Big Sister. Big Brother.

Daddy hit the road, headed north to Lawrence, Kansas with angsty teens in tow, not ready to leave the home they've always known. Kicking and screaming he took his stonewash jean clad brood to put down roots where the soil would not be red. The old folks will miss them, come back and see us. He left for the opportunity, for the education, and to build something for his family for generations to come.

Three questions.
Navigation

Three Strands.
Gather in equal
parts.
Take each part
into your hands.
Braid-
over, under, around-
over, under, around.
The sweet aroma

School house,
boarding school,
rural school,
college, and
university.

[8] A poem to be read in three voices where columns are present.

swirls, dances, rises

to preserve

is our

goal.

Y'all have always navigated, spaces, and places and quickly made them your own. Moving to Lawrence was no different and you were met with a community you didn't expect. You were able to keep the ways you brought from home. You danced. You sang. You praised. You fellowshipped. In community. You contributed to the landscape and the legend of this place by becoming welcoming so quickly after being welcomed.

Three questions. Three Strands. Three generations.

Sustainable Action Three Strands A grandchild as a legacy,

Gather in equal I learned at the dinner table,

parts. the church pew,

Bind with love- the passenger side-

pass along. Watching diligently

Remember. learning through-

A gift. shared meals,

prayer requests,

and community care.

Three questions. Three Strands. Three generations.

Apache Belle was your Apache name but you answered to Mrs. T. here in Lawrence, Kansas. I have vivid memories of going to Walmart with you as a child while you loaded up on things, I knew we did not need for the house. Maybe Grandma is redecorating the kitchen again.

Diapers? Who needs diapers? We check out and you still don't say a word, I load the bags in your little red hatchback, we look like clowns trying to get back in and we drive. Loretta on the radio signing, reminding us that 'we were poor but we had love'. We pull in to a place I don't know and you look at me and say, "Go knock on the door baby and let's unload these for my friend." The look on the woman's face as we unload, like being rescued, like a prayer answered. Another memory, you sitting in your office at Haskell and students coming in just to say hi and like a little Apache Vito Corleone you would hug them and slide money into their hands, honor song style. Money for a pop, to get a burger, buy some gas, go honky-tonkin'. You didn't care how they spent your kindness, only that they knew they were loved. These memories made me and there are countless other ways I watched or heard tale of you caring for others which taught them to care of others and in turn… Forever and ever. Amen.

Chapter 5-Discussion

"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. 439)

Introduction

I've been waiting for this moment.

Where art and truth bleed together

and one becomes the other.

These stories and poems

have been prayers all along.

It's been so long

since I've dreamed of you.

I called you down from the stars.

Through the door of these words,

I called you into my dreams.

I know I am close to done by the way I find you,

you are how I remember you

after the end of a long day,

no one can wind down quite like you.

I enter the bedroom

it's "hell hot" as Uncle Lance would say,

as y'all got older you came to covet warmth

the lack of A/C,

the upstairs bedroom,

provide the sauna that you and grandma have come to crave.

There is warm glow

both the television and the bedside lamp tables.

I did it, Grandpa.

I dreamed you to me for just a moment.

This is how I know I have reached the end.

You are sitting up, glasses on nose, newspaper in hand.

You fold it.

Tell me to sit and listen.

And I do.

I listened to hours of stories from folks in my community that I respect, admire, and adore. I forgot about how well I listened, not that I always hear or retain but when I set my heart to it, I listen. Listening to tone and what is not being said. Listening to inflection and laughter, what is being shared is sacred and a gift. I listened to the Storytellers whose stories very quickly began to sound like a chorus, harmonizing hurts and truths they shared. Storytelling has always been a part of my schema for understanding the world, making meaning, and keeping myself, and those I love safe, but it's the listening I am most proud of, the listening that was granted to me so that I could deliver this message. Through powerful and engaging narratives, this study illuminated three consistent themes from the Storytellers: 1) community mobilization-being called in, 2) cultural resilience while navigating settler-colonial schooling through advocacy and involvement, and 3) sustaining community through respect, accountability, relationship building, and youth mentorship, engagement, and empowerment. These accounts provided the groundwork for an Indigenous framework for community engagement in an Intertribal context.

Reflecting on Findings: Revisiting the Literature

The Storytellers relayed their experiences with engagement in the Title VI and Johnson O'Malley, Indian Education programs through Lawrence Public Schools. While they offered stories of frustration while navigating settler-colonial institutions, many of the experiences were positive and the potential for continued success was echoed by the participants, such as Tommy when he expresses: "I feel like it's like endless possibilities that we could do with Title VI and JOM, and it's more than just your basic curriculum." The asset-based *possibilities* and *enthusiastic hope* expressed by the Storytellers was contagious, I hope that making these stories more visible will encourage other families to become involved in the ways they can. I hope these stories can create a contrast to the deficit narratives about attendance and graduation rates our students that follow our students.

What We Carry, Narratives of Mobilization told stories of being called in to community and the constant pull of feeling as though the work you are doing, is not enough. Storytellers recounted the search for balance in managing their home, family, and work responsibilities with the responsibility they feel to contribute to the Intertribal Community of Lawrence, Kansas. Storytellers who were mothers would in the same breath list off the countless contributions they have made to their community and then lament not having the balance to do more. It brings to mind what Sabzalian (2019) says about Indigenous women: "Survivance is epitomized by Native women who have been at the heart and frontlines of this movement, the women who birthed the next generation of protectors or led resistance through prayer" (p. xv). Mobilization needs community and the act of organizing and encouraging a group of people to take collective action in pursuit of a collective goal in order to thrive.

Storytellers recounted being personally invited by friends, family, or community members. This relationality reflects Wilson's (2008) concept in *Research as Ceremony: "*In healthy Indigenous communities through, the strength of already established bonds between people can be used to help uplift others to bring them into the circle" (p. 81). The calling in to folks both known and unknown in community strengthens the collective power and possibilities available to us for our Indigenous students.

