

Resurgence: Restructuring Urban American Indian Education

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Abstract

The following work is an examination of alternative education programs created by members of urban Native American communities specifically on behalf of their own students. As a result of chronic and systemic failures of local public schools, these communities felt compelled to intervene in the interests of their youth and set about constructing new programming centered on their indigenous culture.

A brief recounting of the historical relationship between the U.S. public education system and the Native American community was included to provide context, as well as to demonstrate an intrinsic failure of the system itself as being responsible for generating current academic disparities. Additionally, recent scholastic data was also included (as yielded by the six cities where the featured alternative programming are in operation) to further demonstrate that the systemic failings of public schools are not receding.

From there, the work examines efforts towards alternative education undertaken on behalf of Native American students within six urban locations – Albuquerque, New Mexico; Denver, Colorado; Los Angeles, California; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Portland, Oregon; and Seattle, Washington. Each level of development of alternative programming within these urban areas was categorized, which details a pattern of civic engagement by the local Native American community, as well as recurring educational strategies that have been employed in an attempt to define the emergence of an indigenous pedagogy.

The work concludes with specific recommendations for ways that the efforts at the featured sites could be explored further, supported better, and transmitted throughout Indian country in the hopes of empowering the Native American community to assert its control over public schools and rectify the systemic problems for their youth on behalf of a system that has thus far been incapable of accomplishing.

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Introduction

To begin, it must be understood that this work represents a temporary extraction of information drawn from the midst of an ongoing process of evolution. This process involves a system nearly as old as the republic itself, and the information a brief glimpse into its current status. Much like the fisherman studying a catch recently pulled into their birch bark canoe to better understand the relative health of the fish population and surrounding ecosystem, this work is likewise intended to serve as a mere snapshot in time of a journey that began long ago. It is with full understanding that it will continue to unfold for many generations to come, irrespective of our actions. Our best hope is to influence its progress, and in so doing, possibly effect positive change.

The particular construct this work has set out to examine now involves one of this nation's most heralded institutions – the public education system – and more specifically a recent outcropping of alternative programs designed to meet the needs of urban American Indian students. In the spirit of our inquisitive ancestral fisherman, who was able to focus with the gentle attention and soft affection required by their understanding that their catch was to be released back into the water unharmed, we know that the public education system in the United States remains far from its own desired destination - despite its own efforts at reform. As such, the conclusions drawn from this work must be done so without condemnation but instead with the same attention and affection towards making a positive contribution towards the furtherance of this particular system's ongoing evolution.

If at all possible, it is the hope of this work to potentially accelerate some of these evolutionary processes now present within the featured alternative programs so that more urban Native American students will be able to achieve academically while at the same time furthering

the development of their own cultural understandings. With this in mind, a shared belief is held that through the broad dissemination of the information presented that perhaps more innovation and progress will manifest within the educational programming operating throughout Indian country. It is also the hope that the exciting alternative sites being showcased will help further the development of an indigenous pedagogy – predicated on culturally-contextualized schools, curriculum, and teaching methods employed on behalf of our indigenous students. And so, as we begin, we do so knowing that this work will itself be returned to the ecosystem from whence it came - all in the hopes that learnings brought forth through this examination will engender growth and success in ever larger demonstrations in the days to come . . .

The relationship between formalized education and the Indigenous populations of North America has been fraught with complication, violence, oppression, trauma, reform, progress, and modicums of success since its very inception. It is an association dominated by the sheer supremacy of a colonizing power often belligerent to those under its subjugation, and yet it remains internally fueled by ongoing concerted efforts of a colonized yet sovereign people intent sustaining their culture and determining their own destiny. Within this tension continues to emerge real academic innovation. Through a brief recounting of the historical antecedents that birthed this relationship and has informed it over the ensuing years, it is the intent of this work to provide readers unfamiliar with this complicated history a primer as to why this system and its methods of interfacing with Indigenous people occurred in the manner that it did and how this relationship continues to inform the efforts within the schools of the 21st century.

From there, it is important to understand the current state of affairs regarding the impact public education is having on our indigenous youth. Standing in the long shadows of its own past, the U.S. public education system has from time to time come to recognize – through the

prompting of public reports and new federal policy - the need for every student to succeed with none being left behind. With that in mind, one must ask to what extent have current strategies and reforms – tactics intentionally deployed as a means of divorcing the system from its history of disgraceful achievement data – actually worked? Targeting six key urban centers that possess a high density of Native American youth attending public schools (Albuquerque, NM; Denver, CO; Los Angeles, CA; Minneapolis, MN; Portland, OR; Seattle, WA), an examination of the key indicators traditionally used to determine the educational efficacy of the public education system has been included. Through a brief examination of this data, the reader will be able to see the effect of internal reform strategies and what results they are currently yielding for Native American youth within these six urban centers. As one may already surmise from anecdotal observations, news stories within the media, or within ongoing policy discussions, there remains a yawning “achievement gap” between students of color and Native American students in contrast to their white counterparts. Despite the ongoing focus and repeated clarion calls by both administrators and policy makers for actively narrowing this gap in academic achievement, many indigenous educational leaders within Native communities have elected to try something different altogether in terms of how their youth are educated within a formalized system. From their efforts, a resurgence in community support and usage began to quickly emerge.

It is at this juncture where this work then shifts into coverage of these community-governed endeavors. Within each of the six highlighted urban centers are operational alternative learning programs designed to uplift and empower Native American students. These programs have intentionally embraced educational approaches and curriculum that purposefully deviate from the traditional methodologies typically found within the mainstream institutions. At these particular alternative settings, the educators abide by a deep connection to their indigenous

culture and customs, and at all points possible, incorporate these traditional practices directly into the curriculum and the construct of their schools. While not a panacea of unqualified success, the strategies employed by these particular alternative programs have achieved demonstrable positive outcomes and have come to form the basis of an identifiable indigenous pedagogy. As a result, each site has become worthy of investigation. It is the intent of this work to showcase these alternative methodologies as a means of broadly disseminating their efforts for readers and communities who may be unaware of such approaches, and who are intent on pursuing such alternatives themselves on behalf of their own.

To this end, the fourth segment of this work will attempt to synthesize the methodologies behind the academic pursuits currently underway at these alternative sites by identifying their common principles and applications – all in an attempt to showcase best practices that have served to achieve positive gains for Native American students, and to provide a roadmap for other communities to follow to implement their own iteration of these strategies. In an ideal scenario, through the identification and cataloguing of these approaches, a broader adoption of such alternative methodologies will then be able to manifest – dramatically improving the educational achievements for Native American youth throughout the country for many generations to come.

In this respect, the fifth and final section will discuss five concrete recommendations to pursue in the hopes of supporting and building upon the efforts of the sites featured within this piece. It is the hope that the discussions generated by this work will be occurring widely throughout professional circles. Perhaps along the way, a groundswell will come to pass that can serve to initiate a sincere contribution towards accelerating the ongoing processes that are forever pushing America's public education system to evolve into something new and better.

It is important to note that throughout this effort the terms indigenous, Native American, and American Indian are all used, and used interchangeably. This decision to do so was deliberate as a means of best reflecting the vernacular used by the American Indian community itself. Even now in this current era, we do not necessarily feel compelled to strictly adhere to the current standard of political correctness relating to how we refer to ourselves, especially as such standards and terms tend to be impermanent, unlike our sovereignty or culture.

Much like the ancestral fisherman in his birch bark canoe gently examining the fish just pulled from the water, as well as studying the water itself, an assessment into the current state of our educational ecosystem has been made. It is an attempt to see where and understand why poisonous conditions remain, and to learn about how some portions of the water have been cleansed through regeneration - restored to a condition where both the fish and water can once again thrive and prosper. Once concluded, the gentle hand will then return the fish softly to where it had originated, followed by a silent oar sliding into the water and paddling forward to the further shore where new knowledge gained can be shared with those intent on furthering the changes sought . . .

Author's Note: As a result of very recent modifications put into place by the Every Student Succeeds Act (otherwise known as ESSA), federal funding for American Indian education has had its traditional moniker of Title VII Funding switched to the new name of Title VI Funding. Throughout this work, this longstanding federal funding retains its original Title VII name – although it is in direct reference to what is now to be called “Title VI Funding”.

Section I – The History

“If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, it expects what never was and never will be.”
- *Thomas Jefferson* (Mondale, 2001, p. 19)

Part I: The Origins of the U.S. Education System

In order to properly appraise the strategies currently being employed by the alternative sites selected for this work, it is incumbent upon us to become familiar with the historical context out of which the needs for these very programs arose. This history, centered upon the relationship between the ever-evolving formalized education systems of the United States and the sovereignty of the Native American people has been wrought with violence, trauma, injustice, reform, and finally, innovation. To fully comprehend why these alternative programs are in operation within the 21st Century, we must return back to the origins of schooling itself within the 18th Century and follow its path forward from there. Once traversed, we will be better able to understand the impetus for a conscious transition away from mainstream efforts towards methodologies that are, for all intents and purposes, born of traditional practices predating the United States itself. The following is a brief encapsulation of this timeline, highlighting the key occurrences and turning points that were instrumental in molding the public education system into what it is today, and how it relates specifically to the American Indian community.

“Americanization” - Common Schools and the American Identity

From the first heady days after gaining its independence from a foreign colonial power, the United States has placed a preeminent focus on providing some form of formalized education for its people as a means of sustaining the new republic. At that time, the young nation was comprised of a variety of geographic regions, as well as a variety of educational levels within its citizenry. If this fledgling nation was to survive, the governing powers quickly surmised that an informed populace capable of honoring the rigors required of participatory democracy would be absolutely vital. Only through the ongoing support of an educated and engaged citizenry would this new “democratic experiment” have a chance of surviving. (Tyack, 2003)

However, the manner by which this education should manifest throughout the countryside wasn't immediately clear. Up until the American war for independence, schooling often reflected the diversity of lifestyles present within the thirteen original colonies. Once independence had been gained, the nation's leaders found value in maintaining this concept of local control for it was believed to be integral towards allowing continued self-rule within a democratic society. To this end, most townships still relied on their local churches as the main vehicle for providing education to their youth. These small, municipally-controlled education programs had begun as a way in which new colonists steeled themselves against the formidable challenges of survival in the "New World". Now, these efforts were focused primarily on basic literacy development, the further teaching of religious values to promote civility amongst colonists (in most instances that of the Protestant Christian orientation), and now a cursory introduction to civic engagement and its applications within the newly founded United States. Owing to the overwhelming agrarian economy at that time, most other skill sets were fostered and taught at the home on behalf of the needs of the family farm. (Pulliam, 1987)

In practice, education at this time – despite being highly prized and advocated for by the highest elected leaders in the land – was essentially a series of loosely defined learning spaces whose primary mission was the reinforcement of the cultural values of the local community in concert with that community's basic core beliefs. Any additional training for economic purposes was left to the devices of each family or community based on need. (Pulliam, 1987) Citizenship was only introduced within the common schools as a means of providing a basic support to the democratic processes that were just being implemented. Seldom were there any coordination between schools or towns beyond the geographic boundaries that encompassed any one particular locale, as each operated in relative isolation as a result of the great distances that

existed between one community and the next. Such was make-up of American schools for nearly the first fifty years of the republic. (Mondale & Patton, 2001)

By the mid-eighteenth century, circumstances would cause the United States to drastically reevaluate and modify how schooling would be undertaken. Three major developments would cause a dramatic upheaval in how the government viewed education, and more importantly, how education was then regarded in terms of its utilitarian purposes for the society as a whole. The first of which was the onset of the industrial revolution. Begun in Europe, it was quick to envelope the United States with its reach and import – transforming her cities and towns. With the onset of increased mechanization and mass production brought on by industrialization, a sudden need for skilled labor manifested almost overnight. (Rury, 2002)

Additionally, most of the economic development associated with this new movement occurred within urban centers – centralized locations where, courtesy of the newly developed systems of mass transit (canals and railways), raw materials could be shipped for processing and manufactured into the finished goods to be sold to consumers. As such, a slow but steady migration to the cities began to occur during this period. At the beginning of the 18th Century, there were three cities possessing population totals beyond 10,000 people. By the 1850, that number was at 42 and growing as many more Americans began to make the move from rural locations on into these burgeoning cities in the hopes of better economic opportunity. (Mondale & Patton, 2001)

Concurrently, a second major development arising at this time would in turn serve to exacerbate events. In this instance, massive surges of new immigrants relocating from Europe on into the United States began arriving almost daily. Drawing from populations across the “Old World”, these new arrivals represented a myriad of differing languages and religious beliefs

(including a vast contingent of Roman Catholics originating from Ireland and Italy). Here again, this wave of incoming humanity was immediately channeled almost exclusively into the urban centers of the United States, for it was in America's cities where the major ports were located, as well as where the readiest opportunities for work were to be found in light of the breathtaking pace of industrialization. As the urban centers became more and more concentrated with immigrants, the need to incorporate them at a steady pace took hold. For their youth, it would be the public schools tasked with this charge.

The third major occurrence during the mid-eighteenth century centered on the desire to move the nation westward. Since its inception, the United States had always envisioned itself as a potential world power on par with its European counterparts. To accomplish this status, the nation set its eyes on moving across the North American continent and establishing its dominion all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Concepts such as "Manifest Destiny" – the belief in God's preordained expansion to the Pacific Ocean by the United States – ignited the public imagination, while military necessity and the now ravenous appetites for raw materials brought on by the booming industrialized production centers further fueled this desire for expansion and conquest – driving this sentiment into practical application. (Rury, 2002)

For the American population at large, many became entranced with the idea of being able to leave behind their small farms or the crushing growth of the eastern cities with their seemingly endless waves of new immigrants. For these people, the pursuit of a fresh start out west, on land that seemed abundant in its supply and fertility, as well as virginal in its untouched splendor – was too much of an opportunity to pass up. (Rury, 2002) For many, the move west was the fulfillment of a promise espoused by their upbringing and local church-led schools, that for the virtuous and hard worker, it would be God's will that the land shall be theirs for the taking.

Fueled by the spirit of special dispensation, large numbers of Americans picked up their belongings and moved west to claim what they believed to be theirs by Divine right.

Out of these three major developments came the emergence of a very real fear shared by many American leaders. Owing to the tumultuous change that now surrounded them, they became worried that the national identity of the United States – only recently considered and still regarded to be in its fragile infancy – was in serious jeopardy of succumbing to some other, foreign character beyond their control. The confluence of a first-of-its kind internal migration from rural towns to urban centers, coupled with the dilution of American villages as vast numbers left behind their neighbors in favor of penetrating deeper into the western frontier, had spread many communities thin. Added to this were the mushrooming populations of America's cities – fueled by the sudden abandonment of agrarian traditions in favor of new, industrialized labor opportunities within urban factories, buttressed by the historic incoming mass of humanity immigrating to the United States with languages and religious customs not reflective of the accepted cultural practices of most American citizens. When taken all together, many viewed these developments as a very real existential threat to what it meant to be an “American”. (Rury, 2002) By the middle of the 19th century, the country found itself being thrust forward by historical forces they were unprepared for, heading towards a crossroads to determine just what this country was. Many began to openly question the ability of this relatively young nation to sustain itself and prosper, without some concerted effort to stabilize and enforce a coda around an accepted national identity - that which they believed to be the requisite characteristics to be exhibited by its citizens. The most practical environment to address these needs and to push back against the escalating fears regarding the national identity was through the nation's classrooms.

In essence, it would be through the public schools where being an American citizen could be defined and reinforced, and done so through the education of the nation's youth.

Within this context arose a new focus on the standardization and broad dissemination of assimilative teachings that were to be used to stabilize and build up the concepts of a national identity, while simultaneously preparing youth for their eventual transition into the industrialized workforce. Through the work of educational pioneers such as Horace Mann in Massachusetts and Henry Barnard in Rhode Island, a network of publicly supported schools, to train the youth in skill development required of the new industrial age while simultaneously reinforcing those characteristics deemed indispensable to maintain the national "American" character – began to spring up throughout the Northeast. (Mondale & Patton, 2001) The "Common Schools" (as they were now being referred to as) focused their efforts at implementing standardized curriculum predicated on the basic core content areas needed for an adult to prosper in the United States. Referred to as "the 3 R's" (Reading, (W)riting, and (A)rithmetic), the emphasis on basic skill development allowed for easier applications of curriculum system wide. Additionally, subjects that were designed to develop the student's capacity to participate as a citizen were also implemented, whereby civic engagement and public issues were also to be studied (often times under the moniker of "Citizenship Class" or "Government"). The end result was a strong assimilative approach towards education that emphasized the English language, American history and mythos, and the American version of democracy across a wide array of geographical boundaries.

However, what was truly transformative about the "Common Schools" was the fact that they were supported by public tax dollars, and were open for all children to attend. In this way, the guarantee of free, public education would then hasten the onboarding of new citizens into the

nation capable of not only working within the evolving economy, but also participating within the democratic machinations required of the republic. (Mondale & Patton, 2001) For these reasons, the majority of the general public throughout the United States would eventually agree to some form of the “common school” networks within their regions, for they believed them to be an important stalwart towards protecting the integrity of their community and for securing the future of the United States – even if they did not have children themselves attending. Despite many initial setbacks, the advent of the “common schools” did prove successful. Additionally, a network of teacher-training schools – as championed by James G. Carter - would also begin to take form during this era to prepare future faculty for work within the “common schools”. These teacher education sites centered their training that teaching must emphasize *normative behavior* standards for American citizens, the result of which was their being dubbed “Normal Schools”. Working in concert together, the “Normal Schools” and “Common Schools” had begun to grow throughout the American landscape – particularly in the Northeast and Midwest. From these small towns, the “Common Schools” were then quick to spread to neighboring cities, where they were swiftly incorporated. (Pulliam, 1987)

Within urban centers, charity schools had already been in operation for many years as a means of addressing rampant issues of child poverty, inequity, and vice that was at that time flourishing within the economically depressed portions of the city. These schools shared common curriculum amongst one another, and were all financially supported through tax payer contribution. (Mondale & Patton, 2001) By the time of the “Common Schools” era, these already functioning urban school networks were quickly adapted into a “common school” construct, and thus giving birth to a new form of universal education at the primary and secondary level for the children of all citizens in America’s cities.

Additionally, incoming immigrant populations within these cities placed high value on the ability to enroll their children within these public schools. For many, it was seen as a way to further entrench themselves within their adopted homeland, while simultaneously affording their children the opportunity to “Americanize” and assimilate at a much faster pace. (Tyack, 2003) Special emphasis on learning the English language and overall literacy was placed by these recently arrived populations on their youth, as both skill sets were prized as attributes that would serve to support the entire family as they transitioned to their new life within the “New World”.

As people began to migrate out into the western frontier, they brought with them their own iteration of the New England “Common Schools” - thus ensuring that this new public model of free education would successfully spread throughout the country. Although many institutions out west would have their instructional time compromised by the needs of sustaining the family endeavors (farming, mill work, etc.), the further utilization of a standardized curriculum that brought forward generally accepted notions of “Americanism” were openly welcomed by those on the frontier. In a very real sense, the inclusion of “Common Schools” out on the frontier was viewed as a tangible means of retaining a connection to their former land base and home populations. For many, the continuation and transference of the American identity into the west was an equally important factor in “settling” the frontier in a manner consistent with the ideology espoused by the republic. In this sense, the establishment of the “Common School” system was akin to carving out settlements from the wilderness, domesticating animals for husbandry, and the overall “taming” of the “Wild West”. Yet just as this new network of publicly subsidized, open education was taking root, the nation was confronted by yet another historical event that would essentially pause this development for five years.

Just past the mid-point of the century, a long-simmering tension that had been gathering intensity from the first days of independence would suddenly erupt with unparalleled violence and commensurate destructive capacity – eventually manifesting in the form of a mass blood-letting that would threaten the very future of the United States and call into question the value of education as a means to secure freedom. Since the invention of Eli Whitney’s cotton gin in 1793, the amount of raw cotton that could be yielded from southern plantations doubled each successive decade during the first half of the 19th century – putting a premium on the amount of slave labor needed to maximize the earning potential of the principal cash crop of the Southern United States. The issue of slavery had been allowed to fester since the dawn of the republic for fear of sowing seeds of discord between the original thirteen colonies who agreed to join together in armed conflict for their mutual independence from their respective colonial overlord. Once won, the resulting new nation intentionally avoided discussing slavery as an issue – despite the fact that slavery had been ended by statute within the northern states of the country, and that the global slave trade had also ground to a halt through international treaty. Yet slavery still flourished within the south as a result of the resurgence of cotton – empowered by Whitney’s gin. The direct result being that there was no desire to end the institution of slavery nor acknowledge the inherent humanity possessed by slaves, on behalf of southern leadership.

(McPherson, 1988)

For the African-American community – both slave and free alike – education quickly became equated with their own personal freedom. Through the acquisition of literacy, arithmetic, philosophy, and the political sciences it was believed that the achievement of ending slavery could eventually be obtained, if not accelerated. Within the slave states of the south, many African-Americans learned to read and write in secret, in fear that their discovery could lead to

severe corporal repercussions. (McPherson, 1988) In the north, African-American leaders such as Frederick Douglass implored northern politicians to establish educational endeavors for free African-Americans as a means of further developing the black race and as a means of hastening the complete abolition of slavery throughout the United States.