What We Keep: Stories of Cultural Resilience Through Navigation presented narratives of advocacy and support especially in education spaces. These parents and families have helped create and foster affinity spaces for Indigenous youth to thrive in public schools. This supports Sabzalian's (2019) work in *Indigenous Children's Survivance in Public Schools* regarding the need for "counterspace" but also a "complete and sustained" academic adjustment to how students learn about Indigenous people (p. 73). Storytellers shared collective experiences with the entanglements that come with being Indigenous in the United States public school system. Navigating both harmful curriculum and educators who would see us continue to live only in the past while striving to hold their students to high academic standards based on a curriculum of colonization and standards of success out of alignment with cultural values. This concept of harmful history has been reiterated by Indigenous scholars Grande (2015) and Keene (as cited in Maher, 2017). Grande (2015) explains:

> Perhaps no one understands this better than indigenous peoples, who, in addition to suffering the depredations of genocide, colonization, and cultural annihilation, have been revictimized at the hands of whitestream history. The lesson here is pedagogical. (p. 175)

The pedagogy of public education in the United States, even in an intertribal community like Lawrence, Kansas, still perpetuates the settler colonial agenda of erasure - the juxtaposition of

identity for our Indigenous students in Lawrence Public Schools to fully experience their Indigeneity outside of the classroom and then to enter a time warp once the walk through their classroom doors in the fall. Keene (as cited in Maher, 2017) expresses a similar sentiment when she describes: “To be Indigenous in fall is to feel hyper-exposed and, at the same time, invisible. It is wondering why your teacher is talking about Native Americans in the past tense when you're sitting right in front of him” (para. 6). The stories of invisibility and stuck in the past narratives re-affirm what Shear et al. found in 2015, as well as in Leavitt et al. (2015) which demonstrated how state level curricular standards, as well as media and mascots consistently reinforce a stuck-in-the-past stereotype of Native Americans. Families and community members have worked diligently to create culturally affirming spaces and programming but call for teachers and district administrators to examine the hegemony that is present in state standards and when teaching about Indigenous peoples. This examination, coupled with the community’s cultural sustainability work, could “dismantle knowledge systems that act against the core foundations of social justice in the social studies” (Shear et al., 2015, p. 92).

Through the involvement of Indigenous families, educators, and non-Native teacher allies Indigenous students have the opportunity to see and feel seen by curriculum and content that sustains and uplifts rather than degrades. The importance of allies in public education to engage in this work, whether Native or non-Native is expressed by Sabzalian (2019):

> All teachers should be aware of (and consciously seek out) resources in the district and community to support Native students and families specifically, as well as to support their efforts to teach Indigenous studies. (p. 204)

The hurt that these missteps can cause are clear in Eric’s stories and the stories of my own family’s troubles with the district’s Native American History class. A painful example of

intention versus impact, how "good" additions to curriculum can still cause harm if educator's skill sets in teaching about Indigenous peoples are not addressed. This is combated by the work of Indigenous educators like Tommy and Joy, and Native Aunties like Cherie, who through partnerships with classroom teachers, Intertribal clubs, and pow wow regalia support closets, are showing up for our children in ways that honor their existence and encourage their own resistance. These Storytellers exhibited patience and intentionality in their advocacy. Their community care and reflexive response was repair, reciprocity, and respect. The work they've completed in their advocacy not only benefits their own children but the community as a whole. Native and non-native students alike benefit from the confrontation of harmful narratives.

What We Create: Stories of Sustainability identifies Indigenous youth as a succession plan as well as utilizing relationality and restorative relationships to continue to build capacity for Intertribal community building. Storytellers who are actively engaged in the Indian Parent Committee resist "damaged-centered" narratives that Tuck (2009) notes are ever present when discussing Native people, when calling families to be more involved, rather than complain when they engage, in ways to support families to be more involved by creating norms of welcome and respect, restoring relationships, and supporting busy families by keeping information current, accessible, and transparent. All but one Storyteller was a former student supported by a Title VI/Johnson O'Malley program. Two Storytellers were supported by the program in Lawrence. These children grew up to be active and involved parents who in turn, have been taking their children along to meetings and special events and explicitly teaching them about community care.

Schools would greatly benefit from calling in and personally inviting Indigenous parents, families, and community members to be actively involved in decision making and vision

building. Research on engagement of Indigenous families credits community empowerment as paramount to fostering Indigenous parental involvement in education. Storyteller, Tommy expressed enthusiasm about being personally invited to a Native American Student Services (NASS) meeting by a former program director. “I was just like, “Oh, crap! We actually have a meeting? Let's go - I was excited to get to that meeting.” Active engagement and participation in decision-making processes promotes a sense of ownership and responsibility (Schutz, 2006). Empowered communities help to dismantle hierarchical structures within education, promoting a more collaborative and inclusive approach that values the voices and experiences of Indigenous families (Lowe et al., 2019). This approach is essential for building trust and ensuring that educational initiatives are genuinely responsive and reflective of the Indigenous students and their communities.

Sustainable action requires not only active engagement and collaboration but restorative approaches. Restorative approaches in the context of schools and the Indigenous families they serve look like shared responsibility (Lowe et al., 2019). Shared responsibility is listening to the Storytellers above recount their experiences in these systems and working diligently to right these wrongs.

Recommendations for Future Research

Education focused on urban intertribal contexts would benefit from more research across all sub-fields of educational research. From an urban intertribal perspective, while this research focused on parents and community leaders, future research could include the stories and perspectives of young people currently entangled in these systems. As Cook-Sather (2002) informs us, “Because of who they are, what they know, and how they are positioned, students must be recognized as having knowledge essential to the development of sound educational

policies and practice" (p. 26). Specifically, it would be beneficial to explore student experiences related to interactions with teachers, curriculum and affiliated learning materials (e.g., textbooks, media), teacher-student relationships, student-to-student relationship and community building across urban intertribal contexts, and more. Additionally, it would be beneficial to explore students' leadership in and out of the classroom in order to navigate, mobilize, and build systems of their own.

Research from the perspective of Title VI or JOM program leaders in urban intertribal contexts would also be of value to illustrate how they navigate work with their communities and the bureaucracy of government grant funding, as well as navigating policies and program structures in an increasingly volatile political environment where diversity, equity, and inclusion style programming is coming under increasing scrutiny. While the Office of Indian Education (OIE) website posts data about the number of programs and funding amounts, there is less known through empirical research around the lived experiences of these program leaders, or stories around models/strategies to improve student engagement or manage parent committee politics. There is also very little around support, strategies, or professional development being offered to these program leaders (Office of Indian Education, 2022).