Eventually, the nation would convulse inward into a civil war that would initiate five years of the most violent and bloodiest conflict to ever be endured by the United States. Throughout the entirety of the conflict, African-Americans clamored for increased educational opportunities – all in the hopes of securing and maintaining their freedom within the Union. The collective enthusiasm and unwavering demand to become citizens of the United States – as exemplified by their harrowing passage from bondage to freedom – was received in full by the abolitionist movement that had presaged the war.

After five years, the Confederate rebellion had been militarily destroyed, and with it, much of the south itself. Very quickly, the United States entered the period known as Reconstruction – a time where men and material would be dedicated towards rebuilding the infrastructure of the vanquished and restore order and equity to all citizens. During this time, education became the most salient effort to ensure the continued liberation of freed slaves. For its part, the federal government created a myriad of new programs to help assist in this work. The *Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands* (more commonly referred to as “Freedman’s Bureaus”) worked to transplant willing teachers from the north into the former Confederacy for the express purposes of lifting the African-American community into a more literate and educated countenance. (Foner, 1988) The creation of what came to be known as “Freedman’s Schools” quickly began to dot the southern landscape in an effort to effectuate this change – something that would never have been allowed for during their time as slaves. With the

passage of the 13th and 14th Amendments to the United States Constitution in 1865. (Foner, 1988) African-American citizenship was now an established legal fact, but needed reinforcement in practical applications for millions of recently freed slaves. Reminiscent of their northern urban counterparts who had only recently arrived within the United States as foreign-born immigrants intent on ingratiating themselves within the fabric of their new homeland, many within the African-American community highly valued the common standards being taught within these new schools (such as literacy, arithmetic, and civics) as a means of accelerating their own induction into the dominant culture of American society as fully participatory citizens equal in recognition by the United States Constitution. Upon the arrival of northern teachers for the Freedmen's Bureaus, most were greeted with a willing and eager audience as the southern black community continued to actively secure their strenuous desire to assert their rights as newly adopted American citizens. (Foner, 1988) Despite the nearly ceaseless violence and brutality enacted against the African-American community by those intent on denying the outcomes of the Civil War, their community's pursuit of education through the public school system and the Freedman's Schools - as a means of preserving their liberty - remained fervent.

While there had been a series of challenges to the new public system of education brought about during the "Common School" era – nothing reached the heinousness or barbarity that was exacted upon the African-American community in the southern United States. Elsewhere Roman Catholics took issue with the predominant focus upon Protestant values and ideology present within these tax-payer supported institutions – endeavoring to either procure financial support for their own school system predicated on Catholic values, or else (and what would eventually transpire) branch out to create their own network of schooling exclusively for Roman Catholic youth to attend. (Mondale & Patton, 2001) Additionally, many wealthy families

objected to shouldering a heftier tax burden than most mainly to support the educational development of the poor and lower class. Yet despite these challenges, the standardization and assimilative process introduced by the “Common School” movement did achieve unprecedented success, and was the forerunner for the very public school system that is utilized by the United States in the 21st century.

Emboldened by eager populations who embraced the opportunity to conform with the national identity and dominant culture, and witnessing the beneficial effects bestowed upon a literate and skilled population, the United States had successfully spread itself westward, incorporated millions of new immigrants from Europe, adopted and acclimated to the furious economic metamorphosis known as the Industrial Revolution, and achieved victory during the most bloody and destructive war it had yet to ever wage. For the leadership of the United States, the educational system born from the “Common School” movement had in fact now been validated repeatedly. They believed that the public schools were marvels worth championing, a new iteration of a democratic institution meritorious of pursuing on behalf of the people and the republic itself. Once the Civil War had concluded, the nation eagerly returned to the activities of “Manifest Destiny” in earnest. Only along the way, the United States was confronted by an obstacle that they had not anticipated, one that would catch them off guard and strain a war-weary people’s capacity to participate in any sort of protracted conflict. There, a movement that had been slowly gaining in intensity over the past several years had now become an entrenched and violent resistance movement that wanted nothing to do with “Americanism”. What laid in wait for the next successive waves of Westward settlers was an indigenous insurgency intent on staving off any subjugation by the United States.

For the Native American people, they were now in a war to prevent conquest. For the United States, they were confronted by an intransigent population that outright rejected their way of life. As the violence spread and grew in intensity, it would be formalized education that the U.S. government would turn to in order to suppress this resistance and absorb this once hostile population on into its own dominant culture.

Part II: The Turn West and the Indigenous Resistance

Indian Removal and the Indian Wars (1820-1876)

All throughout the early part of the 19th century, eastern American Indian tribes had been at once been overwhelmed and eventually physically displaced from their lands by the growing American nation. During this period, the leadership of the United States had viewed Native Americans as nothing more than savage occupants of a virginal landscape, a people whose heathen ways made them wholly dependent upon the government for civilizing and for sustenance. Reinforced by three key decisions of Chief Justice Marshal and the U.S. Supreme Court, the concept of American Indians being “wards of the state” to be contended with by the federal government alone became accepted policy. A new emphasis on utilizing education as a means of retraining the American Indian to abandon their traditional practices in order to become Christian farmers took hold. (Adams, 1995) These educational programs – replete with the provision of necessary equipment to harvest the land – became the preferred strategy of the U.S. government in the hopes of accelerating the domestication and civilizing processes they sought to bestow upon indigenous people. By converting Native Americans from the status of migratory hunters and gathers into stationary farmers, a simultaneous goal could be achieved through the freeing up of their vast ancestral lands for future settlement and conquest by American citizens.

To administer these educative programs, the U.S. government, as before, looked to the churches to implement the changes sought. With federal funding secured through the Civilization Fund Act of 1819, “benevolent societies” were empowered to traverse to Indigenous lands to begin the educative work of “civilizing” American Indians. (Eder & Reyner, 2004) The Commission of Indian Affairs (originally housed within the U.S. War Department until it was transferred to the newly created Department of the Interior in 1849) maintained ongoing oversight as to how these educative programs were unfolding, as well as granting authorizing power to the initialization of new schools specifically for educating Native American youth. Yet it was the churches that were the driving force for the creation and maintenance of these schools as well as the content of the curriculum. (Adams, 1995) Here as before in New England, the preeminent focus was on Protestant Christian theology, as Protestant churches comprised the lion’s share of these institutions (there were few representations of Roman Catholic schools during this era as well).

For the most part, schools began as “day programs” whereby students were free to return home at the conclusion of the school day. Almost immediately, the church-led faculty complained of the negative impact that was had on the student development whenever they were allowed to return home. Complaints about indigenous students reverting back to savage state of affairs as a result of the influence of their families were a common refrain. Eventually, these day school programs would be abandoned in favor of a more rigorous, around-the-clock approach where students would become permanent boarders. (Adams, 1995) The idea supporting these tactics was that if American Indian students are to forever abolish their heathenistic and savage ways in favor of a Christian life, they would need to essentially be quarantined from any cultural influence that might undue their new training. Namely, they could no longer be around their

families or communities. As such, a new practice of forced removal of Native American youth from their families began to occur as a means of populating these new boarding schools. In the years to come, this new method of continuous isolation and education would take on greater significance with increased utilization of this particular model.

During this time, many indigenous nations who outright refused to jettison their own culture in favor of the preferred ways of American society found themselves involuntarily removed from their traditional lands and then forced to continually relocate further and further west through a combination of state edict, ongoing white settlement, and military interdiction. Eventually many of these tribes began crowding into other established indigenous nations already occupying the land that these displaced tribes were now relocating to. This was powerfully evident west of the Mississippi River. Once the displaced tribes had resettled on new land, the churches would almost immediately follow suit and set up day schools in territory immediately adjacent to tribal encampments or near the local military fort. (Adams, 1995) Although these tribes had been physically removed from their ancestral lands in an attempt to stave off being conquered, the instruments of colonization and indoctrination were quick to materialize next to them wherever they wound up.

In some instances, however, the methods for retraining Native Americans as Christian farmers was able to take hold and proved quite powerful when received by a willing and pliant tribe. In particular, with regards to the Cherokee, Choctaw, Muscogee, Chickasaw, and Seminole people (known as the Five Civilized Tribes) the adoption of an agrarian lifestyle and Christian belief system was formally adopted by their people – and reinforced through their own iteration of “Common Schools” within their communities. However, in the end, all of these efforts at adopting white, U.S. culture would prove to be nothing more than a futile gesture. In 1830 the

Indian Removal Act was formally implemented under President Andrew Jackson – and despite their stature as having become “civilized and Christian” – the membership of the Five Civilized Tribes was violently evicted from their homes and force-marched over a thousand miles to what was then referred to as “Indian Territory” (modern day Oklahoma). (Adams, 1995) Soon after their arrival, church-led missionary schools were quickly established to begin educating their youth all over again as to what it means to be a good, obedient, God-fearing American.

By mid-century, many American Indian tribes began to fight back violently against deeper and deeper incursions into their lands by white settlers, traders, and church missionaries. Those who were attacked were purposefully targeted for having little or no regard for the established treaties as negotiated between the tribes and the federal government that protected and honored Native American hunting and fishing rights and sacred sites within these spaces. The resulting guerrilla ambushes upon these trespassers terrified local white settlements, who requested immediate military support. In response to the ongoing outcry from the distressed settlers on the frontier, the United States would dispatch several small contingents of soldiers to create and maintain a network of military outposts to protect travel routes and established white settlements. As a result of this surge of military personnel out west, the indigenous warriors began to coordinate and direct their attacks towards the United States Army. A series of military engagements with American Indian warriors suddenly erupted throughout the western frontier. (Drury & Clavin, 2014) The U.S. military would come refer to their engagements with Native Tribes as “battles” – in reality most were counter-ambushes upon defenseless tribal women, children, and elders.

In Minnesota, the Dakota Uprising of 1862 exemplified the rash of violent episodes between indigenous peoples and the U.S. government – who were seen as nothing more than

invaders. During the 1862 uprising, Dakota warriors persistently attacked settlers who were beyond the compliance measures of established treaties, eventually drawing a massive force of U.S. Army regulars under the command of recently disgraced Civil War General John Pope. The resulting battles between the army and the Dakota quickly quelled the uprising – culminating in the largest mass execution in American history in Mankato, MN. (Drury & Clavin, 2014)

This then began an unprecedented time of bloodshed and tumult within the western lands of the continent. For Native American people, these battles were part of a larger war against colonial invaders intent on conquest – in this case the United States of America. It was a fight for the survival of their culture and traditional practices. From the United States perspective, it was the last gasp of savage enemy, an internal insurgency that stood as an obstacle to the realization of “Manifest Destiny”. In order to protect the national interests and provide security for the nation’s citizens who had elected to move out into the western frontier, the military was to be deployed with tacit approval by the federal government to suppress the insurgency by any means necessary. A series of rolling battles, ambushes, and massacres caused much blood to flow across the landscape. For the Americans, they referred to this activity as “The Indian Wars” – and would pursue their violent suppression until total victory was assured. (Drury & Clavin, 2014)

By the time of the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865, westward expansion beyond the Mississippi River began again with a newfound intensity – only now supported by a fast developing network of railroads, and protected by a huge influx of military personnel recently released from their obligations to put down the Confederacy. As thousands and thousands of new white settlers and soldiers began to encroach deeper into Indigenous lands – lands that already had been disrupted by the westward crush of incoming displaced tribes - the tribal nations began

to fight back in a more coordinated manner – often times bridging old, historical differences in order to fight together against the surge of a common enemy.

Within the Powder River territory in present day eastern Montana, northern Wyoming, and far western South Dakota, the Oglala leader Red Cloud successfully arranged for a multi-tribal effort to attack, disrupt, and possibly destroy several military outposts along the Bozeman Trail. Between 1866 and 1868, an ongoing, coordinated military campaign initiated by the tribal nations was loosed upon the U.S. military. Led by fierce warriors like the Oglala Crazy Horse (whose military genius is now widely understood to have rivaled many of his West Point educated American counterparts), Red Cloud and his multi-tribal nation effort induced a series of bloody and stinging losses for the United States. (Drury and Clavin, 2014) His efforts were so successful that the United States eventually sought a negotiated settlement with the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1868 as a means of ceasing hostilities and preventing the effusion of more blood. Unfortunately, the fighting would soon return as settlers, military outfits, and the U.S. government continued on with the practice of overtly ignoring negotiated settlements and treaties. Within weeks of the signing of the Treaty of Fort Laramie, fighting would resume all across the western frontier.

In 1876, the U.S. Seventh Cavalry boldly rode deep into Hunkpapa Lakota territory – ostensibly to protect mining interests in the Black Hills against ambush (gold deposits had recently been discovered in the Black Hills). Known to Native Americans as the Battle of Greasy Grass, the U.S. Seventh Cavalry stumbled upon a multi-tribal encampment when suddenly, led by Hunkpapa warriors, they were engaged in battle, and just over an hour later, the Seventh Cavalry was completely destroyed. News of the “Battle at Little Bighorn” swirled throughout the rest of the United States, with the haphazard and brazen commander of the Seventh Cavalry –

Lieutenant General George Armstrong Custer – being heralded as a victimized hero. (Utley, 2008) Most however, were appalled by the ongoing brutality being exhibited by both sides in a conflict that could at the very least be understood from each perspective. The prevailing sentiment – which grew each day – was to find a peaceable solution amenable to both warring parties. Unfortunately, for the American Indian people, this was not a political war that could generate terms for a negotiated settlement but instead a war for their very survival.

In reaction to the seemingly endless fighting and prodigious bloodletting now known as the “Indian Wars”, the governing powers of the United States began looking for alternative methods to put down the indigenous insurgency and reassert federal control over the frontier – all as a means to allow for increased Western settlement and furthering national economic development. Those tribes that would pledge peace with the United States were to be granted safe passage to lands reserved for their exclusive use. Simultaneously, in the upper plains, hunters were encouraged to openly decimate the bison population as a means of cutting the principle source of food and sustenance of the local tribes. Within a few short years, the buffalo was hunted down to the very brink of extinction. (Utley, 2008) In addition, traders were given bountiful contracts by the government to purposefully spread disease through the use of infected merchandise as a means of liquidating the actual ranks of the American Indian population. The military was given unrestricted allowances to engage with any Native American believed to be acting in a hostile manner – including extermination. When executed in concert with one another all of these actions were devastating for the indigenous resistance, causing it to falter and crumble. (Utley, 2008) Long lines of American Indians would eventually begin to shuffle into various military installations in various states of desperation. Many more were relocated to the newly created reservations. For those that still could, the fight was continued out on the frontier,

but the odds for a successful defense of the traditional American Indian land base was becoming more and more untenable with each passing day.

Finally, buoyed by the success of the “Common Schools” and the effects that these institutions were imparting upon the African-American community and the newly incoming immigrant population, the U.S. government turned to public education as a principle means of permanently pacifying hostile American Indians and forever concluding the “Indian Wars”. This new strategy would initiate the forced indoctrination of countless American Indian youth, with the goal being that each successive generation would be educated to the point of forever abandoning their cultural identities in favor of accepting the newly forged national identity. (Fear-Segal, 2007)

The Cessation of the “Indian Wars” and the Emergence of Boarding Schools

Lieutenant Richard Henry Pratt had for years served in the American cavalry as a dedicated “Indian fighter” when he was assigned the special task of commanding the Fort Marion prison garrison in St. Augustine, Florida. This prison was to be populated by American Indian warriors and holy men who had been taken into captivity during the various military engagements that had been occurring throughout the western frontier. Pratt was given full authority to run the prison colony as he saw fit – to which the Lieutenant instituted around-the-clock training and education services in an attempt to reorient the prisoners away from what he believed was their blood-thirsty, violence-prone savage ways. Instead, Pratt redirected the prisoners towards learning the English language, memorization of Christian theological practice, and ongoing training in manual labor and rudimentary farming. This methodology was reinforced by a strict system of brutal corporal punishment and the frequent use of psychological manipulation in the form of repeated isolation and public shaming amongst the prison

population. (Adams, 1995) Over time, the prisoners began to learn this second language, practice Christian ceremonies regularly, and become skilled laborers and farmers. Eventually, Pratt allowed the prisoners to leave Fort Marion on brief forays into the nearby town - briefly intermingling with the local population who were impressed with the seemingly sudden peaceable transformation of these once fierce enemies of the United States. (Adams, 1995) Leadership within the United States took notice of the accomplishments of Pratt at Fort Marion.

Leveraging the successful results of his prison camp, Pratt began working closely with the U.S. government to use the tactics employed at Fort Marion as a new model of education to be applied towards American Indian youth. This round-the-clock educational strategy had been in practice in some variety within the handful of church-led boarding schools, but now the United States direct investment would establish several federal boarding schools that would implement the same militaristic techniques that Pratt had employed in Florida. (Fear-Segal, 2007) Most notably, incoming students would be immediately subjected to the complete overhaul of their appearance and attire and forced into the use of the accepted rules of etiquette as expressed by American society. Additionally, in response to the long-standing complaint how access to their base population and families would often times undermine the progress made by schools at “civilizing” American Indian youth, the government would intentionally design these schools to be constructed far away from the homelands of the students. (Adams, 1995) If necessary, the administrators of these new schools would be permitted to forcibly remove the children from their homes – or “conscript” them – into mandatory attendance as a condition of their family receiving ongoing subsidies from the government outposts on the reservations. (Fear-Segal, 2001) Such need for ongoing government support of American Indian families living on reservations had grown into a full-fledged crisis as the 19th century came to a close.

By 1887, most of the western indigenous tribes had been forced onto reservations through a combination of military defeats, U.S. initiated massacres, and the extreme depletion of traditional food sources (most notably the drastic reduction of the bison population through unrestricted hunting by white settlers and tradesmen). As many of the American Indian people began the long trek to resettle onto reservations, there were many who refused and continued on with an armed resistance against the United States. But for those who completed the trek to their new homes, most were confronted with the harsh reality of having no means to provide for themselves or for their families. All that was there for them were government hand-outs of aged commodities and rancid food-stuffs that the people were too desperate to turn down.

Yet even after having moved onto permanent settlements within the reservations, more disruption for the Native American people would soon follow. After the implementation of the Dawes Act in 1887 by the U.S. Congress, Native American land holdings on the reservations themselves began to melt away with rapidity as confiscation and redistribution by settlers and the federal government shrank tribal lands pledged by treaty to almost nothing. Ostensibly the act was to encourage and initiate a transition of American Indians into an agrarian lifestyle – replete with the promise of U.S. citizenship for all those that accepted terms. All unused land would then be opened up for white settlement and commercial exploitation by American businesses. The most immediate result of the Dawes Act upon the American Indian people was a general worsening of the overall living conditions on the reservations and a further deepening of their dependence upon government subsidies and support. (Eder & Reyner, 2004) The majority of American Indian people were wholly ill-equipped to make a sudden conversion to adapt a new lifestyle of subsistence farming. Despite their best intentions and efforts, most failed in their attempts to convert to this newly prescribed way of life. Concurrently, the unused lands were

almost immediately claimed by non-natives, who quickly moved in and cordoned off any return by the American Indian people to their former ways of traditional economies or food collection. In essence, as their lands were stripped from them, and as they floundered at trying to become “domesticated” farmers essentially overnight, the Native American population had no choice but become the very real “wards of the state” that Chief Justice Marshall had declared them to be nearly fifty years prior.

For those that refused to abandon their traditional ways and relocate onto reservations, they continued on with their armed resistance, fighting back against any incursion of white settlers or the U.S. installations whenever possible. The engagements became increasingly more violent, incurring the wrath of the white population and resulting with an overpowering over-reaction by the U.S. military. Despite moments of unity and minor victories – most occurring during the time of the Ghost Dance ceremonies that began to unify a variety of tribes - the vicious counter-attacks by the United States continued to violently wear down and kill the few outstanding bands of warriors who were intent on maintaining the fight for indigenous sovereignty. (Utley, 2008) It was apparent that the “Indian Wars” were coming to a conclusion – but only after the last vestiges of the resistance had been put down through force. To stave off and remedy this growing humanitarian crisis out on its western frontier, the United States turned to education and the recent accomplishments of Lieutenant Pratt as the principle vehicle for pacification and economic development of the American Indian people - as was intended through legislation such as the Dawes Act.

As boarding schools began to spring up throughout the western United States, American Indian families began experiencing the extreme hardship of having their children forcibly taken from them and moved off the reservations, far away and deeper into what were now occupied

lands. For the children, still reeling from the shock of being stripped away from their parents and extended family, they suddenly found themselves being deposited within large buildings on sprawling campuses where they were immediately subjugated to an extreme militaristic system of command and control. Determined to strip away their entire identities – with special emphasis on deconstructing their cultural traditions – the proprietors of the boarding schools immediately set to work by separating and reorganizing the incoming children by age groups (including the forced separation of many siblings from one another which served to further disrupt familial and cultural ties), and remitting them to their adopted quarters. The new homes for these indigenous children were often large, cavernous rooms possessing multiple beds arranged without consideration for comfort or a welcoming atmosphere and instead slavishly echoing the design of a soldier’s barracks. (Huff, 1997) Despite the ongoing wails and tear-flooded cries of young children frightened by what was happening to them, frightened by the prospects of their new “home”, frightened by the sudden removal of their brothers and sisters, and tormented by the cold realization and overwhelming heartache that what they once knew as their families were now gone, the school attendants pressed forward with their work with seemingly cold dispatch dedicated to their mission which was their charge.