Similarly, the National Indian Education Study (NIES) collects survey data on teachers' and leaders' thoughts, experiences, and preparedness when working with Indigenous students but these studies do not collect data on the experiences and perspectives of Title VI or Johnson O'Malley program leaders. Additionally, while the NIES and its data explorer tool allows for disaggregation of low-density (under 25%) and high-density (over 25%) AI/AN schools, it is difficult to isolate schools in the data to show urban intertribal schools (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

Furthermore, there is a need for research focused on public school teachers in urban and intertribal environments to assess their level of knowledge of Indigenous peoples in present times, their potential biases, and gaps due to their public-school education. Research focused on how biases and gaps permeate their classroom curricula's representation of Indigenous people is also needed. For example, it would be helpful to have a pilot study of public-school educators as they go through a crash course of Indian Education 101 professional development programming while being provided resources and mentorship to utilize existing lesson plans that accurately portray Indigenous peoples. These are developments actively occurring in Kansas (more on this below).

The stories of other families in intertribal communities similar to Lawrence would also be vital in creating a deeper archive, in addition to celebrating and remembering the accomplishments of these families to build new and better futures for their children. As a starting point, these findings could inform the construction of larger survey research in this district, or others. Additionally, district data teams could talk with Indigenous families to create SMART goals that reflect their cultural markers of success and work in tandem with communities to document these efforts while aggressively unpacking their role in the curricula and materials available to all students in regard to Indigenous peoples.

Research outside the sector of public education could include community/civic engagement frameworks and strategies. Exploring how local school boards, city councils, and other smaller civic and community centered organizations grow and build capacity among their members. Relationality, respect, and reverence found in storywork could potentially benefit non-Native organizations to consider grounding their organizations' work and missions in traditionally Indigenous ways of knowing and community building. Imagine the reach and

impact organizations could make with research with communities that incorporate and explore respect for all living beings.

Research topics for future studies that have emerged through this process center the experiences and stories of the young Indigenous students in urban intertribal communities and how they currently traverse entanglement in settler colonial structures, their thoughts on teachers, curricula, and their own leadership in and out of the classroom. Research on Indian education program leaders in these urban intertribal communities and their stories as well as research by school districts to determine cultural markings of success with Indigenous parent/family advisory groups could greatly improve the educational landscape and academic success of students in urban intertribal communities.

Recommendations for Practice

Practice involves the day-to-day experiences that impact our Indigenous youth and their families as they interact with the people teaching and leading in our educational systems. Practice starts with teacher education training and preservice teacher experiences working with Indigenous communities. Practice is the curriculum being taught to our students and their non-Native peers, the read-aloud excerpts, library books, worksheets, videos, educational games, and project-based learning activities that either confront harmful stereotypes or encourage them. Practice presents itself in the form of school board reports that focus solely on deficit research representations, absenteeism and declining graduation rates, that "posit the problem with fixing our children, rather than the oppressive systems that they somehow, despite relentless dehumanization, ignorance, and erasure, still engage and contest with courage "(Sabzalian, 2019, p. 7).

Storytellers ranged from various occupations but their stories were deeply saturated in Indigenous pedagogy, child-rearing, and community care. I did not discover or synthesize the following recommendations for practice. Storytellers were clear regarding what they needed changed from the Eurocentric public education system. I want to honor their voices because who better knows what they need, and what better way to reflect the tenets of both Tribal Crit (the desire for sovereignty extended to educational practices and stories/oral knowledge as data), storywork (respect, responsibility, and synergy), and community engaged scholarship (collaborative and reciprocal) than to let their voices share (Archibald, 2008; Brayboy & Jones, 2005; Gaudry, 2018) The key considerations for educators, administrators, and Indian Education Program Directors, as well as community members and families below are rooted in the past, present experiences and future hopes of Indigenous students.

Educators

Storytellers possessed a range of experiences with schooling and education. A few were educators or former educators themselves; all were Indigenous knowledge keepers that brought their own schema from their own Nations to their input for educators. A heavy emphasis was placed on representation and visibility. Educators who have come this far and are reading these recommendations it is important to heed the words of Indigenous educator and scholar, Sabzalian (2019):

> As relentless as settler colonialism is to erase Indigenous experience, our teaching must be equally as relentless: to make it visible, to work within it, to disrupt it. There is no end point, no right or wrong-just stamina to keep interrogating our teaching in light of its relationship to settler colonial and dominant discourses that are harmful to our students. (p. 101).

There is no time for defensiveness, for feeling right, wrong or sorry for ourselves. As educators we have a responsibility to these families; listen to their voices in the spirit of collaboration and let us work diligently to make their ideas a reality. Tommy, who is also an Indigenous educator, echoes:

> "We really need to have a real honest conversation with ourselves. When you do this work, when teachers do the work, are you trying to, you know, add something that's content rich and it has meaning rather than just, you know, perpetuating the inaccuracies?"

Storytellers value accurate portrayals of history and modern narratives that provide perspective on Tribal Nations as sovereign entities and Tribal members as people of the past, present, and future. Storyteller's recommendations for cultural sustaining teaching and honoring the voices of the intertribal community echo what Holmes & Young (2018) describing elements of traditional instruction and culture, and how they should function like "twin strands of a DNA helix" for the success of the learning community.

Additionally, storyteller's calls to action echo the professional responsibilities of educators laid forth by organizations such as The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) and the National Education Association (NEA) for educators. NPBEA created Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) and National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Program Recognition Standards to guide educators into leadership practices that are clear, focused, and build in accountability for educators to work diligently toward the safety and success of every child through positions of leadership on all levels (NPBEA, 2015). Storytellers relayed the desire for collaborative community approaches, culturally revitalizing curriculum, and involvement in decision making processes, these asks

align with PSEL Standard 3: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness, Standard 4: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, and Standard 5: S5: Community of Care and Support for Students, as well as NELP Standard 3: Equity, Inclusiveness, and Cultural Responsiveness and Standard 4: Learning and Instruction (NPBEA, 2015). The National Education Association's Core Values of Partnership and Collective Action mirror the storyteller's recommendations for collaborative approaches to curriculum improvement (NEA, n.d.).