In order to “kill the savage and save the man”, as was the oft used adage of the day popularized by men like Richard Henry Pratt, school officials had been tasked with rebuilding the children now inhabiting the boarding schools into Christianized Americans capable of transitioning into the dominant culture. Boarding schools would cut off the hair of the children (a highly valued cultural attribute for both indigenous boys and girls), immediately strip them of their traditional attire and then dress them into what was considered socially acceptable clothing fashions. School officials would then set to work indoctrinating the youth into learning how to

Speak English only, and to pray in a manner consistent with attending priests of the church. (Huff, 1997) Pratt himself was afforded the opportunity to perfect the strategies that he had originated at Fort Marion, becoming the proprietor of one of these new government-sanctioned boarding schools in Carlisle, Pennsylvania – known as the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Carlisle would go on to become one of the most publicized and notorious boarding schools of this era. (Fear-Segal, 2007)

In many respects, the boarding schools openly adopted the same curriculum used by the network of “Common Schools” that were being constructed throughout the rest of the United States within this same time period. There was an emphasis on basic literacy, the English language, arithmetic, and civics as it applied to being an American citizen (despite the fact that American Indians would not become U.S. citizens until the 1920’s). All were the central foci of the core content areas taught within the boarding schools as well. Additionally, as was pioneered behind the walls of the prison colony at Fort Marion, educational lessons were buttressed with strict edicts on behavioral management and reinforced with oftentimes brutal corporal punishments or forced isolation – even for the youngest children - actions that would in today’s times be considered criminal conduct.

Owing to the fact that these new boarding schools were also where the children would be sheltered overnight, their education was considered to be an “around-the-clock” function – designed to expunge any vestiges of their indigenous roots however they might be expressed by the children. As such, preferred societal etiquette and assimilative educational practices stretched beyond the classroom and were intentionally woven into all facets of daily life for the youth. (Huff, 1997) In short, the formalized education for these children was all-encompassing and supported by a vicious and violent system of corporal punishment, public shaming, and isolation

applied continuously until the student was able to demonstrate proficiency towards conforming to the preferred culture of the United States. What would eventually come to light from the recollections of adult survivors of the boarding school era were stories of systemic physical abuse exacted on the youth by school officials as a means of dissuading the youth from enacting any semblance of their now former culture. Children were beat with soap bars wrapped in towels, or were forced to work long hours on their knees resting atop sacks of marbles that had been purposefully wrapped around them. Many times, the students themselves were made to beat younger students if they were caught speaking their language, praying in a non-Christian manner, or had the audacity to escape the grounds. (Huff, 1997)

Many of the youth took such risks, taking advantage of an open window or an unlatched gate. Yet owing to the remote locations of these boarding schools, the vast distances to get back home often proved too great an obstacle to overcome. Most were eventually tracked down and recaptured before reaching their families, then returned to the schools to face fierce recriminations for their flagrant disregard of the rules. Here too, psychological tactics were employed as the punishments doled out for escapees were oftentimes public and severe – intended to deter any future behavior by any of the other students. For those that did manage to make it home, they were shocked by the reaction of their families – many of whom collaborated with school officials to return the youth back to the boarding schools. Although seemingly an illogical act in light of the abuses that were occurring at these schools, the elders and parents back home were experiencing their own painful realities – so extreme that they in fact viewed the boarding schools as a viable option for securing a better world for their progeny. (Adams, 1995)

By January 1st, 1891, Red Cloud had essentially become imprisoned on the Pine Ridge reservation. Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull – two Lakota leaders of what white settlers came to

refer to as the “Great Sioux War of 1876-1877”, and who famously defeated Custer at the Battle of Greasy Grass - had both been murdered. Less than one week before, several hundred elders, women, and young children had been mercilessly slaughtered along the frozen banks of the Wounded Knee Creek by a reconstituted U.S. Seventh Cavalry (George Custer’s old outfit that had been wiped off the face of the earth at the Battle of Greasy Grass). The buffalo had all but been hunted to near extinction, and the ramifications of the Dawes Act were laying waste to any method the American Indian people once knew as to how to provide for themselves. For all intents and purposes, the western frontier of the United States was closed – secured under the supreme dominion of the federal government. The direct results of the violent and abrupt close to this particular chapter of American history was brutal suppression of the indigenous resistance and the theft of vast tracks of traditional lands by the United States. Compounding this brutality was how the remaining populations of the American Indian people had become irretrievably ensnared within the bondage of reservation life, government dependency, and the coerced indoctrination of an educational system designed for mass assimilation.

For those that remained on the reservations, little hope could be found for the continued existence of the American Indian people in the conditions that they now found themselves. In this context of extreme deprivation, acquiescence to the demands of the government, and acceptance of the boarding schools appeared to be the only viable options to save their children. For them, the boarding schools and the ability to have their youth quickly assimilated into American culture appeared to be not only their best option for survival, but their only. Unlike the African-American community during and after the Civil War, or the incoming waves of immigrant families, the Native American people were not eager to abide by these schooling

measures, nor were they intent on entering into the American nation as willing and compliant citizens. Instead, they were being forced in at gunpoint, and under severe duress.

The adoption of the American “identity” therefore was something that had no value for indigenous people for they did not view themselves in any way as a part of the United States but rather as citizens of their own sovereign nations. At the dawn of the 20th century, the majority viewed the United States as an occupying invader. For them, acceptance of the American schooling methods was not viewed as an instrument to be embraced as a means of securing their freedom, but rather as a poisonous cloud that will lay waste to their traditions and their culture but hopefully save the lives of the little faces that were now subjected to its terrible influence. This was not a time of surrender or cowardice but rather a self-sacrificial moment done in the hopes of creating a future that they hoped would spare the lives of their children.

By 1900, there remained many variations of the day schools still in operation near American Indian reservations. These were principally stewarded by Christian missionaries (also known as missionary schools) where again the preeminent focus echoed much of the “Common School” movement towards radical assimilation into the dominant American culture and the removal of any vestiges of the previous heathen-like existences of the American Indian. Despite the tremendous wealth of the churches that operated these institutions, the mission schools successfully won the right to receive tribal funds held in federal trust as a means of financing their operations – often times diluting these limited resources further and straining their access by the other programs. (Eder & Reyhner, 2004) However, owing to the fact that students within the day schools were allowed to return home at the end of the day, and thus run the very real risk of having the progress towards “civilizing” and Christian customs being negated by a nightly return to traditional indigenous practice, the mission schools would in turn also adopt around-

the-clock practices in alignment with their government-subsidized boarding school counterparts. (Adams, 1995)

Driven by the desire for public education to uphold the wishes of the founding fathers during the nation's inception and preserve its democratic capabilities, the development of the "Common School" was the direct outgrowth of those wishes. The system of American Indian boarding schools was also built upon these same notions, but was also coupled with a military practical necessity and the need to address a legitimate humanitarian crisis emerging in American Indian reservations throughout the land. An emboldened American leadership provided wide allowances to Church missionary leaders and men like Pratt to create a network of boarding schools in order to accelerate the full assimilation of the American Indian people on into the dominant culture – towards the long-desired objective of "killing the savage and saving the man." (Adams, 1995) What resulted was one of the most heinous applications of formalized education to materialize within this nation. A perversion of the intentions of the "Common School" practitioners – which had the luxury of an accepting and willing population - boarding schools approached their work with the diligence and vigilance of a military operation intent on permanently vanquishing a hostile force. As such all means of behavior modification were not only allowable, but encouraged. (Huff, 1997) Hence, roughly over the sixty-year period between the 1868 and 1928, the principle vehicle for formalized education of the American Indian was through some form of boarding school. The physical and psychological wounds that were incurred upon the American Indian people as a result of the extreme brutality exhibited during the boarding school era endures to this very day.

Part III: The Modern Era: 20th Century Public Education and the American Indian People
Sweeping Change in the Early Decades

The opening decades of the twentieth century saw the United States begin to boldly assert itself upon the world stage. From the Spanish-American War, which rewarded the victorious American aggressors with its first legitimate colonial holdings beyond its own borders, to its entry and participation in The Great War (now known as World War I) on the side of the victorious Allies, the expansionist United States had become a bona fide world power. The internal changes that had propelled the country through the 19th century only increased in intensity and impact during the 20th century – fueling the country’s desire for more raw materials, resources, and new markets on a now global scale.

Domestically, industrialized cities continued their breathtaking expansion as more and more waves of incoming immigrants and rural transplants swelled their populations. Railroads provided a solid and tangible link not only between these urban centers, but between the coasts themselves – all the while interweaving the states within an unprecedented web of commerce and internal migration. For the titans of industry, the prosperity that was reaped was unprecedented. New inventions and technological improvements based upon recent scientific advances radically changed the nature of daily life. The telephone, the phonograph, the electrification of the cities, and the airplane all were heralded during that time as examples of the unique ingenuity and gumption engendered by the American character. It was as though there was no limit to what the country could accomplish, what it could develop, or what it could earn, and that this was only a precursor to bigger things yet to come during the course of the next century.

As such, the swiftly developing United States continued to ensconce itself within its own self-anointed mythos known as “American Exceptionalism.” This concept, the direct descendent of the Manifest Destiny invocation from the previous era, was predicated upon the similar idea that divine favor had preordained the United States with a capacity for limitless success and

fortune, so long as the nation adhered to its own self-professed ideals enumerated within its founding documents. This self-perceived covenant with supernatural forces placed increased pressure upon the American public education system. Through the schools, it became imperative that each successive generation of students were well versed in America's grace-bestowed methods of operation, as well as to ensure that each completing class was capable of picking up the mantle and carrying forward in the traditions of their fathers and grandfathers to advance "American Exceptionalism" in perpetuity.

For the American Indian students, the arduous experience of essentially being imprisoned within boarding schools was not yielding positive results. As more and more youth attempted escape, those that did manage to stay to the end and complete, often found themselves unable to return home, for they had crossed over far too deep into the dominant culture and away from their ancestral ways. Equally frustrating was that American Indian graduates also found themselves on the periphery of the dominant culture – where white society was not particularly keen on accepting them as one of their own. More importantly, the rampant poverty and lack of economic development on the reservations (whether industrialized or agrarian) failed to materialize any meaningful changes to the plight of the indigenous people still living there. The influx of newly minted graduates of the public education system did almost nothing to change these circumstances. In essence, the federal system of boarding schools and their compliment of missionary-run day schools were not producing the results that they had been constructed for – they were in fact failing.

Beginning in the early 1920's and unfolding over the next decade, four key developments occurred that would change the course of American Indian education for the remainder of the century. The first was a government report written and released in 1923. This report was

generated by the leading thinkers and policy makers at that time who had been gathered to assess the performance of education within the reservations and in the nearby surrounding communities. Specifically, these policy makers had been tasked with making formal recommendations designed to finally ignite development and support the welfare of Native Americans as it pertained to the academic development of their youth. Known as the *Committee of One Hundred Report*, this work put forward a call for a dramatic increase in federal funding for American Indian education to repair inadequate school facilities, to hire and attract better teachers, to offer scholarships to eligible American Indian students for high school and college matriculation, and to allow municipal public schools to enroll more American Indian students from families who either already lived off reservation lands or intended to do so. (Eder & Reyhner, 2004) The report contended that the end result of implementing such a surge of resources would be a sudden acceleration of the assimilationist policies of the federal government designed to onboard the American Indian into the dominant culture of the United States. While many participants of the *Committee of the One Hundred* lobbied unsuccessfully for greater reforms – including the removal of missionary work from education altogether and the ending of the use of boarding schools – the report did however successfully persuade the U.S. Congress to appropriate more money for American Indian Education. (Eder & Reyhner, 2004) For the first time in nearly 50 years the federal government began making a sustained and increased financial investment within Indian country specifically for schooling.

The second development was a combined effort by advocates who supported the cause of American Indian development, those that believed that assimilation was the only way to save indigenous people from inequity, and veterans groups who were intent on honoring the service of thousands of American Indians who fought with the American Allied Expeditionary force in The

Great War (now known as World War I). For these interest groups, it had become imperative for the United States to formally recognize American Indian people as legitimate American Citizens -which at that time they still were not afforded such official designation. Without the guarantees of citizenship, it was argued that there would be little reason to for the American Indian people to commit to the assimilative practices being utilized within their schools. In 1924 the United States Congress agreed and on June 2nd, 1924, granted U.S. citizenship for all Native Americans via the Indian Citizenship Act - also known as the Snyder Act (although in some cases voting rights were not fully granted by all states to their indigenous populations for another 24 years). Within Indian country, the Snyder Act was received with mixed emotions. Some indigenous leaders at that time valued the act as a means of securing political rights within the established American system that could be used to protect the interests of the American Indian people, while others held the act as a dubious incursion upon tribal sovereignty and the sustainment of tribal citizenship. (Eder & Reyner, 1924) However, equally as significant as the granting of U.S. citizenship, the Snyder Act also guaranteed that the American Indian people would be able to retain citizenship within their own tribes – thus introducing the concept of “dual-citizenship.” This provision of the law was a significant departure from what had been occurring -where American Indians could only obtain U.S. citizenship by entering the armed services, accepting land allotments under the Dawes act, or marrying white citizens. The Snyder Act would become a significant reinforcement of the concept of tribal sovereignty often referenced within the treaties struck between the United States government and the tribes, but that were seldom enforced. With the prospect of an easier transition into the American dominant culture, while still being able to retain their tribal citizenship, more within the American Indian community felt

encouraged to commit themselves and their youth within the public education system. (Eder and Reyhner, 2004)

Four years later, in 1928, another major report regarding the American Indian community was released with equally powerful impact. *The Meriam Report* - officially entitled “The Problem of Indian Administration” - was issued by the Institute for Government Research (also known as the Brookings Institute) and was a scathing indictment of the nature by which the United States Government – specifically the Department of the Interior - had interacted with the indigenous nations of North America. In particular, this report was intensely critical of the Dawes Act, the endemic poverty found on reservations, and the failure of the federal system of boarding schools. The Meriam Report was different from its preceding reports for it wove into its overall narrative a wide body of statistical data to support its contentions and offered a concrete list of immediate reforms. Chief among these reforms was the call for the immediate closure of the boarding schools in favor of having American Indian youth attend day schools or else to have them enroll within nearby public schools with other white children. (Eder & Reyner, 2004)

Under the leadership of President Herbert Hoover and Charles J. Rhoads, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, most of the reforms called for within the Meriam report were implemented – along with the additional allocation of monies to assist with clothing and feeding American Indian students already enrolled in schools. The data presented within this report would go on to fuel one of the most sweeping changes in Indian country that was implemented six years later.

By 1934, the entire nation was beset by the Great Depression. The belief in “American Exceptionalism” had for the most part popped like an obnoxious party balloon – a false pretense forever to be relegated to a bygone era. The new administration led by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was hard at work trying to restore the American economy through government

programs geared towards creating as many jobs as possible in the shortest amount of time. The New Deal and its National Recovery Act set out to rebuild the infrastructure of the nation by infusing massive amounts of government resources into local economies – so long as the local government structures were aligned with the principles of the New Deal and capable of jump-starting “shovel ready” projects. For Indian Country, the data generated by the Meriam Report was translated into a massive plan initiated by the head of the Office of Indian Affairs, John Collier. Collier’s belief was that for the American Indian people to survive and prosper, they would need to adhere to their own culture and heritage as a means of incorporating that which was useful to them that originated from white society. The plan called for the transforming tribal power structures into functional governments that were in essence democratic reproductions of the federal government. (Eder & Reyner, 2004) Once done, it was believed that the reservations would be better able to incorporate the massive amounts of potential incoming federal funds that would be required to repair, restore, or construct tribal economies.

The culmination of Collier’s efforts was the *Indian Reorganization Act* (otherwise known as the Wheeler-Howard Act or the “I.R.A.”), formally signed into law in 1934. It was one of the most sweeping and impactful pieces of legislation to ever affect Indian country. Fueled by the data and recommendations enumerated within the Meriam Report, the Department of the Interior and its Office of Indian Affairs attempted to bring the New Deal directly onto the reservations in an earnest attempt to rectify the longstanding and endemic poverty that the American Indian people had been contending with since the conclusion of the Indian Wars forty years prior. (Eder & Reyner, 2004) Most significantly, the law formally abandoned the assimilationist policies that had dictated interactions between the United States and its indigenous people and instead emphasized the now legally codified policy of dual citizenship. Now, under the Indian

Reorganization Act, indigenous America was encouraged to create their own systems of constitutional democracy that incorporated their own cultural beliefs and heritage.

Once underway, American Indian tribes throughout the United States were instructed to compose constitutions, new tribal governance codes and practices, and voting procedures to ensure democratic functionality. Once completed, the tribe would then be formally “recognized” by the federal government and therefore eligible for massive amounts of financial assistance – primarily for the infrastructure of the reservation – including unprecedented investment within their own form of public schools located directly on the reservations to be administered by the Office of Indian Affairs.

In the span of roughly eleven years, nearly a century of formal U.S. government policy towards its indigenous populations had been eradicated. Most notably, the concept of assimilation and the brutality of the boarding school era were officially condemned and ended. In their destructive wake came a new emphasis on empowering Native Americans to govern themselves based on their own cultural values, to support and uphold tribal sovereignty, and to provide the means for the indigenous people to educate their youth in accordance with the developmental needs of their home reservations – so long as all of it was done through systems that directly mirrored American methodologies. During this time, Native Americans had finally become recognized by the federal government as a legitimate people worthy of engagement irrespective of their cultural beliefs. With granting of their citizenship to the United States came an immediate reexamination of federal policies, coupled with sweeping new initiatives in attempt to atone for past sins while igniting action to build towards a better tomorrow.

Once this new era began, the education for American Indians quickly transitioned out and away from boarding schools (although a few boarding schools remain in operation to this day,

under far more strict supervision to prevent the horrid abuses that had once plagued them – including seven run directly by the Bureau of Indian Education, with another fifty-two supported by BIE monies) Instead, empowered by the Indian Reorganization Act, focus for American Indian students was placed on two potential options for families to enroll their students: public schools that were operating off-reservation within local towns and cities, or reservation-based schools run by the Office of Indian Affairs (the Office of Indian Affairs would formally change its name to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1948, under which the Office of Indian Education Programs helmed the network of these reservation-based day schools. The Office of Indian Education Programs would eventually change its name to the Bureau of Indian Education in 2006). (Eder & Reyner, 2004)

During the initial years of the Indian Reorganization Act, most of the curriculum for American Indian students was focused on rudimentary academic skill development, along with a full complement of civic training to better prepare each for the requirements of participating as citizens in both the American system of government as well as within the newly established tribal governance structure (a new twist on the old “Common School” design). For young men, their primary school years were often followed by intensive training within one of the industrial arts. The goal being for these male students to be able to transition directly into work immediately after completion. For female students, an emphasis on home economics was the basis for their education, with the intention of creating an easier pathway for them to transition into home-making and child-rearing activities – all in alignment with the sexist interpretations of the world prevalent in America at that time. Seldom did American Indian students advance to college or university enrollment for professional career preparation. Most were directed to commit towards working within the local reservation economies. For all, there was a distinct and

noticeable omission of indigenous perspectives, histories, or customs within the curriculum or day-to-day operations of the schools. Owing the extreme need for onboarding into gainful employment to help their families, many students took these critical content omissions in stride and instead focused on gaining marketable skill sets so that they could find work and earn money as soon as possible after completion. (Eder & Reyhner, 2004)

It is important to note however, that beyond the borders of the American Indian reservations, by 1934 the United States' public education system had itself undergone a radical transformation from its previous incarnation during the 19th century. Directly influenced by the radical rate of change being exacted on the nation through the acceleration of industrialization and through the incorporation of the latest thinking regarding pedagogy and student development at that time, American schools had been purposefully reorganized to mimic the modularization and specialization techniques often used within large industrial operations and factories. (Pulliam, 1987) The intent was to produce as many skilled laborers as possible to fill the needs of America's exploding industrialized economy as fast as possible. As such, most major school districts around the country reconfigured their network of schools to work together as one progressive-orientated system of education that would continuously teach and train students from the earliest age that they could attend school – irrespective of their economic status or academic capabilities. This system would then develop them until they became eligible to enter into the American workforce either by age or by attained skill level.

To properly effect this new progressive-development approach, students no longer were grouped together as they had been for years within the old, small-town one-room school houses of years past. Now, in this modern industrialized age, students were purposefully subdivided by age groupings and assigned classes each successive school year within corresponding grade

levels. Curriculum was then developed and implemented that was considered “age-appropriate” and implemented within each distinct grade level with the intended design of teaching skills that would allow the student to advance to the next level of proficiency with each sequential grade change and age level increase. (Pulliam, 1987) By the time of adolescence, most school districts within the country had now added a secondary level school offering as a part of their overall public education system to carry forward this systemic progression of training on to when students became actual adults. High Schools, as they came to be called, developed student ages between fourteen and eighteen (the legal age for adulthood), and suddenly began to be constructed in large numbers across the United States.

Within these new secondary education programs, there again was an emphasis on practical skill development with an intent for immediate transition into the world of work. Only a small handful of students were expected to emerge from the school system and go on to attend university. Much like the day schools on the reservations, students within public high schools were also tracked into identifiable future professions centered upon manual labor or industry. For boys, here again the focus was on industrial arts, while girls were typically relegated to classes in home economics. One major difference between the mainstream American public schools with their American Indian reservation school counterpart was the fact that the curriculum was born from and reinforced the dominant values, historical perspectives, and traditional customs of the dominant American culture – a culture that was shared and adhered to by the vast majority of youth who attended these public schools. Any omission of content relating to American Indians was seldom noticed, nor considered of being of any importance.

This new stratified, industrialized iteration of public education enabled the United States to educate and train millions of its youth every year. It also enabled American students to

successfully emerge into the economy and find gainful employment. However, once underway a major setback befell this new format with the sudden and the horrific downfall of the American economy during The Great Depression – particularly between the years of 1929 through 1934. Yet as the New Deal began to establish a slow but meaningful recovery, this industrialized school system – now referred to as the K-12 system (having incorporated a pre-grade of early childhood development known as Kindergarten – or German for “Child’s Garden”) – returned to its original mission of producing American “citizen widgets” capable of entering into the economy immediately after graduation. This system of public schooling has remained in place and relatively unchanged to this very day.

Post-War Integration: Economic Boom to Termination and Relocation

After the end of World War II, the United States strode across the world’s stage as a bona fide super power. This second global conflict had unleashed the full economic might of the nation in order to allow it to meet the threat posed by the Axis powers - forever doing away with the last remnants of the Great Depression. Upon victory, the U.S. was then able to shift its war industries – which had been pressed towards unprecedented levels of production to help prosecute America’s war effort - over towards the production of civilian goods and services for the private sector. The immediate result was a dramatic and unprecedented economic boom that would serve to further accelerate the overall industrialization of the nation, a process that had begun some 100 years prior. On the whole, many of the jobs created by this massive economic growth were filled with returning G.I.’s intent on building a life for themselves and their new families. Additionally, as a result of the newly minted “G.I. Bill”, whereby returning veterans would receive massive government aid to attend post-secondary institutions, a huge new influx of students began matriculating on college and university campuses across the country. Almost

overnight, the American middle class had risen to become the predominant socioeconomic force in the land. To ensure its survival, and to sustain this historic boom, once again the nation turned towards its public education system to help sustain its historic prosperity. (Rury, 2002)

To this end, the formalized educational processes that had been implemented at the beginning of the 20th century were in the immediate post-war years expanded upon and reemphasized. The intent was to solidify the pipeline into more sophisticated jobs, or to sustain the enrollments within universities to ensure that managerial and professional class posts could be fulfilled over time. Although still relatively new, High School enrollment had now also become compulsory across the United States. What we have now become familiar with in our own time regarding the nature of the K-12 system was further refined and implemented throughout all regions of the country during this time period. (Pulliam, 1987)

For Indian country, the post-war years were quite different from what was occurring within the dominant culture. Only a decade and a half removed from the expansive change implemented by the Indian Reorganization Act, most of the federally recognized tribal nations and their corresponding infrastructures were nearly entirely subsidized by the federal government. The hopes of spurring internal economic development through the investment in health care and the educational system on tribal lands had yet to produce meaningful results. Instead, most services were conducted by the newly renamed Bureau of Indian Affairs (housed within the federal Department of the Interior) with substandard efforts limited by a minimalistic budget. (Eder & Reyner, 2004) Although the quality of life had improved marginally from what it once had been at the start of the century, by the dawn of the 1950's most tribal nations still found themselves mired within stagnant or depressed economies, and more often than not,

extreme poverty. The hopes of John Collier simply were not manifesting fast enough to meet the needs of the American Indian people.

By this juncture, the zeitgeist of the United States had undergone a dramatic shift. The dire realities of the Cold War – the new global political contest of competing political ideologies between the United States, the Soviet Union, and their respective allies – came to dominate much of our nation’s social fabric. Soon after its inception, this competition would take on cataclysmic overtones. In 1949 the Soviet Union successfully detonated their own atomic bomb. That same year China – an ally of the United States during World War II – fell under the rule of a communist regime and now sided with the Soviets. By 1953 the United States had just completed another war, albeit drastically smaller than World War II, but one that had been fought to a bloody stalemate on the Korean peninsula in defense against a communist invasion. Also in 1953, both the United States and the Soviet Union successfully tested thermo-nuclear weapons (Hydrogen bombs) within six months of each other. These latest weapons were roughly 100 times more powerful than the atomic bombs that were dropped on Japan to wipe the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki off of the face of the earth. The Cold War had proven to possess the ability to turn “hot” in the form of real armed conflict, and now with the advanced destructive capacity possessed by each super power, a new nationalistic sentiment swept across the United States, coupled with a palpable existential fear that failing to remain vigilant in defense of the nation might very well result in the end of the world.

The most direct result of these events was the generation of a dramatic political shift towards conservatism and a burgeoning need for citizens to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States. To this end, an open desire to deconstruct the “big government” efforts typified by President Roosevelt’s New Deal - which were now labeled as socialistic and borderline

communistic – came to pass. In its place, the business potential for the United States became the business of the United States. Unfettered free market capitalism was now being championed once again as the cause that would save the United States (and the planet) from the spread of the insidious evil that was communism.

For Indian country, the nearly 20 years of dependency upon government subsidization of their infrastructure and schools came to be viewed as antithetical to these current beliefs and in fact as potentially contributing to the inability of tribal nations to generate their own economic development. The systems developed and implemented under the Indian Reorganization Act were now deemed ineffectual. In 1953, within House Continuing Resolution 108, the U.S. federal government announced the termination of formalized financial subsidization of American Indian tribes. While this process had been underway through a series of Congressional acts empowering states to reclaim jurisdiction over tribes living within their boundaries, HCR 108 had essentially made *termination* the policy of the land and was quickly reinforced by Public Law 280 which surrendered law enforcement and judiciary activities involving Indian country to the states as well. As these federal resources were pulled out, almost immediately the limited services and infrastructure supports on the reservations quickly began to crumble. (Eder and Reyner, 2004)

In 1956 a new federal initiative was employed in order to hasten the economic empowerment of the American Indian people and as a means of contending with collapsing tribal economies that were now in virtual free fall without federal support. The Indian Relocation Act of 1956 sought to encourage and to accelerate the movement of indigenous peoples off of the reservations and into nearby cities where the post-war economic boom was in full swing. There, upon their arrival, the Act also sought to provide training in vocational trades to allow the newly

moved American Indian people an opportunity to find meaningful work. “Relocation”, as it would come to be known, saw the division of countless indigenous families throughout Indian country as many enlisted for an opportunity at a more stable financial existence that could not be obtained living on the reservations. Taking advantage of a small stipend and traveling allowances, many American Indians courageously set off for the nearest metropolitan areas in the hopes of finding a new beginning and economic opportunity. (Davis, 2013)

Yet again, American schools would be ground zero for this new, global ideological struggle known as the Cold War as well as the primary vehicle to receive the large amounts of indigenous youth now entering into America’s cities with their families as a result of Relocation. As was done before, it would be through public schools whereby the American identity would be reinforced and secured, and where a skilled workforce would be trained to support the economic post-war boom. Within the application formalized education during the 1950’s, a renewed focus was given on the subject of civics and a highly editorialized version of American history that restored the concepts of a unified, homogeneous American identity supported by the seemingly supernatural concept of American exceptionalism. A prime example of this increased desire for assimilative and homogeneous education occurred in 1954 when, through an official act of Congress, the “Pledge of Allegiance” (a traditional pledge of loyalty required of American school children at the beginning of each school day that had originally been crafted in 1892 to honor Columbus Day and the 400th anniversary of the “discovery” of the “New World”) officially had the line added “under God” as a means of further separating the United States from the atheist communist bloc nations. As though Horace Mann were once again traveling the lands in order to systematize public schooling as he had done a century before, the curriculum of America’s schools once again returned to a standardized model. (Pulliam, 1987)

However, a unique difference could be found in this era with regards to content that students were to study. This difference was a newfound emphasis on the subjects of science, math, and in some instances engineering. These particular content areas had become highly valued for they were now viewed as integral to maintain the scientific advances that were powering the U.S. military, as well as driving the nation's consumer economy with new, marketable products. After the Soviet Union successfully launched the first satellite into space (Sputnik, October 4th, 1957) the country began to increase financial investments into the public education system specifically to enhance student involvement in these courses as a means of effectively prosecuting the Cold War and to keep up with the Russians. (Rury, 2002)

For American Indian students, enrollments within the public schools had hit an all-time high. As once confronted by their elders behind the canopied walls of boarding schools, the curriculum and learning models within America's public schools at the middle of the 20th century were similarly predicated upon the habits of highly militarized and industrialized society intent on producing as many skilled workers as possible to fuel the nation's economy and to support its efforts – this time with regards to the Cold War. (Rury, 2002) All considerations regarding indigenous culture, customs, and history were automatically deferred in favor of what was deemed commensurate with being an American citizen. Any deviation from this generally accepted dominant culture was considered an affront to the national identity – providing potential aid to America's communist enemies. As a result, the curriculum used within schools again sought to reinforce the concepts of a national homogeneity that in fact did not exist. (Rury, 2002) If there were inclusions of American Indians, it was to reinforce their savage ancestry, and to celebrate their conquest by the heroic white settler or American military.

Once again, American Indian students were forced to jettison their own cultural identities - including their languages, customs, and religious beliefs - if they were to have a chance at succeeding within the American public education system. The immediate result was a desultory acceptance of this education system, but one that would translate into poor attendance and poor academic performance. (Davis, 2013) As also was the case with their elder predecessors, American Indian students were very often “tracked” into coursework that focused on vocational skill development (for boys) and home economics (for girls). Despite the wild economic cycles, two world wars, the onset of the Cold War, and the federal termination and relocation policies, very little in the way that schooling was administered to American Indian students had changed in over thirty years of practice. This era would begin to see the very first usages of data collection and standardized tests to gauge proficiency levels. (Pulliam, 1987) Even during these earliest of days regarding district and systemic assessments, there was evidence of a gap relating the academic achievement for white students versus that of students from communities of color and the American Indian community. This newly discovered phenomenon would come to dominant policy discussions regarding public schools for sixty years on into the future, as well as to fuel position papers commissioned by relevant 501c3’s working within these particular communities in an attempt to examine and potentially rectify this detected academic disparity.

In the decade after the implementation of federal termination and relocation policies, the poverty that was so prevalent on American Indian reservations had worsened. Without a base economy from which to draw resources, and without the substantial federal financial resources that had supported the reservations since 1934, their economic anguish had become critical. Simultaneously, those who had sought reprieve from the crisis on the reservations by moving away to nearby urban centers were rudely awakened to the reality that there simply wasn’t any

opportunities waiting for them once the busses deposited them in the heart of the city. Despite the economic boom, many transplanted American Indians did not possess the requisite skill sets to acquire meaningful employment. At best, entry level and seasonal manual labor jobs were all that could be obtained so long as no other unforeseen circumstances obstructed their hiring – such as racist employers or because of a general lack of economic development within the inner-city neighborhoods that most had no choice but to resettle in. (Davis, 2013) Within only months of their arrival, the federal stipends had been exhausted, and the poverty they ran away from back home had quickly metastasized around them once again in their new urban homes and neighborhoods like a malignant form of economic cancer. As the country moved into the 1960's, the public education system was not producing enough skilled American Indian workers capable of transitioning into the booming U.S. economy, nor much in the way of producing American Indians operating within the professional classes either. Instead, indigenous students were pigeonholed by public schools into limited course offerings, and if they managed to complete, they did so with an academic achievement record far below that of their non-native contemporaries.

The outlook for any major economic or academic transformation on behalf of the American Indian people – a vision that seemed realistic at the start of the 1950's – was now rapidly declining. The dramatic increase in enrollment of American Indian youth within public schools did little to abate these circumstances despite the system's insistence upon the effectiveness of its curriculum and the primacy of the American national identity. In reality, the incredibly rigid public school system that openly denigrated indigenous culture was in fact exacerbating and accelerating the economic disparities already impacting the American Indian people. By the 1960's yet another equally distressing set of academic disparities continued to

manifest throughout Indian country. More and more American Indian students felt dejected by their experience in schools – succumbing to growing despondency that had also permeated their entire communities. For the indigenous people, a deep-rooted frustration and dissatisfaction with public schools was growing in power and would soon explode onto the surface of the dominant culture in a way that no one had anticipated nor were prepared for.

Part IV: Dawn of the Resurgence: Civil Rights, Civic Unrest, and Indian Self-Determination

As the United States contended with its new role as international superpower, societal changes were afoot on the home front. The horrors of World War II had brought into sharp focus the power of racially motivated ideologies and man's capacity for evil if such ideologies are carried out to their logical conclusion. Nazi Germany and its genocidal practices towards European Jews and other minority groups had sickened the world and as a result received the justifiable retribution of their own violent annihilation in response. Upon returning home to America, the racially motivated policies of the forced separation of the races within many southern states (known as "Jim Crow laws"), as well as other deeply rooted American racist beliefs championed by terrorist organizations such as the Klu Klux Klan, came under intense scrutiny. These state-sanctioned laws were now being openly challenged by both the African American community as well as non-African Americans who saw in them a blatant reflection of the policies of the Nazi Germany.

Led by brilliant and charismatic leaders such as Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., Roy Wilkins, Rosa Parks, Medgar Evers, Ralph Abernathy, Thurgood Marshall, and many others within the African American community, the American Civil Right Movement began in earnest by the 1950's and quickly picked up moment in the ensuing years. One of their first, and arguably most successful initiatives began in the nation's public schools, where the notion of

“separate but equal” - as established by the 1896 Supreme Court ruling of *Plessy v Ferguson* that engendered legalized segregation - came under direct assault. The legal actions that were initiated by the champions of the civil rights movement took issue with unequal funding and resource allocation between dominant culture (white) schools in the South versus their African American counterparts - as evidenced by the segregated urban school district of Topeka, Kansas. This inequality was argued to be detrimental to African American student development as it was deemed antithetical to the founding concepts of a free and universally accessible public education system. In this regard the very act of segregation was believed to be damaging to African Americans in general when considering the development of their youth as American citizens. The Supreme Court agreed unanimously, asserting that the notion of “separate” – whether in public schools or in society in general – was simply unconstitutional. (Mondale, 2001) Operating through the vehicle of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, the Supreme Court overturned *Plessy v Ferguson* and ordered the immediate integration of all public schools “with all due deliberate speed.” Thus began the legally enforced unraveling of societal norms that had been in place since the nation’s inception.

Despite the adherence towards nonviolent interactions, the Civil Rights movement, in their ongoing efforts to seek legal and societal equality amongst all races (as epitomized through efforts like *Brown v Board of Education* or the mass march on Selma, Alabama) was wholly disruptive to the established order within many of these southern states. As a result, the entrenched forces that had enacted the racially motivated policies in the first place fought back, violently. Captured by the burgeoning new medium of television, Americans and the world could see first-hand the violent struggle for freedom versus oppression play out in their living rooms

every night. Thus began an era of violent civic unrest not seen since the days of the American Civil War.

By the 1960's, the Civil Rights movement had been joined by an equally powerful ongoing civic protest against the Vietnam War. Additionally, more and more communities that had been marginalized during the course of America's history were now inspired by these civic protests, prompting their own leadership to become organized and their own communities to take to the streets to fight for changes in policy in order to better support their own. This conflagration of politics, protest, and cultural empowerment – at times literally combusting in the form of violent urban riots – were anchored in the belief that communities of color must now assert themselves and demand support for their equal rights from the established power structure. The American Indian community was not immune from such desires or actions.

In July of 1968 in Minneapolis, Minnesota the American Indian Movement (AIM) was formed. An urban American Indian political group, AIM took inspiration from other quasi-militant political groups such as the Black Panther Party and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The centerpiece for AIM was to reassert indigenous culture, values, and sovereignty. In so doing, it was the contention of this movement that the plight of American Indian peoples – as engendered by the dominant U.S. culture – would finally be addressed in a meaningful way. (Hendricks, 2007) AIM sought to redress existing treaty rights and build new social service institutions to mitigate the chronic poverty, destitution, and other debilitating forces that were negatively impacting the community. Primarily based in urban centers, the mission of AIM quickly spread to reservations and throughout all of Indian country. In the fall of 1969, Richard Oakes, an American Indian activist and student at San Francisco Community College, led a large protest in the Bay Area that culminated in the long-term occupation of Alcatraz Island – once

again calling attention to existing treaties between indigenous nations and the federal government and the manner in which the United States has treated the American Indian people. (Hendricks, 2007)

This newly asserted political engagement helped accelerate the end of the era that had brought about Termination policies. In its stead, tribal and urban indigenous populations called on the U.S. government to actively support American Indian people as they worked towards true autonomy and sovereignty. Fueled by the activism being pursued by so many within their communities, along with the masterful use of mass media to emphasize and enumerate the policy demands sought by American Indian leadership and by the membership of AIM, a powerful effort towards enacting meaningful reform was beginning to be undertaken. (Hendricks, 2007) In terms of policy, these efforts began to have an effect upon public officials as new legislation at the federal level began to take shape and that would manifest in a series of new laws enacted by the mid 1970's.

Within each of these movements, a call for a drastic reform of education for American Indian students was central to their work. Oakes would work to create one of the first American Indian studies programs on the west coast, encouraging many American Indian students to become engaged with such studies as a means of furthering the now expanding indigenous liberation movements that he himself had helped to ignite. Back in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, the American Indian Movement fought to disassociate the indigenous communities living within the cities from the public education system altogether. For the leadership of AIM, the public education system was perceived as a principle instrument of colonization – whereby the government intentionally used the influence of schools to deconstruct indigenous identity while simultaneously furthering assimilative practices. Despite being nearly

thirty-five years since the public disavowal of boarding schools and assimilation as a federal accepted policy, AIM believed that nothing had really in fact changed. (Davis, 2013) By disengaging with the public education system, AIM sought to create a culturally-contextualized model of learning whereby the customs, ceremonies, and histories of indigenous people would become the principle curriculum used. For the leadership of AIM, formalized education of indigenous youth was now to be used as a means of furthering indigenous sovereignty through the education of the community's students.

However, some changes were underway within the system. Finishing the work began by the now late New York Senator Robert F. Kennedy, the U.S. Congress published in 1970 a comprehensive review of the state of American Indian education. Entitled *Indian Education: A National Tragedy - A National Challenge*, this latest report harshly condemned the ongoing failures of the American public education system. In particular, the report savaged the U.S. public education system for its abject failure towards providing curriculum inclusive of indigenous histories or perspectives, for a palpable anti-American Indian fervor within most districts, for the lack of indigenous participation or control over the public education apparatus, for failing to engage with the American Indian parents in a manner consistent with the intent of public schools, and for having no inclusion or regard for indigenous culture within the schooling system. (United States Senate, 1970) Additionally, the report went on to single out federally funded schools as being woefully underfunded, possessing decrepit facilities, and failing to meet the base line academic rigor required to provide for an adequate education for American Indian students.

In response to this bombshell of a condemnation, within three years the U.S. Congress passed the landmark Indian Education Act of 1972 which formally established the Office of

Indian Education (later renamed the Bureau of Indian Education, or BIE), provided federal funding to all public school districts that would establish a department dedicated to American Indian education and American Indian student performance at all grade levels (this funding stream would go on to be referenced as Title VII money – on account of its placement within the 1972 Act), and established a requirement for school districts and federally operated schools to work with empaneled indigenous parent groups to ensure that community voices are heard by the system. One of the major results was the sudden creation of Indian Education Departments within local school districts across the country.

In 1975, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Act (ISDEA) was passed by the U.S. Congress. This landmark legislation would begin the processes of handing over government control of health care and educational services directly to local tribal governments. For the first time ever, tribes would have the ability to exercise their sovereign dominion over schools operating on tribal lands. For its part, the federal government agreed to sustain all levels of funding for these enterprises but would issue the resources directly to the tribes to allow for the American Indian people nearly full autonomy to run their education and health care services.

Yet despite these new attempts at reform, the changes on the ground and in the classrooms came about very slowly. For the typical American Indian student, not much in the way of meaningful change could even be detected. The downward spiral of poor performance by the public schools regarding indigenous students would continue almost unabated as new performance data would indicate a continuation of a now persistent achievement gap. This continual systemic breakdown was an even more painful experience for the urban indigenous populations. For these people, who were only a few years removed from having transitioned to

urban life as a result of termination and relocation policies, the failure of schools to provide a quality education for their youth only served to exacerbate their current challenges.

It was for these reasons that AIM decided to include education as one of their principle courses of action. To this end, AIM leadership began pursuing their own academic endeavors that manifested in the opening of two new schools within the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota that were wholly dedicated to the teaching of indigenous culture and the preservation of indigenous sovereignty.