In parallel to this dissertation, The Kansas State Department of Education is closer to meeting the expectations of this study's Indigenous Storytellers, with the recent formation of the Kansas Advisory Council for Indigenous Education (KACIE). Working in collaboration with Tribal Nations of Kansas, the Kansas Board of Regents, state university representatives, and representatives from Tribal Nations currently residing in or that have historical ties to Kansas. This advisory council houses on their webpage resources, an Essential Understanding Framework, which also includes a rubric for content evaluation. The document was produced based on feedback collected from Tribal Nations and partners concerning what Kansas students should learn about Indigenous pasts, presents, and futures (Kansas State Department of Education, n.d.). This deliberate and explicit sharing of Indigenous futures is supported through KACIE's *Essential Understandings and Subtopics* as well as their accompanying rubric for resource evaluation providing educators with a starting point to ground their curriculum in accurate and authentic representations of Indigenous peoples. Educators would benefit from purposeful professional development and dedicated time to become familiar with and integrate these new state sanctioned resources into their current pedagogy.

Figure 7

KACIE Essential Understandings

Kansas Advisory Council on Indigenous Education. (n.d.).

Lawrence Public Schools has a rubric for evaluating these resources, created by a former NASS director, that predates the above-mentioned resources. Joy encourages Lawrence educators to consider this when approaching Indigenous content and knowledge:

> "There's like a whole rubric[9] for culturally relevant, educational material that all the teachers, that all the people in the district are supposed to be using when they are coming up with their assignments, with their projects, with materials introduced in classes.

The Culturally Responsive Assessment of Indigenous Schooling (CRAIS) Tool (Castagno et al., 2021) is another available resource based in both culturally responsive practices

[9] In Lawrence Public Schools this rubric exists and was authored by former Indian Education Director, J. Attocknie. With her permission this rubric is included in the appendix.

and Indigenous pedagogy with an emphasis on the utilization in schools and districts with a high population of Indigenous students. Districts or national education associations could utilize these tools and collaborate with their local Tribal Nations to review the results and begin to create system change in how curriculum regarding Indigenous peoples looks in their respective learning communities.

Administrators

Recommendations for superintendents, administrators, and principals focused on understanding systems, staff development, and an intentional commitment to Indigenous students. Cherie spoke to the idea of commitment: "…there needs to be some improvement in how the USD 497 school district, works with the program, and there needs to be more effort from them as well and more commitment to our Indian students". Professional development was called upon by multiple Storytellers, to extend that call, I would caution against leaning on traditional one-and-done professional development that is prevalent in public education. Districts could work in partnership with their NASS programs to create what Mackey et al. (2022) call "micro-dosing" PD. Through the Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model, Mackey et al. (2022) sought to disrupt traditional models of leadership preparation by engaging in storywork to "generate a professional development opportunity that was conducted on a regular interval for shorter periods of time" in order to create a more meaningful connection between the school and the Indigenous community (p. 146). Tools like CRAIS and the resources provided by KACIE are imperative for creating ongoing adult learning and collaborative knowledge development with resources that are about, for, and with Indigenous people.

Tommy presented the perspective as an educator who has been through a teacher preparation program and find it wanting in the content presented on Indigenous peoples:

> "Hopefully you can have PDs for your teachers, because I think that's another key point because, you know, our teacher prep programs obviously need to be looked at as well because, you know, those are the people or the schools or the universities that are kicking out these teachers and not giving them those tools that they're not going to need."

Administrators and school leaders would benefit from reevaluating approaches to data. During the June 9, 2025 school board meeting, the Lawrence School Board listened to the director of district data and assessments report that Indigenous students have the lowest graduation rate and that this rate is continuing to decline. Beginning of the school year board reports included the rate of absenteeism for the districts Indigenous students. These narratives bookend each school year. It is the settler colonial machine doing its job but blaming us. Deficit based approaches to data representation have had a sustained critique from Indigenous scholars. Walter (2025) identifies the goal of this type of data: "Understanding us only in such terms supports national narratives of Indigenous deficit. And this is purposeful. Constituting Indigenous Peoples as "the problem" also operates to obscure non-Indigenous responsibility in the creation and maintenance of that problem" (p. 75). Districts would benefit from a community engaged research process, involving Indigenous students, past and present, as well as Indigenous educators, along with Indigenous families and community members. There is a need for a process that is not only about Indigenous students but for and in collaboration with Indigenous communities. It is also important to ask questions about the systems, curricula, and formative assessments that are in place district-wide. Rather than asking the question why aren't these Indigenous students graduating from Lawrence Public Schools, we should use a simple turn of phrase, why is Lawrence Public Schools increasing the number of Indigenous students they are

failing. Once community-based research is conducted, specific and measurable goals to ensure the districts commitment to Indigenous education can be developed.

Overall, storytellers are signaling administrators to uphold PSEL Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Core Values with specific attention to their Indigenous populations. In other words, they need to engage these intertribal communities and find ways to explicitly write the dreams, goals, and maps of success into your school and districts Mission and Vision Statements. When emphasizing these practices as encouraged in educational leadership training through PSEL Standard 10: School Improvement, leaders should specifically include the cultivation of those goals for Indigenous student, especially in districts and schools in Intertribal communities (NPBEA, 2015).

Preservice learning and ongoing teacher development were also noted as areas in need of improvement, specifically the onboarding of new teachers in our Intertribal community:

> "One of the things that we addressed with the school district was when new teachers are onboarded, new staff. They need it to include a learning component about NASS. This should be part of the new employee onboarding."

Storytellers vocalizing the need for administrators to build professional capacity aligns beautifully with the responsibilities of district and building leadership by PSEL Standard 6: Professional Capacity of School Personnel and Standard 7: Professional Community for Teachers and Staff (NPBEA, 2015).

Program Directors

The Storytellers have all engaged with various program directors in their time in Lawrence's Intertribal community. Recommendations for directors included active participation in the community and relationship building for the purpose of long-term sustainability. As one

storyteller shared, “I guess the hope and the dream is, you know, just to make it (NASS) big as you can, but I think it's also very important to have relationships with your administration, your principals.” Relationship building extended beyond the school district community and for Darcie included the City of Lawrence as a whole:

> “Well, I think here in Lawrence. Everyone's pretty open minded, and they like Native activities and events. I think it would go pretty good if we did more, even like having classes, like teaching them about all the different tribes. Just because there's still people out there that don't think we're here. Or we exist... Or there are some that love it and want to learn all they can. It goes both ways and have those (events) be open to the community, too, I think that's important.”

Darcie also recommended more information community-wide about the program: “I guess just try and get as much information out to your community about your program and what you have to offer, and then yeah, educate.” Eric’s recommendation included exploration of alternative funding sources and grant writing as a much-needed aspect of the program director’s work.