Institutions such as the Heart of the Earth Survival School located in Minneapolis, Minnesota, which opened its doors in the early 1970's, stood as a first-of-its kind example of how a school can be owned, operated, populated, and devoted to the Native American people. However, the persistent financial challenges faced by these schools precluded them from expanding and thriving – often times relegating them to embody a marginalized existence reflective of the people themselves. (Davis, 2013)

By the 1980's, leading educators and Native American elders continued to lobby for the further internal implementation of new initiatives within public schools so that they could better serve indigenous youth. Within the 1988 text *Teaching American Indian Students*, various key Native American educators enumerated a variety of teaching strategies and curriculum adjustments to be employed by public schools as a means of directly supporting the cultural identities of Native American students. They argued that if implemented such measures would demonstrably improve Native American educational achievement. In one instance, Karen Swisher and Donna Deyhle wrote that at the time of this particular text's publication, that "the body of research, although small, on learning styles of American Indian students presents some converging evidence that suggests common patterns or methods in the way these students come

to know or understand the world,” suggesting a further need to tailor the educational experience of Native Americans towards their own cultural understandings and practices in order for them to be successful. (Reyhner, 1988, p. 86) In this sense, the cultural identities of the student became identified as the keystone upon which academic achievement must be built, and essentially validated the efforts previously put forward by AIM. However, despite these calls for reform and the modest changes that were implemented, the academic data continued to show the presence of real academic disparities affecting American Indian students. The problem had yet to be dealt with properly, nor was it subsiding in any meaningful way.

By 1991, a federal report was drafted and published by the Indian Nations At Risk Taskforce, a select group of leading educators derived from the United States Department of Education. Their work, entitled *Indian Nations At Risk: An Educational Strategy for Action* continued the call for increased institutional reform within public education so as to empower Native students to achieve more. In short, there was a continued need to address the unique challenges faced by Native American students within our public schools regarding the preservation of their cultural identities as well as their academic pursuits. (Indian Nations At Risk Taskforce, 1991) However, despite all of these advances in thought regarding cultural identity and its relation to formal education at the close of the century, wholesale changes were slow to be implemented, if at all, by America’s public schools.

Today’s Trial and Errors: The Era of Intentional Reform

Now, as we stand within the 21st century - nearly one hundred and thirty-five years after the opening of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School - our public school system is still grappling with how best to provide education to Native American youth that is culturally responsive, respectful, and yet can maintain the academic rigor all schools strive for. Within the

compendium *Standing Together: American Indian Education As Culturally Responsive Pedagogy*, another group of educators and Native American leaders have once again compiled a collection of essays and papers replete with new and innovative practices designed to support America's public education system towards developing the cultural identity of the Native American students while ensuring their ability to achieve success academically. Now however, the system has been commandeered by the politically fashionable emphasis on high stakes testing and school accountability. Within this work, the various authors present well researched methods for engaging students and transforming school work from an arbitrary nature to one that is couched in relevance and relational for the students and their culture. They also strongly advocated for the inclusion of Native American history and languages as perfunctory coursework within schools that enroll Native American students. (Klug, 2012) While many advances have been made, the overall commonality with each of these collected works strongly suggests that there is quite a bit more work to be done.

Compromising the implementation of these proposed reforms were the most recent pieces of federal legislation specifically designed to improve public education. The No Child Left Behind Act (otherwise known as "NCLB"- passed in 2001), and its watered-down successor the Every Student Succeeds Act ("ESSA" – passed in 2015), were successive attempts to spur widespread reform and target the achievement gap for permanent closure by applying strict evaluation standards to gauge the efficacy of America's public schools. While these two federal acts did effectively leverage the modern advancement in information technologies to tabulate and disaggregate key academic data in order to highlight differing student ethnicity performance for the first time, they fell far short in offering any meaningful supportive strategies to rectify detected shortcomings within schools. Instead, interdiction efforts typically took the form of

harsh overreactions with overly strong punitive measures. Most often, it was the teachers rather than administrators who were scapegoated as the reasons for poor school performance. Owing to the extreme consequences of failing to hit established outcomes and benchmarks, school administrators began dictating to faculty pedagogical approaches to ensure optimum student performance on standardized tests (the preferred instruments by which schools were graded). The result was the immediate disintegration of academic inquiry and critical thinking development for students – all in favor of a slavish adherence to test preparation. What has come to be known as the “drill and kill” approach to teaching is now unfortunately ubiquitous in most American public schools.

To date, in spite of both NCLB and ESSA, each successive data disclosure by the American public education system still strongly indicates the persistent presence of a yawning achievement gap between white students versus that of students from communities of color, and most significantly, American Indian students. Proprietors of the public education system and their benefactors in the U.S. Congress are enthusiastic that their application of ESSA – an act that many hold in high regard - will be *the reform* that will start to finally remedy this seemingly intractable academic disparity.

Section II - Where We Are at Today: Key Academic Data from Six Urban American Indian Population Centers (Albuquerque, NM; Denver, CO; Los Angeles, CA; Minneapolis, MN; Portland, OR; Seattle, WA)

“The grandfathers and the grandmothers are in the children; teach them well.”

- *Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) proverb* (Cleary, 1996, p.64)

Part I: Background and Definitions

The National Urban Indian Family Coalition (NUIFC) has, through the course of its work, come to identify six major urban centers that possess a high concentration of American Indian students attending local public schools that also possess alternative education programs. These alternative learning opportunities and centers have arisen organically within their established systems as fueled by the work of the American Indian community residing there. To understand the genesis of these systems and the commensurate need that gave impetus to their creation, it is important to take a brief examination of the academic data currently being yielded by the school districts within each of these cities. To achieve this, baseline data used for cursory evaluations of public school efficacy have been included within the following section. These metrics culled for inclusion within this report are central data points that have been used for evaluation purposes in both the No Child Left Behind Act and have now been incorporated within the current Every Child Succeeds Act.

The purpose of including this data within this paper is to generate a snapshot illuminating the relative value of the education currently being provided for American Indian students within these urban centers regarding achievement. While it must be stated that this data will only provide a narrow look into the schools operating within these cities and as such cannot detail all of the remarkable work being pursued by the dedicated educational professionals working therein. For the purposes of this report, when this information is examined in concert with the depth of historical antecedents that have molded American public education thus far (many of which were outlined within Section I of this report), one will begin to deepen their understanding as to why the progenitors of these alternative models created what they did.

It is safe to assume that despite the near-heroic efforts of the teachers within the mainstream schools of America's public education system, the data is not great for American Indian students. We know this to be true for the concept of an "Achievement Gap" has come to dominate discussions relating to the American School system. This phenomenon involves the seemingly intractable statistical gap regarding academic achievement that exists between white students and students originating from communities of color and the American Indian community. For decades, this gap in achievement has persisted, so it would stand to reason that any statistical inquiry regarding current system performance as it relates to American Indian students would reflect this ongoing disparity.

The six urban centers identified for inclusion within this report are Albuquerque, New Mexico; Denver, Colorado; Los Angeles, California; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Portland, Oregon; and Seattle, Washington. What follows is a statistical snapshot utilizing key characteristics often used by evaluator bodies regarding school and district efficacy. As a primer, let us further define what is meant by these data points:

Aggregate Attendance Rates

This data point, collected at each successive grade level throughout the K-12 pathway establishes the average cumulative attendance rate for a group of students at that level. For the purposes of this report, we will utilize Attendance Rates drawn from key grades in each of the three main clusters of academic schooling - primary, middle, and high school (drawn from grades 3, 8, and 11, respectively).

Literacy/Reading Comprehension Rates

Utilizing basic standards-based testing results, these metric evaluate the competency levels of students to perform age-appropriate tasks associated within the core content areas of reading and

writing. Here again, we will utilize data drawn from key grades in each of the three main clusters of academic schooling - primary, middle, and high school (drawn from grades 3, 8, and 11, respectively). The higher the percentage of accomplishment detailed by this metric suggests the higher capacity for students to move forward to more challenging developmental work within this content area.

Mathematic Achievement Rates

Much the same as the Literacy/Reading Comprehension data point, through the utilization of basic standards-based testing results, these metric evaluate the competency levels of students to perform age-appropriate tasks associated within the core content areas of mathematics and computation. As before, we will utilize data drawn from key grades in each of the three main clusters of academic schooling - primary, middle, and high school (drawn from grades 3, 8, and 11, respectively). The higher the percentage of accomplishment detailed by this metric suggests the higher capacity for students to move forward to more challenging developmental work within this content area.

Grade Point Average (GPA) Data

For those students that are earning credits or receiving grades and assessments, the cumulative performance data around the scoring or grades awarded to students can also provide insight at the type of success being earned by the students. This weighted average is typically associated with the assignment of letter grades for each course taken and also affixes a point score to accompany each letter grade awarded. When combined, the grades earned and the grade points yielded can offer insights in the nature of the success being achieved by the student. Commonly referred to as the Grade-Point Average, or “GPA” this metric denotes the degree of aptitude students realize as they pass (or fail) their classes. (GPA can be assigned to individual students,

and can also be captured by accounting for whole groups of students in a class-wide basis). GPA can also be reflective of a particular grading period, or detail the overall course of a student or group of students' entire academic careers (otherwise known as "cumulative GPA"). For the purposes of this report, we will be including cumulative GPA for whole groups of American Indian students at key grade levels within each of the three main clusters of academic schooling - primary, middle, and high school (drawn from grades 3, 8, and 11 respectively).

Behavioral Intervention - Suspensions Rates and Number of Expulsions

This statistic details interventions taken by the school or schools within a particular district for the purposes of classroom management and behavioral conditioning of the students. Whenever exhibited behaviors are out of compliance with accepted school or district standards, the offending student can be removed from the learning environment – either temporarily (In-School and Out-of-School suspensions) or permanently (expulsions). This data point looks to establish the frequency of these types of interventions enacted for American Indian students within each district.

Graduation Rates (4-year/5-year/6-Year)

For secondary schools, one of the preeminent data points used to gauge effectiveness relates to successful completions - whereby the student earns their secondary education credential. Thus, graduating with a diploma becomes one of the cornerstone accomplishments for any secondary program to demonstrate. To this end, secondary programs (mainly high school) are held to account for their rates of graduation based on the length of time it takes for a student to complete. Most high schools are comprised of four grade levels required for completion (freshman year, sophomore, junior, and senior). As such, graduation rates are evaluated by assessing what percentages earn their diplomas within four years of entering high school, and if

there is a delay in the progress of the student from earning credits on pace to sustain completion within four years, two secondary graduation rates capturing those who completed in five and six years' time are also tracked (most state laws allow for students to continue on pursuing their high school diploma one to three years after their eighteenth birthday). This study will include all three variations of graduation rates as a means of establishing the amount of American Indian students who are considered to have completed "on time" or with a one or two year delay.

Drop-Out Rates

On the opposite side of the spectrum for assessing completion rates at the high school level comes the data point tallying those who have exited prematurely prior to completion. Commonly referred to as "drop-outs", this data point measures the volume of students who quit school in favor of some other pursuit. Typically, drop outs do not declare their intentions, instead favoring an immediate withdrawal from school. Some states allow students to formally withdraw school at the age of 16, while most maintain that students must be 18 (a legal adult) prior to prematurely ending their academic careers. For most districts, once a student has been absent for 15 consecutive school days at the secondary level, without return, they are then considered a "drop out". This metric evaluates how many American Indian students are permanently disengaging from the K-12 system.

Post-Secondary Matriculation Rates

Once students have successfully completed their secondary education, many transition into college or university matriculation. This data point tracks the average number of successful enrollments once American Indian students have earned their high school diploma.

Career Placement/Employment Rates

Similar to post-secondary matriculation rates, career and employment placement rates focus on those American Indian students who have transitioned from their successful completion of their secondary education (graduating from high school) directly into some form of employment. This data point tracks the average number of job placements occurring for American Indian students after graduation. Also included within this data pool are average wage rates at time of placement, as depicted by an average dollar amount being earned, and the average amount of hours eligible for work for the position hired.

Albuquerque

Home District of Chosen Urban Center: <u>Albuquerque</u> Total Number - American Indian Students: <u>4,732</u>									
Educational Grade Level	Enrollment # and % of district	Aggregate Attendance Rates:	English Literacy Achievement: % proficient & above	Mathematic Achievement: % proficient & above	Behavioral Intervention Data: # of Suspensions / # of Expulsions	Graduation Rates: (4-year/5-year/6-Year)	Drop-Out Rates:	Post-Secondary Matriculation Rates:	Employment Data (16-21 year olds)
Primary School (K-5)	N/A	N/A	K: 38% 1: 39% 2: 49% 3: 13% 4: 10% 5: 16%	3: 17% 4: 9% 5: 12%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Middle School (6-8)	N/A	N/A	6: 12% 7: 14% 8: 18%	6: 9% 7: 7% 8: 10%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
High School (9-12)	N/A	N/A	9: 16% 10: 23% 11: 39%	9: 12% 10: 15% 11: 7%	N/A	4-yr: 47% 5-yr: 59% 6-yr: 71%	N/A	In-State: 48.5% Out of State: 6.1% Total: 54.6%	N/A
Districtwide	4,732 (5.2%)	93.8%	N/A	N/A	4% of total district-wide suspensions	N/A	N/A	N/A	Employment rate: 50.8% Average wages/salary in last year: \$12,129 Average usual hours worked per week last year: 33.4

Enrollment

- **Data in table**
 - 2015-2016 American Indian/Alaskan Native enrollment district-wide
 - Source: [http://webed.ped.state.nm.us/sites/conference/2016 District Report Cards/001 ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS DRC2016 .pdf](http://webed.ped.state.nm.us/sites/conference/2016%20District%20Report%20Cards/001_ALBUQUERQUE_PUBLIC_SCHOOLS_DRC2016_.pdf)
- **Additional data available**
 - 2016-2017 American Indian/Alaskan Native enrollment totals (#, not %) by school type (Elementary- 1,455; Middle- 1,423; High School- 3,419); but these numbers go to *third* ethnicity rather than American Indian as *primary* ethnicity

- Source: data directly from Indian Education Director of Albuquerque Public Schools

Attendance

- **Data in table**
 - 2016-2017 attendance rate of American Indian/Alaskan Native students district-wide
 - Source: http://www.aps.edu/indian-education/aps-tribal-education-status-reports/tribal-education-status-report-2016-2017/at_download/file
- **Additional data available**
 - Truancy infractions reported, American Indian/Alaskan Native students, from 2010-2011 through 2014-2015 school years: 651 infractions, which is 5.8% of all truancy infractions compared to Native American/Alaskan Native making up only 4.3% of district-wide enrollment
 - Source: <http://www.aps.edu/accountability-reporting/documents/2015-2016-publications/suspensions-and-infractions-report-final>
 - Habitual truancy (accumulation of 10 or more unexcused absences in 1 year) among American Indian/Alaskan Native students. American Indian/Alaskan Native students as a whole had the highest rate (22.7%) of habitual truancy in 2013-2014 compared to 14.7% of students overall, as well as the highest rates of truancy at each grade level (K- 19.1%; 1- 21.6%; 2- 18.5%; 3- 13.3%; 4- 15.4%; 5- 16.7%; 6- 22%; 7- 24.5%; 8- 22.8%; 9- 36.9%; 10- 35%; 11- 39.7%; 12- 32.7%).
 - Source: http://www.aps.edu/accountabilityreporting/documents/2014_2015_Publications/Achievement_Native_American_Education_Update_2015.pdf

English/Literacy

- **Data in table**
 - 2017 % of American Indian/Alaskan Native students proficient or above in the content of Reading or Literacy, grades K-11
 - Source: <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/AssessmentAccountability/AcademicGrowth/NMSBA.html>

Math

- **Data in table**
 - 2017 % of American Indian/Alaskan Native students proficient or above in the content of Math, grades 3-11
 - Source: <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/AssessmentAccountability/AcademicGrowth/NMSBA.html>

Behavioral Interventions

- **Data in table**
 - American Indian/Alaskan Native suspensions over 2011-2015 5-year period; suspensions (in-school and out) and expulsions are grouped together.

- Source: <http://www.aps.edu/accountability-reporting/documents/2015-2016-publications/suspensions-and-infractions-report-final>
- **Additional data available**
 - American Indian/Alaskan Native overall disciplinary infractions over 2011-2015 5-year period: 4% (3,339) of all infractions (83,477). Similar breakdowns are also available by specific infraction type (e.g. alcohol/drug; assault/battery; bullying; gang activity; etc.)
 - Source: <http://www.aps.edu/accountability-reporting/documents/2015-2016-publications/suspensions-and-infractions-report-final>

Graduation Rates

- **Data in table**
 - American Indian/Alaskan Native high school graduation rates: 2016 cohort – 4-yr rate; 2015 cohort – 5-yr rate; 2014 cohort – 6-yr rate
 - Source: http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/Graduation_data.html

Drop-out Rates

- **Data in table**
 - *N/A - Dropout rates by race/ethnicity are not publicly reported for Albuquerque Public Schools.*

Post-Secondary Matriculation

- **Data in table**
 - American Indian/Alaskan Native students who graduated in 2014 and enrolled in an institution of higher education within 16 months of earning a regular high school diploma
 - Source: [http://webed.ped.state.nm.us/sites/conference/2016 District Report Cards/001 ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS DRC2016 .pdf](http://webed.ped.state.nm.us/sites/conference/2016%20District%20Report%20Cards/001_ALBUQUERQUE_PUBLIC_SCHOOLS_DRC2016_.pdf)

Employment

- **Data in table:**
 - Employment rate: % employed among 16-21 year olds who identify as “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone”
 - Averages wages or salary income over the last 12 months among employed 16-21 year old “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone” population
 - Average usual hours worked per week over the last 12 months among employed 16-21 year old “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone” population
 - Source: Customized microfile extraction of American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 year estimates. Data reflects only those individuals residing in the borders of the unified school district.
- **Additional data available:**
 - # and % weeks of worked by American Indian/Alaskan Native students during the last 12 months for employed AI/AN individuals aged 16-21 (K. Cherry can provide this if needed)

- Source: Customized microfile extraction of American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 year estimates. Data reflects only those individuals residing in the borders of the unified school district.

Denver

Home District of Chosen Urban Center: Denver Total Number - American Indian Students: 592									
Educational Grade Level	Enrollment # and % of district	Aggregate Attendance Rates:	English Literacy Achievement: % proficient & above*	Mathematic Achievement: % proficient & above	Behavioral Intervention Data: # of Suspensions / # of Expulsions	Graduation Rates: (4-year/5-year/6-Year)	Drop-Out Rates:	Post-Secondary Matriculation Rates:	Employment Data: (16-21 year olds)
Primary School (K-5)	274 (.6%)	N/A	3: 13%* 4: 18%* 5: 20%*	3: 14.8% 4: * 5: *	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Middle School (6-8)	115 (.6%)	N/A	6: 30.6%* 7: 26.5%* 8: 28.6%*	6: 17.6% 7: 11.4% 8: 22.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
High School (9-12)	203 (.9%)	N/A	9: 20%* 10: 24%* 11: 33.3%*	N/A	N/A	4-yr: 47.5% 5-yr: 49.1% 6-yr: 50%	N/A	In State: 23.1% Out of State: 5.1% Total: 28.2%	N/A
Districtwide	592 (.6%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	# of students suspended: 71 # in school suspensions: 39 # out of school suspensions: 62	N/A	Grade 7-12: 8.6%	N/A	Employment rate: 47.3% Average wages/salary in last year: \$16,650 Average usual hours worked per week last year: 40

Enrollment

- **Data in table**
 - 2016-2017 American Indian/Alaskan Native enrollment in Denver Public Schools
 - Source: http://thecommons.dpsk12.org/cms/lib/CO01900837/Centricity/domain/31/student/submissions/forms/2016_MembCountEthnicity_SubReport_SchoolType_OFFICIAL.pdf

Attendance

- **Data in table**
 - *N/A - Attendance data disaggregated by race/ethnicity is not publicly available for Denver Public Schools.*

English/Literacy

- **Data in table**
 - 2015 - % of American Indian/Alaskan Native students grades 3-11 met or exceeded expectations
 - Source: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/cmas-dataandresults>
- **Additional data available**

**There will be newer data available (2017) to be considered soon. Beginning in 2016 the English test was only administered to grades 3-9 instead of 3-11; for the 2017 test, data is reported for AI/AN students only for grades 3, 6 and 8 (this compared to the 2015 data in the table which is reported for all grades 3-11).*

 - Source: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/cmas-dataandresults>

Math

- **Data in table**
 - 2015 % of American Indian/Alaskan Native students' grades 3-8 met or exceeded expectations. Data for grades 4-5 is not available/suppressed due to small sample size/privacy concerns.
 - Source: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/cmas-dataandresults>
- **Additional data available**

**There will be newer data available (2017) to be considered soon. For the Math 2017 test, data is reported for American Indian/Alaskan Native students only for grades 3, 4 and 5 (this compared to the 2015 data in the table which is reported for grades 3, 6, 7 & 8).*

 - Source: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/cmas-dataandresults>

Behavioral Interventions

- **Data in table**
 - 2015-2016 American Indian/Alaskan Native student discipline data. “# of students suspended” is the unduplicated count of American Indian/Alaskan Native students who received an in or out of school suspension. “# of in school suspensions” and “# of out of school suspensions” are the counts of suspension actions against students - thus these numbers may represent the same student who experiences more than one suspension.
 - Source: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/suspend-expelcurrent>
- **Additional data available**
 - 2015-2016 American Indian/Alaskan Native students: 12.2% of the American Indian/Alaskan Native student population experienced some form of suspension; American Indian/Alaskan Native students experienced 1.2% of the district's suspensions and expulsions but make up only .6% of the district's student population.
 - Source: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/suspend-expelcurrent>
<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rv2015pmlinks>

Graduation Rates

- **Data in table**
 - American Indian/Alaskan Native high school graduation rates. Class of 2016 – 4-yr rate; Class of 2015 – 5-yr rate; Class of 2014 – 6-yr rate

- Source: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/gradratecurrent>

Drop-out Rates

- **Data in table**
 - Overall district American Indian/Alaskan Native dropout rate for grades 7-12 *including* alternative schools
 - Source: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/dropoutcurrent>
- **Additional data available**
 - Overall district American Indian/Alaskan Native dropout rate for grades 7-12 *excluding* alternative schools: 3.6%
 - Source: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/dropoutcurrent>

Post-Secondary Matriculation

- **Data in table**
 - American Indian/Alaskan Native students graduating in 2015 and enrolled in a post-secondary institution
 - Source: <http://higherred.colorado.gov/data/Fullreport.aspx>

Employment

- **Data in table:**
 - Employment rate: % employed among 16-21 year olds who identify as “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone”
 - Averages wages or salary income over the last 12 months among employed 16-21 year old “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone” population
 - Average usual hours worked per week over the last 12 months among employed 16-21 year old “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone” population
 - Source: Customized microfile extraction of American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 year estimates. Data reflects only those individuals residing in the borders of the unified school district.
- **Additional data available:**
 - # and % weeks worked during the last 12 months for employed American Indian/Alaskan Native individuals aged 16-21 (K. Cherry can provide this if needed)
 - Source: Customized microfile extraction of American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 year estimates. Data reflects only those individuals residing in the borders of the unified school district.