> “What we need to do is get the right leadership in that position, somebody that's going to apply for every grant known to man, who's going to brainstorm on their own…We need not just strong leadership but an ambitious leader that does everything they can to provide for the kids while getting that engagement from the city.”

Storytellers recommend that program directors work diligently to prevent conflict through the establishment of meeting norms and relationship building while utilizing restorative approaches to resolve conflicts that will inevitably arise. These recommendations have been added in greater depth to the Indigenous families and community member’s section. Restorative justice approaches and talking circles are seeing a renaissance in public education but their roots

are Indigenous. Although, program directors are being asked to facilitate community through these approaches, ultimately it is the community members, through participation, that make these programs a success.

There were calls to dream big, to reach out in community, to build relationships, and to educate. The Storytellers called for program directors to model the same tenets of reciprocity they are teaching their children and families. Spread that knowledge to decision makers, check writers, and grant seekers but through it all dream of something bigger. People are needed to bring these dreams to fruition, so there is a call for intentional relationship building, explicit norms for meetings with an emphasis on respect and reciprocity, and restorative justice for conflict. Anderson (2024) explains that these approaches will foster advocacy as well as help grow and maintain healthy relationships that are ultimately the foundation of community engagement.

Indigenous Families and Community Members

For Indigenous families and community members, the Storytellers recommend restorative approaches to not just build community but to stay in community when there is conflict. What do we do when community is hard? What do we do when we are hard on one another instead of the systems that were built to break us down? We begin to do the job for the settler colonial agenda. Instead, Louise gently but firmly reminds us: "…this is for our children; first of all, it's not for you to be like, (insert eye roll) God, like, no, stop it. There's a lot of great minds that could get together here and figure some things out." Joy reaffirms Louise's' stance on conflict and reminds us who is watching:

> "It's really just wanting what's best for our young people and that requires getting along with people who don't want to get along with- you're modeling that. These kids are

looking to you to see how to respond to people that don't like you, or people that you don't like, or other types of adversity."

Participation in community talking circles is a first step forward to building capacity for restorative approaches. Lawrence Public Schools is among many school districts to adopt restorative justice in their classrooms and have hosted smaller community building circles to familiarize families with the practice. Anderson (2024) reveals, "the use of restorative circles may help build or repair trust, create community, and promote constructive problem solving (p. 58). Building capacity, efficacy in working toward a common goal, and the relationships required to act collectively are key benefits of incorporating restorative practices. These practices pair nicely with storywork tenets respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy (Anderson, 2024; Archibald 2008).

Storytellers long for more engagement with the program from more Indigenous families. Several Storytellers spoke of bringing their children to meetings, volunteering together for events, and explicitly showing their children how to be in community. According to Tommy, the children are the key to lasting and authentic community engagement:

> "The young kids being together, you know, my girls see those NASS families out in the community and they say hi to each other. That's something that I try to teach them, you know, to respect everybody. Try to have a conversation with other NASS families because at the end of the day, you want NASS families to support each other and respect each other."

Bring them in and let them see all aspects of community organizing. Sometimes there will be moments of pure joy and sometimes we may not see eye-to-eye but if we teach our children how

to organize, how to act, and how to repair we can remain and reimagine ways of being in Intertribal community.

According to the Title VI and Johnson O'Malley by-laws young people can be active participants of the parent committee meetings once they are in middle school and high school. A way to foster this participation is through a youth centered intertribal clubs. Parents and community members can inquire about their local school's intertribal club and if one doesn't exist creating partnerships through the Native American Student Services program is a great way to start. Providing the space for Indigenous youth to build relationships, share experiences, and practice leadership has been paramount for capacity building and sustaining my own career in public education. The "counterspace" as Sabzalian (2019) explains, can form meaningful relationships as well as offer counters to the daily microaggressions they are faced with in the classroom. Start these spaces, support these spaces, bring the snacks, come to the potluck, share your stories, show the kids how to bead or bake, come play kickball, eat come pizza with us, the repair it will bring you to your own young person is unquantifiable. Indigenous families, community members, and parent committees are being called to create and respect conduct protocols to ensure a welcoming environment so that these spaces can continue to grow for generations to come.

Reflecting on Sweetgrass Roots as a Metaphor

The goal of this research, for me, was to learn from my community, to listen with every ounce of my being to the hopes, fears, celebrations, frustrations, and dreams of the parents, families, and community members. As I listened, the stories began to intertwine, I would constantly review the audio recordings of interviews, grateful I could hear their voices lest I attribute the wrong quotes to a Storyteller. The humbling and astounding reality was my

Storytellers began to sing out in harmony, a chorus, repeating one another's feelings, fears, and ideas. Voices representing many tribal nations in concert on how to engage in community for the benefit of our youth.

I approached this research looking for and leaning in to acts of survivance. Forming my questions and engaging Storytellers to share their truths. Instead of emphasizing why parents and families weren't showing up to engage in community with NASS I learned why the families that were showing up, kept showing up. I heard stories of parents staring down the public education system, forged for our attempted ruin, still working as it was designed, and advocating for Indigenous students, as well as parents, families, and educators working through, and actively against, the settler colonial project of assimilation through education.

From the beginning, I wanted something tangible, a plan, a promise, that I could hold out to my community once this work was complete. Hands open and outstretched, I wanted to say, *"look, we created this- together".*

In the tongue of the academy, my culminating gift is the beginnings of a metaphorical framework for engagement and capacity building through Title VI Indian Education programs in an urban intertribal community. A framework merging the well-known concepts of "grassroots" community organizing, with an emphasis on Kimmerer's (2020) poetic knowledge sharing in *Braiding Sweetgrass.* Leaning into Kovach's (2021) emphasis on Indigenous methods and use of metaphor, throughout this project I found myself thinking about Sweetgrass as a way to conceptualize urban intertribal communities. Kovach (2021) explains how "metaphors help to reveal, and make visible, Indigenous ideas, thinking, and thought. The use of metaphor in Indigenous conceptual framing allows for a variety of expressions representing diverse experiences and symbols from place" (p. 48). Here I offer my reflections on using this metaphor

as a methodological, or conceptual, tool to help articulate the unique qualities found in urban intertribal communities. Or rather, what I might call *Sweetgrassroots Community Building*.

Grassroots initiatives are defined as a basic level of activity or organization, often conducted by the very members of that community. *Sweetgrassroots* initiatives are the same concept but dreamed, developed, and brought to fruition by Indigenous communities. Intertribal communities that reside away from their ancestral homelands, uprooted by as many varying factors as tribes that exist. Some uprooted by those who sought to do harm, some by choice, some by circumstance but all replanted here and through community care, systems building, personify Indigenous survivance.

As discussed previously, research on urban intertribal communities is lacking; therefore, it stands to reason that many methodological frameworks lack an Indigenous lens. The use of a metaphorical framework with Indigenous methodology incorporates culturally sustaining practices, storywork, and promotes accessibility to a wider range of audiences, making the research both rigorous and providing validity. Stories informed the use of the metaphor of *Sweetgrassroots Community Building* to illustrate grassroots effort in an Indigenized context when geographically removed from clear political institutions representing a single nation's tribal sovereignty, dependent on community organizing, culturally sustaining practices, and relationality. In this 'Sweetgrassroots' metaphor, the facets of community building are likened to the strands of sweetgrass, each with specific functions but interdependent on one another for overall strength, healing, grounding. Moving forward I will be exploring how this metaphor might allow us to deepen our understanding of urban intertribal communities and ponder frameworks that might also help future research and inquiry. The following framework feels like

a gift I was given. Informed by storywork and the Storytellers themselves, I was taught when honored with a gift to present a gift in return.

Sweetgrassroots Community Building: A Metaphor & Prayer

Sweetgrass, an aromatic and medicinal plant with traditional and contemporary uses. Utilized in prayer, gifted in honor, and ceremoniously placed on the dash of your auntie's car or connected to form a hoop rocking back and forth, a fragrant lullaby on the rearview mirror of your dad's "Rez Ride". The air conditioning might not work but fear not that medicine on the dash is doing the heavy lifting. A braid of sweetgrass, carried from Montana by my Apsaalooké sister Eva, sits above a watercolor painting of my late grandparents.

Figure 8

Sage Hanging Over a Watercolor Painting of Burgess and Millicent Tapedo

I've always loved the smell of sweetgrass and coveted each braid that I've ever been gifted. My love deepened when I saw sweetgrass through the eyes, and by the words, of Robin Wall Kimmerer, Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2020) was a salve for a hurt I had not yet named. I read the book slow, savoring each chapter and often staining the pages of my borrowed book with tears - tears of affirmation, wonder, empathy, and

the sullen melancholy that sometimes lingers and latches, like a new baby, to memories of motherhood. The book, a collection of stories about the natural world and our relationship, features many stories about plants from the perspective of Kimmerer's tribal nation. Sweetgrass, I know, and it's Kimmerer's poetic descriptions of sweetgrass that continued to return to me during my doctoral program studies. The lens through which I began to more deeply understand community was set lovingly upon my eyes by Kimmerer's words.

Kimmerer (2020) reveals that "sweetgrass is best planted not by seed, but by putting roots directly in the ground" (p. 2); in other words, a transplant. Transplant was how almost all of the Storytellers described themselves as members of our urban intertribal community. Intergenerational intertribal communities that reside away from their ancestral homelands are full of these transplants. This study, which explored dynamics of an urban intertribal community, helped provide stories and perspectives that helped me evolve the metaphor of a Sweetgrassroots community building. Specifically, it helped me conceptualize grassroots effort in an Indigenized context when geographically removed from reservation-based notions and geographies, highlighting tribal sovereignty, yet, with a live sustaining dependence on community organizing, culturally sustaining practices, and relationality. While the field of Indigenous methodologies continues to grow there are many methodological frameworks and tools becoming available for specific use for Indigenous communities. However, the ongoing emphasis on

Figure 9

Visual of Sweetgrassroots Metaphor

sovereignty and self-determination can make it difficult to apply these kinds of frameworks to intertribal communities.

In this 'Sweetgrassroots' metaphor, the facets of community building are likened to the strands of sweetgrass, each with specific functions but interdependent on one another for overall strength, healing, grounding. The genesis of this notion initially presented through prose in Chapter 4 as I concluded my findings, Here, I continue this exercise. In considering the following layers of the metaphor, each strand is paired with its equal in Archibald's (2008) *Principles of Storywork* to affirm review of Indigenous methodologies at work, a companion planting in hopes of a plentiful harvest:

Strand One: To Gather Together

For generations, intertribal communities, like Lawrence, Kansas, have welcomed Indigenous peoples whose roots were not grown here. Connections made; acquaintances fostered kinship. Haskell Indian Nations University or Native American Student Services programming and events become epicenters of building these relationships. Intertribal pow wows, community feeds, fashion shows, open markets, and basketball games. The gathering is key and a foundational component to an intertribal community's success, for how can we know one another, support one another, and work together unless we first meet.

In practice this looks like calling folks in, often by name, and inviting them personally to engage in community, to know one another. Kimmerer (2020), when speaking to a graduate student called sweetgrass, "the grass that will teach you" and advised her student to "get to know it" (p. 158). Building a base with community requires the same attitude, every member of an intertribal community can teach you, but we have to get to know one another. Start with a meal,

make being in community an event to be celebrated, not a meeting to be met or a box to be checked. Build relationships and collective action and goal setting will follow.

Strand Two: Cultural Collaboration and Strategy Across Tribal Nations

Strategize collaboratively to identify culturally sustaining practices. Cultural resilience through navigation of Eurocentric systems. As Kimmerer (2013) describes, "When the sweetgrass is cared for and treated with respect, it will flourish, but if the relationship fails, so does the plant" (p. 262). Strand two asks us to collaborate with one another to engage in culturally sustaining practices, in an intertribal community that can be challenging with so many Tribal Nations and cultural protocols represented. Challenging, but not impossible, there is no pan-Indianism here but there are ways we can celebrate one another. Native students and community members are invited to maintain their cultural identities while respecting the differences of one another, but simultaneously building – *carrying, keeping, creating* – new shared protocols and expectations grown from the transplanted roots.

Collaborating across Tribal Nations to develop cultural and community sustaining practices that are inclusive, welcoming, and affirming spaces by and for members of the intertribal community. Building systems of support in collaboration with the members of the intertribal community and in conversation and consultation with the Tribal Nations they represent. Tribal consultation is often mentioned when discussing education or government entities but why not have an intertribal committee who regularly reaches out to Nations to update them on the communities their members now call home?