Los Angeles

Home District of Chosen Urban Center: Los Angeles Total Number - American Indian Students: 1,226									
Educational Grade Level	Enrollment # and % of district	Aggregate Attendance Rates:	English Literacy Achievement: % proficient & above	Mathematic Achievement: % proficient & above	Behavioral Intervention Data: # of Suspensions / # of Expulsions	Graduation Rates: (4-year/5-year/6-year)	Drop-Out Rates:	Post-Secondary Matriculation Rates:	Employment Data (16-21 year olds)
Primary School (K-5)	395 (.13%)	N/A	3: 39% 4: 39% 5: 45%	3: 42% 4: 32% 5: 25%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Middle School (6-8)	345 (.25%)	N/A	6: 41% 7: 47% 8: 37%	6: 23% 7: 39% 8: 20%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
High School (9-12)	486 (.26%)	N/A	11: 48%	11: 25%	N/A	4-yr: 66.1% 5-yr: 71.86% 6-yr: 69.27%	24.8%	2-yr Institution: 31% 4-yr Institution: 24% Total: 56%	N/A
Districtwide	1,226 (.19%)	94.4%	42%	29%	.66% out of school suspension rate	N/A	N/A	N/A	Employment rate: 34.3% Average wages/salary in last year: \$4,269 Average usual hours worked per week last year: 32.7

Enrollment

- **Data in table**
 - 2016-2017 # American Indian/Alaskan Native enrolled and % of district
 - Source: <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensus/EnrEthGrd.aspx?cds=1964733&agglevel=district&year=2016-17>

Attendance

- **Data in table**
 - 2016-2017 American Indian/Alaskan Native districtwide cumulative attendance rate
 - Source: Data directly from an employee of LA Unified School District's Office of Data and Accountability

English/Literacy

- **Data in table**
 - 2016 American Indian/Alaskan Native English Language Arts achievement grades 3-8 and 11, % met or exceeded standard
 - Source: <https://www.ed-data.org/district/Los-Angeles/Los-Angeles-Unified>

Math

- **Data in table**
 - 2016 American Indian/Alaskan Native Math achievement grades 3-8 and 11, % met or exceeded standard
 - Source: <https://www.ed-data.org/district/Los-Angeles/Los-Angeles-Unified>

Behavioral Interventions

- **Data in table**
 - 2016 American Indian/Alaskan Native out of school suspension rate
 - Source: <http://schoolinfosheet.lausd.net/budgetreports/disciplinereports.jsp>
- **Additional data available**
 - 2015 # American Indian/Alaskan Native of in school suspensions (6) and # of out of school suspensions (12)
 - Source: <https://www.ed-data.org/district/Los-Angeles/Los-Angeles-Unified>

Graduation rates

- **Data in table**
 - American Indian/Alaskan Native high school 4-year graduation rate, Class of 2015-2016
 - Source: <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/CohortRates/GradRates.aspx?Agg=D&Topic=Graduates&TheYear=2015-16&cds=1964733000000&RC=District&SubGroup=Ethnic/Racial>
 - American Indian/Alaskan Native high school 5-year (Class of 2012-2013) and 6-year (Class of 2011-2012) graduation rates
 - Source: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ar/cogrdatafiles.asp>

Drop-out Rates

- **Data in table**
 - Class of 2015-2016 cohort dropout rate for American Indian/Alaskan Native students
 - Source: <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/CohortRates/GradRates.aspx?Agg=D&Topic=Dropouts&TheYear=2015-16&cds=19647330000000&RC=District&SubGroup=Ethnic/Racial>

Post-Secondary Matriculation

- **Data in table**
 - Class of 2014 American Indian/Alaskan Native graduates who enrolled in 2 and 4 year higher education institutions
 - Source: <http://laeri.org/ed/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/laericollegegoing082017.pdf>

Employment

- **Data in table:**
 - Employment rate: % employed among 16-21 year olds who identify as “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone”
 - Averages wages or salary income over the last 12 months among employed 16-21 year old “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone” population
 - Average usual hours worked per week over the last 12 months among employed 16-21 year old “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone” population
 - Source: Customized microfile extraction of American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 year estimates. Data reflects only those individuals residing in the borders of the unified school district.
- **Additional data available:**
 - # and % weeks worked during the last 12 months for employed American Indian/Alaskan Native individuals aged 16-21 (K. Cherry can provide this if needed)
 - Source: Customized microfile extraction of American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 year estimates. Data reflects only those individuals residing in the borders of the unified school district.

Minneapolis

Home District of Chosen Urban Center: Minneapolis Total Number - American Indian Students: 1,227									
Educational Grade Level	Enrollment # and % of district	Aggregate Attendance Rates:	English Literacy Achievement: % proficient & above	Mathematic Achievement: % proficient & above	Behavioral Intervention Data: # of Suspensions / # of Expulsions	Graduation Rates: (4-year/5-year/6-Year)	Drop-Out Rates:	Post-Secondary Matriculation Rates:	Employment Data (16-21 year olds)
Primary School (K-5)	567 (3%)	N/A	3: 20.9% 4: 20% 5: 27.9%	3: 29.8% 4: 22.3% 5: 21.4%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Middle School (6-8)	278 (3.8%)	N/A	6: 21.9% 7: 19.5% 8: 27.5%	6: 6.1% 7: 9.9% 8: 17.1%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
High School (9-12)	382 (3.6%)	N/A	10: 23%	11: 0%	N/A	4-yr: 37.4% 5-yr: 44.6% 6-yr: 40.7%	4-yr: 21.2% 5-yr: 27.7% 6-yr: 39.6%	63%	N/A
Districtwide	1,227 (3.4%)	51.5%	All grades: 22.9%	All grades: 17.1%	6.8%	N/A	N/A	N/A	Employment rate: 22.2% Average wages/salary in last year: \$5,000 Average usual hours worked per week last year: 25

Enrollment

- **Data in table**
 - 2017 # American Indian/Alaskan Native enrolled and % of district
 - Source: <http://w20.education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/DataTopic.jsp?TOPICID=2>

Attendance

- **Data in table**
 - 2016-2016 % American Indian/Alaskan Native students “consistently attending” (e.g. not chronically absent; 90% attendance threshold)
 - Source: Internal data analysis provided by employee of Minnesota Department of Education’s Data Reports and Analytics department

English/Literacy

- **Data in table**

- 2017 American Indian/Alaskan Native Reading achievement for grades 3-8 and 10, % “meets or exceeds” standards
 - Source: http://rc.education.state.mn.us/-academicStandards/orgId--30001000000_groupType--district_test--allAccount_subject--R_grade--10_categories--amIndian_p--7

Math

- **Data in table**

- 2017 American Indian/Alaskan Native Math achievement for grades 3-8 and 11, % “meets or exceeds” standards
 - Source: http://rc.education.state.mn.us/-academicStandards/orgId--30001000000_groupType--district_test--allAccount_subject--R_grade--10_categories--amIndian_p--7

Behavioral Interventions

- **Data in table**

- 2015-2016 % of disciplinary actions assigned to American Indian/Alaskan Native students; disciplinary action is defined as an “out of school suspension for one day or more, expulsion or exclusion”
 - Source: <http://w20.education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/DataTopic.jsp?TOPICID=133>

- **Additional data available**

- 2015-2016 % of disciplinary actions assigned to American Indian/Alaskan Native students compared to AI/AN enrollment as a % of district: In 2015-2016, American Indian/Alaskan Native students received 6.8% of disciplinary actions although they only make up 3.5% of total district enrollment
 - Source: <http://w20.education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/DataTopic.jsp?TOPICID=133>
<http://w20.education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/DataTopic.jsp?TOPICID=2>

Graduation Rates

- **Data in table**

- American Indian/Alaskan Native high school graduation rates: 4-yr rate (Class of 2016); 5-yr rate (Class of 2015); 6-yr rate (Class of 2014)
 - Source: http://rc.education.state.mn.us/-graduation/orgId--30001000000_groupType--district_graduationYearRate--6_categories--amIndian_x_p--3

Dropout Rates

- **Data in table**

- American Indian/Alaskan Native high school drop out rates: 4 yr rate (Class of 2016); 5 yr rate (Class of 2015); 6 yr rate (Class of 2014)
 - Source: http://rc.education.state.mn.us/-graduation/orgId--30001000000_groupType--district_graduationYearRate--6_categories--amIndian_x_p--3

Post-Secondary Matriculation

- **Data in table**

- Class of 2015, % of American Indian/Alaskan Native high school graduates who enrolled in any institution of higher education within 16 months of graduation
 - Source: http://rc.education.state.mn.us/-collegeGoing/orgId--30001000000_groupType--district_year--2015_categories--amIndian_x_p--1

Employment

- **Data in table:**

- Employment rate: % employed among 16-21 year olds who identify as “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone”
- Averages wages or salary income over the last 12 months among employed 16-21 year old “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone” population
- Average usual hours worked per week over the last 12 months among employed 16-21 year old “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone” population
 - Source: Customized microfile extraction of American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 year estimates. Data reflects only those individuals residing in the borders of the unified school district.

- **Additional data available:**

- # and % weeks worked during the last 12 months for employed American Indian/Alaskan Native individuals aged 16-21 (K. Cherry can provide this if needed)
 - Source: Customized microfile extraction of American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 year estimates. Data reflects only those individuals residing in the borders of the unified school district.

Portland

Home District of Chosen Urban Center: Portland Total Number - American Indian Students: 348									
Educational Grade Level	Enrollment # and % of district	Aggregate Attendance Rates:	English Literacy Achievement: % proficient & above	Mathematic Achievement: % proficient & above	Behavioral Intervention Data: # of Suspensions / # of Expulsions	Graduation Rates: (4-year/5-year/6-Year)	Drop-Out Rates:	Post-Secondary Matriculation Rates:	Employment Data (16-21 year olds)
Primary School (K-5)	165 (.6%)	N/A	3: 26.1% 4: 29% 5: 25.9%	3: 30.4% 4: 32.3% 5: 21.4%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Middle School (6-8)	37 (.6%)	N/A	6: 47.8% 7: 52.2% 8: 45.8%	6: 40.9% 7: 31.8% 8: 43.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
High School (9-12)	72 (.6%)	N/A	11: 55.6%	11: 23.1%	N/A	4-yr: 47% 5-yr: 56%	12%	42%	N/A
Districtwide	*See notes	90.9%	39.9%	31.4%	5.7%	N/A	N/A	N/A	Employment rate: 77.2% Average wages/salary in last year: \$20,045 Average usual hours worked per week last year: 44.1

Enrollment

- **Data in table**

- 2016 # American Indian/Alaskan Native enrolled by school type, % of district

- Source:

[https://www.pps.net/cms/lib/OR01913224/Centricity/Domain/207/Enrollment by Race2016.pdf](https://www.pps.net/cms/lib/OR01913224/Centricity/Domain/207/Enrollment%20by%20Race2016.pdf)

- **Additional data available**

* 2016 enrollment (referenced above) also provides American Indian/Alaskan Native enrollment numbers for the following school type categories: “Alternative programs” = 14; “community based organizations” = 36; “special services” = 10; and “public charter schools” = 14. Including these schools brings total district enrollment to 348; enrollment only including traditional schools (E-5, 6-8, 9-12) puts district enrollment at 274.

- Source: [https://www.pps.net/cms/lib/OR01913224/Centricity/Domain/207/Enrollment by Race2016.pdf](https://www.pps.net/cms/lib/OR01913224/Centricity/Domain/207/Enrollment%20by%20Race2016.pdf)

Attendance

- **Data in table**
 - 2015-2016 American Indian/Alaskan Native aggregate attendance rate
 - Source: <http://www.oregon.gov/ode/reports-and-data/students/Pages/Attendance-and-Absenteeism.aspx>
- **Additional data available**
 - 2015-2016 chronic absenteeism for American Indian/Alaskan Native students: 28.8% chronically absent
 - Source: <http://www.oregon.gov/ode/reports-and-data/students/Pages/Attendance-and-Absenteeism.aspx>

English/Literacy

- **Data in table**
 - 2015-2016 American Indian/Alaskan Native English Language Arts achievement, % “meets or exceeds” standard
 - Source: <http://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/assessment/Pages/Assessment-Group-Reports-for-2014-2015-and-2015-2016.aspx>

Math

- **Data in table**
 - 2015-2016 American Indian/Alaskan Native Math achievement, % “meets or exceeds” standard
 - Source: <http://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/assessment/Pages/Assessment-Group-Reports-for-2014-2015-and-2015-2016.aspx>

Behavioral Interventions

- **Data in table**
 - 2015-2016 American Indian/Alaskan Native expulsions and out of school suspensions = 5.7%. Interpreted as 5.7% of American Indian/Alaskan Native students in 2015-2016 school year experienced and out of school suspension or expulsion.
 - Source: [https://www.pps.net/cms/lib/OR01913224/Centricity/Domain/207/Major Discipline Referrals by Race-Ethnicity 2015_16.pdf](https://www.pps.net/cms/lib/OR01913224/Centricity/Domain/207/Major%20Discipline%20Referrals%20by%20Race-Ethnicity%202015-16.pdf)

Graduation Rates

- **Data in table**
 - American Indian/Alaskan Native high school graduation rates: 4-yr rate (students entered high school in 2012-2013 and formed the 2015-2016 4-yr graduating

cohort); 5-yr rate (students entered high school in 2011-2012 and formed the 2015-2016 5-yr graduating cohort)

- Source: <http://www.oregon.gov/ode/reports-and-data/students/Pages/Cohort-Graduation-Rate.aspx>

Drop-out Rates

- **Data in table**

- American Indian/Alaskan Native drop-out rate grades 9-12 for school year 2015-2016
 - Source: <http://www.oregon.gov/ode/reports-and-data/students/Pages/Dropout-Rates.aspx>

Post-Secondary Matriculation

- **Data in table**

- 2014-2015 school year, percent of American Indian/Alaskan Native high school graduates enrolling in higher education within 16 months of graduating
 - Source: Internal data direct from an employee of Oregon Department of Education

Employment

- **Data in table:**

- Employment rate: % employed among 16-21 year olds who identify as “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone”
- Averages wages or salary income over the last 12 months among employed 16-21 year old “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone” population
- Average usual hours worked per week over the last 12 months among employed 16-21 year old “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone” population
 - Source: Customized microfile extraction of American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 year estimates. Data reflects only those individuals residing in the borders of the unified school district.

- **Additional data available:**

- # and % weeks worked during the last 12 months for employed American Indian/Alaskan Native individuals aged 16-21 (K. Cherry can provide this if needed)
 - Source: Customized microfile extraction of American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 year estimates. Data reflects only those individuals residing in the borders of the unified school district.

Seattle

Home District of Chosen Urban Center: Seattle Total Number - American Indian Students: 342									
Educational Grade Level	Enrollment # and % of district	Aggregate Attendance Rates:	English Literacy Achievement: % proficient & above	Mathematic Achievement: % proficient & above	Behavioral Intervention Data: # of Suspensions / # of Expulsions	Graduation Rates: (4-year/5-year/6-Year)	Drop-Out Rates:	Post-Secondary Matriculation Rates:	Employment Data (16-21 year olds)
Primary School (K-5)	118 (.4%)	93.7%	3: 35.3% 4: 48% 5: 35.3%	3: 35.3% 4: 56% 5: 17.6%	N/A	N/A	N/A	n/a	N/A
Middle School (6-8)	84 (.7%)	91.6%	6: 25.8% 7: 52% 8: 46.4%	6: 38.7% 7: 52% 8: 32.1%	N/A	N/A	N/A	n/a	N/A
High School (9-12)	140 (1%)	80.3%	N/A	N/A	N/A	4-yr: 54.5% 5-yr: 61.3% 6-yr: 66.7%	4-yr: 15.2% 5-yr: 32.3%	47.6%	N/A
Districtwide	342 (.6%)	87.5%	N/A	N/A	5.8%	N/A	N/A	N/A	Employment rate: 32.9% Average wages/salary in last year: \$13,015 Average usual hours worked per week last year: 27

Enrollment

- **Data in table**
 - 2016 # American Indian/Alaskan Native enrolled by school type, % of district totals
 - Source: <https://www.seattleschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=627&pageId=23394317>

Attendance

- **Data in table**
 - 2015 overall attendance rates for American Indian/Alaskan Native students by school type

- Source: <https://www.seattleschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=627&pageId=24450059>
- **Additional data available**
 - 2016 # (118) and % (28.9%) of American Indian/Alaskan Native students chronically absent
 - Source: <http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/PerformanceIndicators/ChronicAbsenteism.aspx>

English/Literacy

- **Data in table**
 - 2015 % of American Indian/Alaskan Native students who met Reading standard
 - Source: <https://www.seattleschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=627&pageId=24450059>
- **Additional data available**
 - 2015-2016 overall grades 3-8 % of American Indian/Alaskan Native students at English Language Arts proficiency: 37.7%
 - 2015-2016 % of 10th grade American Indian/Alaskan Native students passing all (not exclusive to English Language Arts) state exams required for graduation: 35.9%
 - Source: https://www.seattleschools.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_543/File/District/Departments/REA/sps_district_scorecard15_16.pdf

Math

- **Data in table**
 - 2015 % of American Indian/Alaskan Native students who met Math standard
 - Source: <https://www.seattleschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=627&pageId=24450059>
- **Additional data available**
 - 2015-2016 overall grades 3-8 % of American Indian/Alaskan Native students at Math proficiency: 37.3%
 - Source: https://www.seattleschools.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_543/File/District/Departments/REA/sps_district_scorecard15_16.pdf

Behavioral Interventions

- **Data in table**
 - 2016 district-wide discipline rate for American Indian/Alaskan Native students, including all discipline action types (school suspension, out of school suspension, expulsion).

- Source: <http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/PerformanceIndicators/DisciplineRates.aspx>
- **Additional data available**
 - 2016 % of American Indian/Alaskan Native students in 6-12th grades who were suspended or expelled: 6.9%
 - Source: https://www.seattleschools.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_543/File/District/Departments/REA/sps_district_scorecard15_16.pdf

Graduation Rates

- **Data in table**
 - % of American Indian/Alaskan Native students who were high school graduates after 4, 5 and 6 years of entering high school
 - Source: <https://www.seattleschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=627&pageId=24450059>

Drop-out Rates

- **Data in table**
 - % of American Indian/Alaskan Native students who were dropouts 4 and 5 years after entering high school
 - Source: <https://www.seattleschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=627&pageId=24450059>

Post-Secondary Matriculation

- **Data in table**
 - % of American Indian/Alaskan Native students who graduated in 2015 that enrolled in in any institution of higher education
 - Source: <http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/PerformanceIndicators/PostsecondaryEnrollment.aspx>

Employment

- **Data in table:**
 - Employment rate: % employed among 16-21 year olds who identify as “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone”
 - Averages wages or salary income over the last 12 months among employed 16-21 year old “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone” population
 - Average usual hours worked per week over the last 12 months among employed 16-21 year old “American Indian/Alaskan Native alone” population
 - Source: Customized microfile extraction of American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 year estimates. Data reflects only those individuals residing in the borders of the unified school district.
- **Additional data available:**

- # and % weeks worked during the last 12 months for employed American Indian/Alaskan Native individuals aged 16-21 (K. Cherry can provide this if needed)
 - Source: Customized microfile extraction of American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 year estimates. Data reflects only those individuals residing in the borders of the unified school district.

Section III – A Resurgence: Promising Alternative Educational Practices Emanating from Urban American Indian Communities

“The whole world is coming,
A nation is coming, a nation is coming,
The Eagle has brought the message to the tribe.
The father says so, the father says so.
Over the whole earth they are coming.
The buffalo are coming, the buffalo are coming,
The Crow has brought the message to the tribe,
The father says so, the father says so.”