This particular strand can hold the tension that comes from building community which mirrors the tension required when braiding sweetgrass, Kimmerer (2020) explains:

> Of course, you can do it by yourself-by tying one end to a chair, or holding it in your teeth and braiding backward away from yourself-but the sweetest way is to have someone else hold the end so that you pull gently against each other, all the while leaning in, head to head. (p. IX)

Strand two is strategy in navigating the dominate educational system, while working towards the preservation of Indigenous futures. Being all the while mindful of the capacity of your community members, never taking more than you have given, maintaining that balance so that community can flourish, never deplete. Sweetgrass also teaches us this practice, over-harvesting can result in the plant's demise. There is a balance is what is given and what is taken.

In practice, this looks like Intertribal clubs, dance classes, new parent support groups, traditional art classes, language classes, tending community garden plots together, and round dances, social dances, and celebrations. Creating or recreating traditions that have worked in the past, Louise who was born and raised in Lawrence has witnessed NASS since the 1980 and remembers fondly the height of family and community involvement:

> "They had a banquet every year and many parents participated. It would be filled. There would be kids running all around and there would be like, you know, a big thing just (fried) chicken and everybody would bring a dish to share. I really miss those kinds of opportunities for the community because you know, now I'm like, why is why is it me and (names three other committee members)? Like, where is everybody else at?"

Indigenous youth as the succession plan is a part of strand two, as we engage with one another with respect, reverence, and reciprocity, we bring the children along and through modeling show them the way. These young people's future engagement will be a direct result of the way their parents and families were treated and engaged with in community. Just as sweetgrass when

harvested, with reciprocity and reverence, below the soil buds produce “thrifty young shoots to fill the gap” so too do the youth in our Intertribal communities fill the gaps (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 164).

Strand Three: Story as Gift and Gratitude

Throughout this framework relational and intergenerational accountability and the principle of remembering to restore connections and responsibility must be incorporated. Metis scholar Adam Gaudry (2018) is correct when he states that “the long-term survival of Indigenous knowledge ultimately rests in the hands of Indigenous people” (p.294). We must repatriate knowledge of our past from ancestors long vanished to answer our questions of today (Barnes, 2022) *Sweetgrassroots* as a developing metaphorical framework for community sustaining practices in an urban Intertribal context requires *remembering*. Like most relationally work, remembering is paramount. As Kimmerer (2020) beautifully reminds us, the land remembers what we said and what we did. Stories are among our most potent tools for restoring the land as well as our relationship to the land” (p. 341). With this remembering will come the restoration of our relationship and responsibility to one another. Community work can be challenging and there is no real end. These stories, these archives, are what can sustain us. As McCoy (2024) encourages, “[T]hese stories guide us, giving us energy, hope, and knowledge as we work toward joyful futures where all of us thrive” (p. 147).

In practice this strand looks like creating archives of survivance in other urban intertribal communities. Sharing stories, victories, and celebrations across urban intertribal communities.) Building a network of communities like Lawrence, Minneapolis, and Denver. Storyteller Eric believes in the power of these conversations and storytelling to build community,

> "Stuff like this(study) is gonna help. Just people being insightful people. Just provoking thought, emotions, provoking, you know, all the positive, because we come up with negative ends, it's so easy to come up with negative stuff. But to have something and create a positive, you know, that's good medicine. Like laughter…good medicine."

Stories as foundation and research, as our institutional memory, as a gift we give to each other because this type of research will sustain us, Chief Benjamin Barnes (2022) of the Shawnee declares:

> Questions from me, and those like me, help us to preserve the boundaries of our identities, rooting us into the soil of our cultures and histories. For Indigenous people and our communities, to continue to thrive, both culturally and politically, we must nourish our roots. (p. 40)

Indigenous people are the land and metaphors, like the one Barnes spells out clearly. In this reality, the roots are the people, and the stories will sustain and strengthen us, as they always have by *carrying, keeping,* and *creating* as described in Chapter 4.

Sweetgrass is medicine, revered and respected. I feel the urge to clarify the use of sweetgrass as metaphor is with love and reverence. I by no means mean to trivialize the medicine's power, to mythicize, or even Indigenize academia. In truth, I didn't create this metaphor as much as I observed it happening and have been witness to its existence since I was a child. Kimmerer (2020) wrestled with writing about sweetgrass in the academic, her words continue to encourage me: "To be heard, you must speak the language of the one you want to listen" (p. 158). *Sweetgrassroots Community Building* is a metaphorical framework for community organizing. and can be refined through more research in urban intertribal communities by collecting stories of mobilization, navigation, and building sustainable action in

those respective communities. *Sweetgrassroots Community Building* is also a prayer, an offering that I make to my community for us to gather together, to dream together, teach and raise our children together, and return the gift as new transplants find their way to Lawrence, Kansas. This framework is a hope, a prayer, for our intertribal communities to endure.

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Appendix A- Informed Consent

Informed Consent

PROJECT TITLE:

Creating an Archive of Survivance: Exploring the stories of an Urban Intertribal Community Members and

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Royce Ann Collins, Professor, Educational Leadership

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Jennifer Bonilla, doctoral student

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS: Dr. Royce Ann Collins, racollin@ksu.edu

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PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

The purpose of this study is to explore the survivance stories of American Indian parents, family members (n=3-4), and community members (n=3-4) engagement with the Title VI and Johnson O'Malley (i.e., Indian Education) programs in Lawrence Public Schools. By focusing on these narratives, this study aims to deepen our understanding of urban Intertribal community and family engagement in a public-school setting, while highlighting how these families and community members *mobilize*, *navigate*, and build *sustainable actions* within Eurocentric educational systems. Through participants stories, this will allow us to deepen our understanding of how Intertribal community and family engagement contributes to the creation of an *archive of* survivance.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

You will be asked to participate in three rounds of interviews that will last 60 to 90 minutes in length. The interviews will be audio recorded then transcribed by the doctoral student. You will have opportunities to review findings and transcripts.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:

While we do not anticipate any risks or discomfort, we do understand if you choose to withdraw from the research study. Any information collected to that point will be deleted and not included in the final dissertation.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:

Anticipated benefits for the participants include the opportunity to voice joys and victories in community building, being heard and having experiences validated as worthy of research. Contribution to this study can add to the small body of research that exists focusing solely on Indigenous families in the public school system.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

Audio recording of participants stories through the interview process. Audio recordings will be transcribed by the graduate student for use with coding. You will be given a pseudonym which will be used on all transcripts and data analysis. You will also have the opportunity to review the interview transcript and make sure no identifying information is included. All documents will be stored on a password protected computer and a locked office of the graduate student's. The data will be destroyed in three years after the conclusion of the dissertation. Only the graduate student and the dissertation committee chair (PI) will have access to the data.
The information collected as part of the research, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

Appendix B -Interview Questions

There were 16 interview questions developed: five questions seeking background and the participant's initial engagement and mobilization in the NASS program, five questions focused on navigating the educational system, and six questions emphasizing sustainable action. These questions represent planned entry points to conversations across three interviews.