- *Ghost Dance Song, Lakota* (Cleary, 1996, p. 56)

Part I: Introduction to Section III

There was intentionality behind the selection of the six urban centers that serve as the focus of this work. Within each of these selected cities are established alternative programs or alternative schools - or emerging plans to foster such programming - on behalf of an American Indian student population within their public schools. Also, these cities possess American Indian populations that are higher than most other metropolitan areas. Now equipped with a deeper understanding of the historical antecedents that fostered the current climate within American public education and propelled by the stark data points still being generated by this very system, it becomes understandable as to why the American Indian communities within these urban centers felt compelled to try something different on behalf of their students. If changes were not implemented regarding the approach as to how their youth were educated, there was enough evidence to suggest that these communities would continue to watch wave after successive wave of students endure a foreign culture's system that has historically failed their people.

In response to this very real threat to their young people, these communities acted by creating alternative programming and alternative sites that were purposefully anchored within the values of their community and in the belief that the people could no longer afford to remain idle. In nearly all instances, these models were established as a means of addressing a perceived need to help their own by their own means. Now, several years after their doors were opened, these programs have achieved many of the academic outcomes that they had originally set out after – perhaps not to the sweeping degree required - but in demonstrable ways that stand out as an improvement upon the what is being produced by many other school districts across the nation. As such, these community-governed programs were born out of a deep sense of hope, as well as a belief in the possible. For these American Indian communities, a collective vision had emerged

that illuminated a pathway forward towards cultural resurgence by reaching back through time for the wisdom propagated by their people well before first contact. In the name of their ancestors and on behalf their children, these communities seized upon that vision without hesitation and set out towards making it a reality.

Within the following section, this work will highlight seven sites or programmatic activities that have been deployed within these six cities by the urban American Indian communities living there. To be sure, there are other cities that have deployed some variety of programming on behalf of their own American Indian student populations, and that could also very easily be considered meaningful and of value. For the purposes of this work, the intention is merely to foster a larger discussion by focusing in on only a handful of particular urban sites that currently reflect a wider experience regarding the potential of alternative, culturally based, community driven education methodologies within the context of the current public education system.

The efforts being pursued by these sites has generated positive results, but one must remain clear about two salient points: the first being that these programs do not represent a panacea of solutions that can eradicate all negative academic data points on behalf of American Indian students. Instead, they were chosen for investigation due to the fact that they demonstrate community-led, alternative approaches worthy of further examination and, perhaps, replication or expansion. The second key point is to know that all of these programs within these urban sites are being conducted in close coordination with the local public school district, or are directly operated by the school district itself. This is important to note for it exemplifies the reality that - despite the long-term historical failings of the U.S. public education system regarding American Indian students (as explored within Section I of this work) - these urban school districts have

undertaken an honest appraisal of their own systemic issues and recognized the need to make changes. As a result, these particular districts have employed dedicated and trained professionals drawn from indigenous communities who are working from *within* the system and who have taken a proactive role utilizing new methodologies to address these seemingly intractable failures. Some districts have even taken this a step further and partnered with outside organizations to create entirely new learning centers altogether in an attempt to remedy the academic disparities being experienced by this one community. This spirit of creativity, partnership, and innovation exhibited by these local school districts is equally important to note for it is a rather rare occurrence, and is absolutely integral towards enabling the success at these alternative sites, as well as something that needs to be celebrated and replicated as well.

Organizing the Alternative Sites for Better Understanding

Over the course of a year, much time was dedicated towards preparing for this work – including conducting site visits to the following featured locations for the express purposes of learning about the alternative programs or alternative schools operating within each of the selected urban settings. These site visits included observations of the programming as well as informed discussions with faculty, administrative staff, and occasionally the students themselves. As a result, a deeper understanding was garnered regarding the work being pursued at these sites as well as a greater appreciation of the rather complex nuances that distinguishes one site from another. The following section was designed to provide a baseline exposure for the reader so that they can develop their own interpretations about what is happening at these sites. To this end, each program or alternative school will be discussed through a brief synopsis that details their origins, purpose, and the methods employed by each. However, as noted within the introduction of this section, these activities reflect a variety of approaches and models being employed on

behalf of American Indian students as determined by the needs of each community. As such, these programs are not the same as the other. In fact, some have become more advanced in their operations while others are still relatively young. In the interests of providing as much clarity as possible, and without placing judgement on the effectiveness of these programs, this work has elected to categorize each of the selected urban sites within three differing classifications reflective of their current state of development. These categories denote a sequential ordering along a continuum depicting the scope of the educational services provided at each location, and to the extent that the program has autonomy from the local school district (meaning to identify if the site is operating individual programs or possesses a full-fledged alternative learning site such a “bricks and mortar” alternative school). These categories have then been labeled and organized as being *Emerging*, *Developed*, or *Advanced* – each suggestive of the current status of development within each of the chosen urban centers.

As a means of assisting the reader, the following definitions have been provided to further clarify how these categories have been used and why certain programs have been housed therein. A secondary objective for the inclusion of these category definitions is to assist other school districts or indigenous communities in defining the state of their own public education system - potentially inspiring them to accelerate the development of this system to include more alternative, indigenized programming on behalf of their American Indian students.

Emerging

For the academic activities assigned to this category, the following characteristics are typically present: First, there is ongoing purposeful engagement between district officials and the American Indian community to seek out and potentially deploy supportive services and possibly alternative educational options for the American Indian students enrolled within the district.

These engagement activities are readily identifiable and documented. In some instances, the district may have hired direct staff or a team of administrators to work on behalf of the American Indian community either directly or with their students within the schools. Additionally, there may be the development of cultural groups for American Indian students to participate in that are supported by district staff. In other instances, these engagement activities might take the form of district advertising or district sponsorship of cultural activities occurring on behalf of the American Indian community - either in the form of extra-curricular activities or in-school events (pow-wows, art exhibits, cultural practices or culturally informed outdoor activities, community gatherings, etc.).

Within this category, there are usually very limited academic or credit earning programs designed specifically for American Indian students or that have been inculcated with indigenous culture (such as language revitalization courses, indigenous history, indigenous art, etc.). Community based organizations are present but are only engaged by the local school system on occasion (typically around extra-curricular event promotion or support). Dedicated staffing within this category is relatively small, rarely possessing over ten full time positions with some staff originating from the indigenous communities. Funding seldom is accessed beyond federal Title VII appropriations.

Developed

Within this category, the local school district and the American Indian community have a strong and established history of engagement with one another. The district operates a specialized office or department that includes a specific focus on American Indian education. The local district has active and ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty and administration who work throughout the district to better familiarize staff with indigenous

perspectives, history, and culture. There is strong and sustained support for American Indian cultural groups for students to participate in. Additionally, there is equally strong support by the district for extra-curricular cultural activities and events on behalf of the American Indian community (pow-wows, art exhibits, cultural practices or culturally informed outdoor activities, community gatherings, etc.). There are robust supportive services for American Indian students to utilize as offered by the district and at times by individual schools (counselors, transition planners, attendance support, academic coaches or tutors, elder mentors, etc.)

In this category, the local district provides supplemental curriculum that is contextualized within indigenous culture for inclusion within the regular content of standard classes held within its schools. Additionally, there may be alternative learning spaces operating within the mainstream schools (often referred to as either “Small Learning Communities” – SLC’s – or “Schools Within School”) that have been specifically designed for American Indian students and have also been anchored within indigenous culture. These specialized spaces provide American Indian students enrolled within the mainstream school an opportunity to fulfill some or all of their academic requirements during the school day. The local district – acting in concert with the schools in operation within its boundaries – offers culturally contextualized academic offerings *for credit* predicated on indigenous beliefs, languages, customs, practices, or histories. On occasion, community based organizations are partnered with by the local district (or schools operating therein) for the purposes of providing supportive services or additional culturally contextualized academic offerings.

Advanced

Elements present within this category can include a strong and established history of engagement between the local school district and the American Indian. This is often times

typified by an established Memorandum of Understanding or Memorandum of Agreement between the local district's school board and American Indian community leadership or through the direct utilization of a shared alternative learning centers dedicated specifically for the American Indian community (such as sponsoring an indigenous charter school or contracting with a local American Indian 501c3 to provide an alternative school site on behalf of the American Indian community). The district operates a specialized office or department dedicated specifically to American Indian education with a sizeable staff (sometimes in excess of ten full time positions that has strong representation from indigenous communities). The local district has active and ongoing professional development opportunities for all faculty and administration *that is mandated* in order to better familiarize all employees with indigenous perspectives, history, and culture.

Within this category, a variety of American Indian cultural groups are led and populated by the students with explicit district or school support (these cultural groups could be based merely on cultural identification but often times also encapsulate specific curricular pursuits such as indigenous language groups, traditional practices like drumming, canoeing groups, etc.)

Robust supportive services for American Indian students are offered by both the district and by individual schools (counselors, transition planners, attendance support, academic coaches or tutors, elder mentors, etc.) The local district – in concert with the schools in operation within its boundaries – offers culturally contextualized academic offerings *for credit* involving indigenous beliefs, languages, customs, practices, and histories. To support these activities, the district and schools have a large repository of culturally appropriate curriculum and materials that can be used either as the principle curriculum within the core class offerings, or as supplemental items.

There is strong and sustained support by the school district for extra-curricular cultural activities and events on behalf of the American Indian community (pow-wows, art exhibits, cultural practices or culturally-informed outdoor activities, community gatherings, etc.) which district and school staff regularly participate. These extra-curricular activities and events are often times sponsored or led by the Indian Education Department, or the alternative schools themselves, in coordination with the local American Indian community and the school district administration.

Frequently, local indigenous non-profits are engaged as partners by the local district or schools for the purposes of providing expanded supportive services or additional culturally contextualized academic offerings. Elders and cultural carriers are often requested to come into classrooms to teach culturally appropriate materials for the benefit of both Native American and non-Native students. Additionally, there are alternative learning sites within the mainstream schools (often referred to as either ‘Small Learning Communities’ - SLC’s - or “Schools Within School”) that have been specifically designed for American Indian students and have been anchored within indigenous culture. These designated in-house centers are places where American Indian students enrolled within the mainstream school have an opportunity to fulfill some or all of their class requirements during the school day.

Finally, the district might employ stand-alone schools specifically designed as alternative sites of education (brick and mortar alternative schools) that have been intentionally designed to be culturally contextualized in both content and delivery model incorporating the local indigenous culture. These sites are governed either as a charter school with the home district serving as the official sponsor or these alternative programs are run by outside, autonomous American Indian community based organizations (non-profits) that operate within the same

geographic area as the local district. With regards specifically to alternative schools operating within local non-profits and community based organizations, these schools have been licensed to operate through a formalized contract for services as tendered by the home district to provide additional schooling options for the local American Indian student population, while allowing the district to provide oversight.

The categories that were just listed were designed with much forethought, and have been predicated upon evident characteristics consistent with what is actually occurring out in the field. However, it must be understood that the sites that were selected and their base school districts do not necessarily reflect a spot-on match regarding all of the criteria described above. To this end, an educated approximation was made when determining the best category to apply for each urban center. The more important point is to illustrate the capacity for these urban sites to continue their evolution towards more alternative methodologies and more innovative practices until the historical academic disparities that have negatively impacted the American Indian community are rectified once and for all.

Part II: The Selected Sites

Denver Public Schools; Denver, Colorado.

Native American Student Support Program (NASS)

Status: EMERGING

The Denver Public School District operates what is known as the Native American Student Support program (NASS) for Indian Education – which is housed directly within district headquarters itself. The NASS program works in close collaboration with the district office known as the *Department for Student Equity and Opportunity* – whereby the two outfits are considered “educational partners”. This department houses a variety of programming predicated

on the notion that every child deserves to be welcomed within an inclusive learning environment, and that the academic efforts present within the district should be executed in a manner ensuring that all students succeed both in the classroom as well as in life. In this context, the Title VII federally funded NASS program is well situated within this department's stated mission and goals.

The NASS program provides ongoing support for a reported 850 American Indian students currently enrolled within the district. However, based on their professional experience and familiarity with the local American Indian community living in Denver, it must be stated that NASS believes this number to be in reality higher than what is being reported. Owing to the high mobility rate of the American Indian population that reside within the city - in particular when considering the close proximity to many tribal homelands located in the west-river portions of South Dakota and in neighboring New Mexico, and the fact that many students who have been classified as Latino within the demographic counts are also of indigenous background – the team at the Native American Student Support program believes that the American Indian population is larger than most urban centers. In their estimation, there could be an additional 300 to 400 students added to those rolls at any given moment – pushing the potential total enrollment number for American Indian students within the district closer to 1,100 to 1,200 youth.

Currently comprised of eight highly trained professionals who are assigned work throughout the district – the NASS staff have been tasked with engaging the American Indian students remotely within the mainstream schools where they attend classes on a daily basis. Referred to as *Education Partners*, these particular individuals of the NASS team are themselves citizens or descendants of indigenous nations. The work of these specialized Education Partners puts them in direct contact with both the American Indian students and their families in an

ongoing basis. Such engagement has served to build a strong rapport between the community, the students, and the district – ensuring that input from these key stakeholders is taken into consideration by the schools and district and then applied for the benefit of their students. As a result of this work, both families and students have felt more welcomed and supported by the public education system with student academic data starting to rebound in a more positive direction. In the context of daily operations, the Education Partners administer a mentorship program for both students and families – assisting with studies, outside-of-class challenges, as well as participating in Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings for those students receiving Special Education services. This highly personalized approach towards engagement has enabled the NASS to sustain a positive relationship with the American Indian community in service to the educational needs of their students.

The NASS staff also retains the services of a school psychologist to attend to the social emotional needs of American Indian students throughout the district, as well as having two Lakota language specialists to ensure that this particular indigenous language is taught in select classrooms within the system. These language revitalization efforts have been intentionally undertaken as a means of sustaining the life of the language, to providing an ability for American Indian students to earn required “World Language” credits needed for graduation, and ensuring that the opportunity to learn an indigenous language is afforded to all American Indian students who wish to learn. While the enrolled American Indian student population is rather diverse with a variety of tribal affiliations present, the Lakota population is one of the larger groups within Denver, and as such language revitalization efforts have thus far been focused on this particular indigenous language. Through the learning and sustainment of an indigenous language, it is believed by NASS that American Indian students are better able to learn about their history, as

well as to participate within cultural events and ceremonies in a much more involved manner. The inclusion of language development has also provided social and emotional supports for these students as a means of furthering the development of their overall cultural identities. When considering that most American Indian students are attending school within a rather large urban school district (with over roughly 92,000 students total in DPS, the American Indian population comprises about 1% of the overall), the development of American Indian student's cultural identities takes on heightened importance as a means of sustaining individual development, as well as indigenous culture in general.

Beyond the direct activities occurring within the schools, NASS also uses its Title VII funding to provide school supplies for those American Indian families who are in need. (According to recent NASS data, roughly 90% of all American Indian students enrolled within Denver Public Schools qualify for the federal Free and Reduced Lunch program – meaning that their home financial status is at or below federal poverty benchmarks). NASS also provides financial supports for student and community events – such as the annual Christmas Program put on by American Indian students each school year.

In terms of alternative methodologies, the Native American Student Support program does not at this time have any specific alternative programming available that has been culturally contextualized within indigenous practices and perspectives. This includes an absence of any formally developed and implemented SLC's (Small Learning Communities) or "Schools Within School" models whereby American Indian students can work together within a specialized cohort or as a community of learners to support one another and center their academic studies on American Indian focused curriculum. Additionally, there are no stand-alone indigenous alternative schools within the Denver school district – either American Indian charter schools

sponsored by the district or alternative learning sites under contract with DPS. The only alternative pathways that can be utilized by American Indian students within DPS involve established alternative sites available to all district students known as “Pathway Schools”.

The “Pathway Schools” were created as a means providing an alternative learning environment with additional supportive services built in so that the district might recapture drop-outs or sustain the enrollment of those students behind in credit accumulation or proficiency benchmarks in order to prevent them from disengaging and then dropping out. Estimates put forward by NASS staff suggest that nearly 22% of all American Indian students in DPS have left the mainstream schools in favor of attending either a “Pathway School” or a DPS-sponsored charter school. Although these alternative sites are not specifically geared towards a uniquely American Indian experience, these schools do vary in the pedagogical techniques utilized and also vary in student population size. The more popular Pathway School programs for American Indian students within DPS included the *Denver Center for International Studies* – which emphasizes global perspectives and a higher level of student autonomy whereby student portfolios are constructed as a requisite part of earning their diplomas. *EXCEL Academy* and *RiseUp Community School* have both experienced growing enrollments over recent years from American Indian students. *RiseUp* has leveraged previous experience with federal Youth Build grants to create a learning environment where students who have previously dropped out or are at high risk of dropping out can reengage and succeed via vocational training. *EXCEL Academy* has made credit recovery and graduation their main focus as a means of returning students who are behind or credit deficient back to being “on track” towards completion. Both have been showing increases in American Indian enrollments.

In essence, these Pathway Schools have been a useful tool at the secondary level to provide options when American Indian students become disaffected with the mainstream schools. Through their availability, access to such programs has served to prevent widespread disengagement or dropping out of school by many DPS students. For American Indian students, in light of the long history between public education and indigenous people, this need for such differentiated approaches is even more acute.

Beyond these Pathway Schools, DPS and the NASS staff have little in the way of culturally contextualized alternative models or stand-alone American Indian alternative schools that can be utilized by the American Indian families living in the Denver area. This however, is not a result of a lack of desire either by NASS or the American Indian community in Denver. Current efforts to expand the alternative offerings within DPS for American Indian students are underway. Specifically, NASS leadership has begun discussions with local American Indian 501c3's operating within Denver (and the wider metropolitan area) in an effort to further define and expand the collaborative opportunities that could be shared by each of these entities – including the possibility of creating an alternative school for American Indian students. As it stands, each of these organizations currently provides a wide variety of meaningful services for the same American Indian community within the region, so it is only a logical extrapolation for these various outfits to work towards a mutual network of support between one another. One potential goal that could be achieved through such a collaborative effort would be the creation of a strong American Indian community coalition whereby, working collectively, the group could amplify the presence of American Indian education within DPS as well as pull in additional resources, curriculum, and programming opportunities on behalf of their students. Specifically, NASS staff would like to see greater Math and overall STEM programming (the content areas of

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) being offered directly to American Indian students, as well as the creation of a Preschool program for the youngest of the community to begin their educational pursuits in a manner consistent with indigenous values.

In the final analysis, there appears to be a conscious understanding within Denver Public Schools that the American Indian students enrolled within their district remain in need of something beyond the standard offerings within the mainstream system. The NASS staff has conducted exemplary work through their tireless efforts at sustaining the academic achievements of Denver's American Indian students, and their team has gone a long way to incorporate culturally appropriate academic offerings for their students – in particular the teaching of an indigenous language (Lakota) that can earn credits for students. The NASS team has also sustained a healthy interplay and relationship between the district and the families that comprise the American Indian community within Denver. This relationship building has helped in minimizing any antipathy held by community members towards public schools that may be a result of long-standing historical trauma. Beyond this, the NASS team has identified a variety of areas for future growth - including new content areas to be explored to further their own work expand the offerings for their students, as well as initiating new collaborative efforts that engages local indigenous nonprofits as key partners working together with NASS. On the whole, there is a lot of positive work occurring in Denver, with a keen understanding that there is more growth yet to occur in order to achieve the type of academic results that all of NASS and DPS believes is possible for American Indian students. For these reasons, Denver is considered to have an emerging climate for the development of additional alternative, indigenized educational models within its formalized educational services. The work of NASS is worth supporting and

expanding, and with the new initiatives on the horizon, they believe a more developed system is soon to be constructed and employed on behalf of Denver's American Indian population.

Seattle Public Schools; Seattle, Washington.

Huchoosedah Program

Status: DEVELOPED

The Seattle Public School District provides services to nearly 55,000 students annually throughout its K-12 system. Within this overall population, it is estimated that there are roughly 1,600 American Indian students attending school within the district (this number swells to nearly 3,000 students when indigenous, Meso-American students within the district are also included). To ensure that this sizeable population of indigenous students are provided adequate cultural supports to empower each to achieve academically, Seattle Public Schools (SPS) created an internal department to work closely with these students, their families, and their home communities.

Huchoosedah, a term used by the Pacific Northwest Lushootseed people to describe the possession of cultural knowledge or the ability to deeply know one's own self, was the name chosen for the Indian Education Services (IES) in the district - the department dedicated to working with American Indian students who live in the greater Seattle metropolitan area. IES was created in the late 1960's and through the years became one of the preeminent urban American Indian programs in the nation. Having eight dedicated staff members who are all indigenous, this department has endeavored to earn and retain the right to be viewed as the principle vehicle of support for American Indian students enrolled within the district as well as to serve as a supportive advocate working alongside the American Indian community. Through their efforts, the American Indian student population of Seattle have had unprecedented access to

culturally-contextualized curriculum, the ability to participate in traditional practices out-of-doors, and support through a better educated and engaged faculty teaching within SPS.