1. How would you describe the Intertribal Community of Lawrence, Kansas to a newcomer?
2. Can you tell me about your first experience learning about the Title VI or Johnson O'Malley programs in the context of Lawrence Public Schools?
3. What motivated you to get involved with the Indian Education programs?
4. Can you describe any challenges or barriers you initially encountered when engaging with these programs? How did you and your family/community navigate those challenges?
5. Can you describe any experiences or moments that made you feel empowered or inspired to take action within the educational system?
6. How would you describe your experience within the broader educational system in Lawrence Public Schools before you engaged with the Indian Education programs?
7. In what ways have the Title VI or Johnson O'Malley programs helped you and your family navigate the educational system?
8. Can you share a specific story about a time when you or your family faced a challenge in the school system, and how did you overcome it?
9. How did you work with school officials, teachers, or other staff members to address the needs of your family and community?

10. Can you think of any barriers that are still present in the school system today that you believe affect American Indian students and families? How do you think they could be addressed?
11. Over time, how has your engagement with the Indian Education programs evolved?
12. How have your family or community's actions and involvement with the Title VI or Johnson O'Malley programs contributed to sustainable changes within the school system?
13. Can you share an example of a long-term impact you've seen from your involvement in these programs?
14. What have you learned through your engagement with these programs that has shaped your approach to supporting future generations of Indigenous students?
15. What do you believe is needed to ensure that the work and actions of families like yours are sustainable in the long run, both in terms of community involvement and program effectiveness?
16. Looking to the future, how would you like to see the Title VI and Johnson O'Malley programs improve to better support American Indian students and their families?

Prior to the conversations, the participants, or Storytellers, were provided with an informed consent form for participation that described the study in depth and provided appropriate contact information for further questions or concerns. The questions were crafted and relayed in order to support the telling of stories, rather than rote responses.

Appendix C - NASS Rubric for Curriculum Evaluation

JENNIFER ATTOCKNIE, NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENT SERVICES, EXT. 4954, CENTENNIAL BUILDING updated January 2015

This chart/rubric contains some criteria used to evaluate books with American Indian/Alaska Native content. As educators, we are encouraged to practice mindful inquiry and consider multiple perspectives, while keeping in mind "below the line" information. As we engage in this practice, please realize this chart/rubric is a starting point for conversations and decisions. As every "best of" list, no matter what the original intent, eventually needs to be updated, I put together this chart/rubric to be used as a tool for reflection, evaluation and deepened understanding of the books you choose for your classroom while considering how your Native students see and experience the world around them.

Please feel free to contact me with any specific questions or comments. Thank you. ~jla

	If yes, ☺	If no, ☹
Is there a specific tribe mentioned in the text?	What is the tribe? ☺ Does it include modern references/settings? ☺ Are there websites listed in the resources/bibliography? ☺	If it is a made up tribe, or the tribe is never mentioned, then it probably isn't authentic. ☹ If the book treats all Indians as from the same homogenous culture, then the book is not representing Native cultures well. ☹
Is the author Native American?	Then, what tribe? This information should be readily available through the authors' or publishers' websites. Most American Indian authors are very forthcoming about their heritage. ☺ Is the author writing from his or her own culture's perspective? ☺ Consider the author's relationship to the tribe(s) represented in the book. ☺	If not, consider… What research or personal experience is the author drawing upon? If the author has no real connection with the tribe, then… ☹ If the author has written tons of books about tons of things, then he/she is probably not an authority on a specific tribe. ☹ The book may lack correct insight to the culture represented. ☹
If the non-Indian author is closely related to the tribe represented, does the tribe acknowledge their expertise?	Then, it's probably a good book. ☺	If the tribe does not approve, then it should be avoided. ☹ Being "adopted into a tribe" may be a dubious claim. ☹
Regarding names. For example, "Little Indian Two Feather" = fake or "Red Wing" = real	There are many Anglicized versions of Indian names. If you are not sure, go back and check on the author and the tribe(s) represented.	It may not be authentic. Always best to do research. Don't make assumptions.
Does the text treat tribal languages with the same amount of respect as English?	Are the Indigenous language words explained and explored through context? ☺ Is there a glossary or definition of the Indigenous words in the book? ☺	Do the Indigenous people in the story speak in stilted, "Ugh. Me make fire." "Tonto-speak"? ☹ Are the languages/songs described as gibberish/nonsense? ☹
Are the terms used to describe Native people the same as used to describe other humans in the story?	If all the people are women, men, and children, then… ☺	If all the Native women are squaws, all the Native men are braves and all the Native children are papooses, then… ☹
Are American Indian characters…	Living in the same world in which we live (i.e. drive cars, live in apartments, have jobs, relationships)? ☺ Being active members of their communities? ☺ Having their own struggles and humanity? ☺ Making decisions, not merely reacting to non-Indians? ☺	Only reacting to Non-Indian characters with more power? ☹ Seen only as… savages? ☹ … objects? ☹ … animals? ☹ … only in the past? ☹ … vanishing? ☹ … dead? ☹ … drunks? ☹

As you've probably noted, as you move through this chart, not all books fit into an either/or, smiley/frowney, yes/no didactic framework. That's okay. Is there a :/ face? A caveat face category? Even your required, assigned textbooks may have some fundamental issues that become apparent as you read this. Remember that you have control in your classroom. You are allowed to question sources and provide supplements to assigned texts. Throwing the baby out with the bathwater may not serve you or your students' needs well. You may come up with some middle ground or use the texts as a starting point to courageous conversations about race and sovereignty with your students and peers.