One of the center pieces of the work of Huchoosedah involves the ongoing professional development opportunities that the department provides for both administration and faculty. Through their work, the team ensures that educators employed at all levels (primary, middle, and high school) have been trained in understanding the nature of tribal sovereignty, the local indigenous histories, and possess a cursory understanding of customs and practices affiliated with local tribes. These professional development efforts are pursued each school year to ensure that all educators within SPS can better engage with and relate to American Indian students. One of the major supports for this training is a one-of-a-kind, statewide curriculum initiative known as *Since Time Immemorial* (STI). This initiative was championed by the state of Washington's education offices (known as the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction – or OSPI) in partnership with representatives from the 29 federally recognized tribes within Washington. STI was co-created by these parties as a purposefully designed, robust cache of resources and teaching materials that can augment existing social studies curriculum or be used as the primary curriculum for SPS social studies classrooms (to date, STI remains relegated to the content area of social studies but is working towards the development of resources and curriculum that can be used in the other core content areas that are also required for graduation). Through the incorporation of lessons revolving around tribal sovereignty and related issues, STI offers a variety of materials that can be incorporated directly into classroom instruction that would remain in alignment with Common Core standards and state requirements. It is the intent of STI – and the professional development pursued throughout the district by Huchoosedah - to improve

American Indian student achievement as well as to sustain the cultural knowledge base for future generations.

To ensure that American Indian students and their families have full access to the Huchoosedah program and the various academic supports offered by IES, each school within the SPS district has an identified “point person” tasked with interfacing with American Indian students enrolled in their building. These identified on-site coordinators are then empowered to engage with the students by assisting them in selecting offered services made available through Huchoosedah. Additionally, these on-site contacts play an important role towards informing the work of the Huchoosedah staff by providing them with information, insights, and observations as to how the department’s programming is working in the field, as well as to what information students and community members are offering back to the schools. This channel of communication has served as a powerful tool towards refining programmatic activities to ensure successful performance as well as meeting the needs of each student. Additionally, this ongoing exchange provides relevant guidance to IES as to what the desires and needs of the community are and how their programming can best address the community’s wishes. In this way, Huchoosedah can execute programming that is authentic in its honoring of the American Indian community’s vision for how schools can and should work on behalf of their own students.

Outside of the day-to-day school delivery, Huchoosedah also provides a myriad of extra-curricular activities to further enhance the educational experience for American Indian students, as well to provide additional opportunities to earn credits while learning about their indigenous culture. Such activities include out-of-doors experiential learning, participation in leadership development programming, and credit retrieval options to support efforts of American Indian students to graduate. In terms of getting students outside onto the land and water of the

surrounding area, one of the featured programs involves traditional canoe construction and usage on surrounding waters (including Puget Sound). The canoe activities have proven incredibly popular with American Indian students, and have been leveraged by Huchoosedah as a means of ensuring academic achievement within the classroom by American Indian students. Additionally, the canoe field trips and activities serve as a powerful teaching mechanism that reinforces and sustains the very culture of the indigenous students that it serves. Complimenting this are activities around fishing and the harvesting of natural medicines and food - whereby American Indian students can learn about their own customs, traditional medicinal practices, and traditional diets. Here again, through all of these program offerings, the work of Huchoosedah continues to sustain indigenous culture while providing opportunities to apply knowledge learned in the classroom out in the field.

The *Native American Youth Leadership Academy* (NAYLA) is an opportunity for American Indian students in SPS (and throughout Western Washington state) to attend training sessions outside of school with community elders and a wide variety of American Indian students from throughout the region to learn about tribal sovereignty, advocacy, and leadership – all taught through a wholly indigenous lens. Begun through a partnership between the *Western Washington Native American Educators Consortiums*, along with regional leaders working within federal Title VII Native Education programs, NAYLA was designed to engage American Indian students between grades eight through twelve from across Western Washington to learn leadership skills and to learn from one another about each students' tribal associations. As the program developed, students were also involved in service learning activities occurring within their base communities and were also encouraged to take their learnings home with them to be shared within their local school districts - including Huchoosedah. Through NAYLA, students

are able to further their understanding regarding their own indigenous culture – which in turn aids in sustaining the survivability for regional indigenous cultures for future generations – and are also empowered to achieve academically to ensure timely completion of their secondary education requirements (i.e. high school graduation).

For those American Indian students who have fallen behind in credits required for completion, Huchoosedah provides resources to allow families to purchase supplemental curriculum for the purposes of credit retrieval. Known as *Portable Assisted Study Sequence Packets* (PASS Packets), these self-guided curriculum modules have been made accessible for American Indian students as a way to provide additional opportunities to earn accredited, secondary level academic credits that can be used to fulfill SPS graduation requirements. The use of PASS Packets by American Indian students can be pursued year-round and are not bound by the traditional school calendar – thus accelerating the amount of credits that can be earned while students are enrolled, and commensurately hastening the pace by which these students can get back on track towards completion.

Huchoosedah has also leveraged its own fundraising capabilities to procure additional monies from external sources that were then allocated on additional academic supports for SPS American Indian students. In recent years, the department has been awarded grants from the city of Seattle to provide after school homework tutoring, as well as providing for cross-generational programming within SPS schools where community elders come into classrooms to teach indigenous practices such as traditional beading, weaving, storytelling, and other culturally relevant activities as a compliment to the standard subject materials. With this added capacity to earn additional income to supplement funding already provided through SPS and Title VII, Huchoosedah itself has augmented the amount of potential resources and programming that

American Indian families and their students have access to in order to improve their overall academic outcomes.

When all of these efforts are taken together, Huchoosedah has fostered and sustained a robust partnership with the urban American Indian population living within the greater Seattle metropolitan area. The program has proven over the course of many years to be effective towards assisting with the academic achievement of the community's students. To this end, they have engaged with unique learning opportunities that were employed as a means of not only developing the student academically but reinforcing and sustaining the indigenous cultures found throughout the surrounding region of Western Washington State. For American Indian students enrolled in SPS, they are provided a variety of learning opportunities, with some occurring out-of-doors within the natural landscape or directly on the water itself. The department has brought cultural carriers in the form of community elders on into the classroom to teach students about indigenous culture, crafts, and practices. The department has also actively participated in the creation and utilization of a broad statewide curriculum centered on teaching students about tribal sovereignty and indigenous treaty rights and has provided opportunities for ongoing leadership development in a manner consistent with indigenous cultural values. Despite these innovative practices that are yielding stabilizing results and academic growth, the staff of Huchoosedah sees even more opportunities for additional development in the years to come.

The first vision is to begin to collect and house a large repository of indigenous literature and indigenous texts for future use by both students and faculty alike. Through the creation and maintenance of an "Indian Library", the Huchoosedah team believes that greater inroads can be made towards increasing academic achievement by adding more books that incorporate American Indian perspectives and values throughout all core content areas well beyond the

social studies-focused work that STI currently provides for. Additionally, independent study work by students can be further supported by ensuring that they have ready access to culturally contextualized resources that will provide the dual function of supporting their academic pursuits while simultaneously furthering their understanding about their own cultural identities.

Huchoosedah's second vision for the future is to reinstate, or reconstitute, a series of alternative schools that are fully anchored within indigenous practice and culture. It is the current belief of the IES team that the advent or implementation of a handful of such alternative learning sites could provide powerful support towards the academic achievement of American Indian students who have become disaffected within the district. The Huchoosedah plan would be the creation of a network of alternative school options throughout SPS for American Indian students to choose from – that way if students or their families preferred the mainstream schooling experience they could continue on with their enrollment therein and still be supported by Huchoosedah. However, if academic success was lacking, if the environment of the school was not to their liking, or if the family and student wanted a deeper understanding of their indigenous culture, these alternative sites would also be available to them as a part of the overall offerings within the district.

There had at one time been an indigenous alternative high school in operation within Seattle. Last known as the American Indian Heritage Middle College (referred to by community members simply as “Indian Heritage School”), this alternative program was originally founded in 1974 to provide culturally contextualized curriculum for American Indian students at the primary school level. Over the years, the school and its mission would go through several iterations, to where in its final version it served primarily high school students. More often than not, Indian Heritage School found itself being populated by students struggling with finding

academic success within the mainstream schools, and who were eager to congregate with other American Indian students and community leaders when pursuing their education – so they chose to attend Indian Heritage School. During its years of operation, those that did attend Indian Heritage would come to view their experience as tremendously rewarding.

However, a variety of elements would eventually surface that in total, would conspire to hasten the school’s eventual demise. Inconsistent achievement data - particularly as presented during the height of the No Child Left Behind era - would castigate the school as “ineffective” in the eyes of many professional educators. Such attitudes were corrosive on the support from the Seattle School Board and Superintendent at that time and would initiate a series of public debates – oftentimes contentious – between district leadership and community members as to the efficacy of the school. Add to this situation dwindling resource allocations and a forced change in building locations, Indian Heritage School was unable to survive and shut its doors for good in 2015.

The final vision for the future as seen by the Huchoosedah staff is to build a stronger, more integrated relationship with local indigenous 501c3’s operating throughout Seattle. By developing and leveraging partnerships with nonprofits who provide services to the very same families within the American Indian community that SPS works with, it is the intent of Huchoosedah to expand the potential supportive service offerings that can be accessed by students. In addition, through collaborative efforts with these organizations, American Indian families and their students could potentially receive a more comprehensive package of support that would serve to accelerate student success and family stabilization. Also, strong partnerships with indigenous non-profits are believed to be a viable pathway forward towards bringing back

alternative sites that are culturally contextualized and that could serve as options for those students struggling in the mainstream education system.

When viewed externally at this time, the work of Huchoosedah on behalf of the urban Seattle American Indian population – specifically its students – is quite remarkable. The strong and ongoing support that this department receives from administration, faculty, and the community itself stands as powerful testimony to its effectiveness. While there is much more work to be done, as well as an internal desire for further expansion and new endeavors, there are ample examples of programs and initiatives occurring in Seattle that are not in operation in other urban American Indian communities. For these reasons, it is viewed as a developed model certainly worth further examination, and whenever possible, replication.

Albuquerque Public Schools; Albuquerque, New Mexico

The Native American Community Academy (NACA)

Status: ADVANCED

In the heart of the North Valley of Albuquerque, New Mexico lies the Native American Community Academy (more commonly referred to by its acronym “NACA”). A tuition-free charter school authorized by Albuquerque Public School District (APS), NACA was intentionally created to provide a learning environment separate from what is traditionally experienced within the mainstream school setting for American Indian students living within the local urban area. While there is a strong Indian Education Department serving APS, the would-be founders of NACA wanted to create a more uniquely indigenous experience to better serve American Indian students and their families. The vision for this potential alternative school was to intentionally develop students beyond just academics but in a holistic manner rooted in indigenous philosophies and ideologies. Through the initiation of a collaborative process with

the very system that they believed was in need of support, through dutifully seeking and implementing input from other key community stakeholders, and through the dedication of a visionary founder and staff, these innovative concepts about what American Indian education could be in Albuquerque were eventually brought into reality.

Currently, APS serves nearly 90,000 students, of which latest estimates identify just over 5% of the overall population as being indigenous (roughly 5,600 students). The Albuquerque Public Schools Indian Education Department (IED), begun in 1974, has developed a catalogue of services to assist eligible American Indian students to improve core academic achievement data in alignment with district goals (such as improved literacy and mathematic performances, increased graduation and attendance rates, and increased cultural awareness as indigenous people). To support the pursuit of these goals, IED has deployed 17 specialized resource teachers throughout the district leveraging local indigenous valuations and teachings to support reading and math intervention curriculum for eligible American Indian students. The Navajo language is taught by 3 full time faculty within three separate APS high schools as a credit-earning second language option. Added to these efforts are several afterschool programs for eligible American Indian students to pursue in support of their traditional academics. Most of these extra-curricular programs, some 13 in total and known as Ohiyesa, have been purposefully designed to accelerate student achievement within STEM by combining such academic pursuits with philosophical considerations, traditional indigenous beliefs, and a full accoutrement of critical thinking development activities. When viewed comprehensively, the efforts undertaken by APS IED reflect the ongoing engagement of the department with two groups of stakeholders that directly informs the department's work - one is with a group called the Indian Parents Committee and the other being the Indian Education Committee. The former provides direct input into the strategic

execution of the APS IED, as well as to assist in the reform or creation of new programming or cultural events in the district. The latter is focused directly on the ongoing management or creation of new educational programming for American Indian Students.

Out of these ongoing engagements between the APS IED and the local American Indian community arose a set of convenings held in the early 2000's regarding American Indian education between national thought-leaders, local educators, indigenous spiritual leaders, community leaders, families, and emissaries from the student population itself. The purpose of these gatherings was to envision and possibly co-create an indigenous learning environment that would ensure academic achievement and support the cultural development of the student (and by extension the local urban American Indian community in Albuquerque) - thus empowering the entire community to thrive and succeed. To this end, participants at these gatherings were in essence seeking to reshape the entire educational experience for American Indian students by deliberately incorporating methodologies that were far more holistic in their approach than what they believe had been historically offered within the public education system. From these dialogues arose NACA. The collaborative energies that birthed this school are still in place today, and still play an integral role towards the school's success.

Today, NACA provides educational services for over 425 families annually for elementary, middle, and high school age students. These students originate from the American Indian community throughout the Albuquerque metropolitan region – and so transportation is a key factor in allowing these students to access the NACA campus. All told, the student body has come to reflect over 60 different tribal affiliations throughout the years with some five different indigenous languages being taught to students at NACA. The course of offerings reflect a balanced blend between the traditional core content areas (such as Math, Science, Social Studies,

Health, Physical Education, etc.) in concert with Indigenous teachings and whenever possible, indigenous curriculum. This balance allows for the school to provide rigorous academics for the students in order to empower them to graduate with a high school diploma – as mandated and monitored by their accrediting body and by the APS district who serves as their charter sponsor. It also allows NACA to ensure that the students spend adequate amounts of time developing their own cultural identities as indigenous people throughout the school day as well.

With regards to the inclusion and inculcation of American Indian values, perspectives, and histories, students are offered a variety of curriculum and courses to further deepen their understandings about themselves and their people. The campus has a garden within which students frequently spend time out-of-doors cultivating local traditional medicines, herbs, and spices. Within one health class, students plant, tend, and harvest materials from this garden to make traditional medicinal teas which both students and faculty can drink from directly during the school day. For physical education requirements, the school has a strong and very popular program centered on the traditional indigenous sport of lacrosse that has been woven into a health curriculum as well. As students learn about kinetic energy, body development, and nutrition, they are then able to apply and demonstrate those learning in real time by participating within the inter-school and external competitive lacrosse teams (which are also supported by a strong inclusion of indigenous history to detail the proper origins of the sport).

Additionally, indigenous language courses are also available for students to take (and are equally as popular as lacrosse). Owing to accessibility, the NACA administration and faculty have implemented a Lakota language course taught by Lakota language speakers (this is unique, for the principle tribal affiliations near Albuquerque are the Navajo and the Pueblo – but suggestive of the typical diversity of tribal presence within most urban settings). The Lakota

language had many speakers and representatives living near the school, and so it was a logical selection for the school to make.

For those students making sufficient progress and who have demonstrated an interest, NACA also provides a slate of nationally recognized Advanced Placement courses (otherwise commonly referred to “AP classes”) for students to pursue once they become upper classmen within the High School portion of the campus. Though rather rigorous, the access to AP coursework allows students to earn college credit before ever enrolling into a post-secondary program (dependent upon their final exam test scores). Even more significantly, AP offerings within the school further develop the student for an easier transition into post-secondary institutions for the students become far more acclimated to the demands of that type of curriculum. Additionally, scores earned by students within AP courses can greatly improve overall grade point averages, enable successful students to earn scholarships and potentially increases the likelihood to being accepted into more post-secondary universities across the nation.

Owing to the wide array of personal histories that come with the students who are accepted into the school, there are times when old traumas or outside pressures can negatively impact a student despite the progress that they are making with their studies. To this end, the NACA faculty emphasizes a trauma informed approach when working in partnership with affected students, and whenever possible, their families as well. Each week, students participate within a cohort setting of the same 10 students, led by a NACA faculty facilitator. These Advisory Activities are not only used to keep students connected with regular school activities, but they also serve as an important touch point where staff can learn about any potential issue percolating through the student body or surrounding an individual pupil. If necessary, support

staff are deployed for an intervention to provide immediate assistance to a student in need.

Woven throughout these interventions are indigenous practices and ceremonial elements that are integral to stabilizing the student, and working with them to cope with the issues at hand. The campus even possesses a “safe space” known as the Eagle Room, full of traditional indigenous items and symbols, to provide an area for students who are feeling overcome by their personal traumas and need time to collect themselves before returning to class.

Another type of care provided at the school is indicative of one of the most powerful and unique features of NACA. Onsite medical and dental care is provided for students and the community through an innovative partnership with local indigenous nonprofits who agreed to provide services on campus. If the student is maintaining active enrollment, they will be able to schedule appointments with either a licensed dentist or licensed health care provider to tend to their needs. Additionally, social and emotional behavioral specialists also provide onsite services for NACA students through similar partnerships between the school and local American Indian nonprofit service providers. For many within the community, living in the shadow of many years of inadequate services, the trust between the people and the service providers has been corroded. Yet through the inclusion of these offerings at NACA, the school has leveraged the trust invested in it as a learning institution to where the community once again reengages with these other services. This partnership represents another hallmark of NACA – a strong collaborative presence with other 501c3’s (both Native American and non-Native), outside of their academic programming. These partnerships include both social service programs and post-secondary institutions that in one way or another provide additional services for the American Indian community throughout the greater Albuquerque region.

NACA currently participates within 24 formalized partnerships with external organizations. These collaborative efforts allow the school to access a wide variety of additional educational resources for their enrolled students that can either be used on campus within the classrooms or serve as supplemental curriculum in the form of field trips or extended learning opportunities. Additionally, through the use of this network of providers, NACA has created a myriad of out-of-school pathways for students to apply their learning within the real world in terms of additional training or employment or to pursue additional academic credentialing after graduation.

A prime example of the effectiveness of the network of providers within which NACA is embedded regards its after school or extra-curricular activities available to its students. The school employs a variety of programming housed under the umbrella term referred to as Outside of School Time (OST). OST is powered by a collaborative project between NACA and the University of New Mexico – leveraging the university’s program for community service and service learning projects pursued by its own enrolled students (known as the UNM Community Learning and Public Service program, or CLPS). This particular program at the university has a tract specifically designed for tribal outreach (known as the Tribal Service Corps of UNM) that has enabled undergraduate students to provide tutoring services directly to NACA students after the school day has concluded. However, these after school experiences go well beyond assistance with homework (which is in fact just one of the offerings). In addition, students and the university tutors have formed specialized groups with curriculum designed to expand the capacities of the students academically, as well as to how they engage the wider world outside of NACA. Classes around filmmaking, traditional Lakota drumming and singing, leadership development and mentoring, a comic book club, softball club, a girls group dedicated to

women's issues, and even a martial arts class have all been offered through NACA's OST program to further develop students during the course of a school year. All of these offerings are powered by the resources and materials (both in terms of curriculum and human capital) that is accessible by NACA through the use of its strategic partnerships.

NACA's learning programs go far beyond the typical school year. During the summer intercession, the school sponsors what it refers to as "Learning Trips" where students travel to a variety of locations to augment the material they are learning within the classroom. Examples include Emerging Leaders Development Trips taken to places such as Washington D.C., and formal Cultural Exchanges like when NACA students visited the Maori people on their homelands located in New Zealand. The purpose of these trips is to stretch the concept of the learning space to include real world places where the material that the students have been studying is actually occurring or being utilized. By expanding the students experience through exposure to and embedding within these foreign sites, the students gain a deeper understanding about their role, their future, and how their community fits into the wider world beyond the geographic confines of where they happen to live.

To further support student development outside of the regular school day, NACA utilizes its online presence through web portals known as "Schoolology" and "Google Classroom". Both students and parents throughout the local American Indian community can keep in constant contact with administration and faculty, monitor their student's progress, and learn about upcoming community events sponsored by or hosted by NACA by using this access point enabled by the internet. By having such an effective communication tool to keep students and families up-to-date about school business and student progress, NACA has circumvented many of the issues that typically impact schools where the student population is drawn from wide and

large geographical distances. Instead, students and their families have relayed a sense of being directly connected to the day-to-day events of the school, as well as feeling as though they can exercise greater influence upon their student's overall performance and development.

The culmination of the learning experiences for NACA students result in the annual year-end Student Demonstrations. During this event, students present a project that encapsulates their interests as well as exemplifies their fullest capacities as NACA students. The demonstration piece is compiled over the course of the year as it reflects the totality of development of the student's base of knowledge reflected within the confines of a singular area of focus.

Additionally, students are afforded an opportunity to rehearse and then execute an oral presentation – complete with visual aids. These particular skills sets – as developed through this annual project-based learning event – are considered to be of high value and easily translatable within the private sector when the time comes for students to transition into career placement (either after graduation or after completing a post-secondary enrollment). School administration, faculty, family, community members, and peers all attend the end-of-year Student Demonstrations to learn and to support each student. Although the process can be at times stressful, both school officials and students repeatedly cite the annual event as one of their favorite aspects of attending NACA.

When taken all together, these component parts comprise a central ideology espoused by NACA – known as “personal wellness” – whereby students actively participate along with supporting school faculty and staff in charting out their development within a holistic mindset. Spiritual, physical, social, and emotional health are all equally valued as much as academic achievement and indigenous cultural development within the NACA model. As part of their academic pursuits, again utilizing project-based learning, students maintain a portfolio detailing

their own “personal wellness” as they attend school. Within these portfolios are critical thinking activities, artifacts of academic success, and tracking measures maintained by the students themselves as they monitor the growth of their own personal wellness on the road to graduation. In this way, the students themselves work to maintain the balance sought between personal wellness, academic achievement, and the further development of their cultural identities as American Indian people as supported by NACA faculty and administrators.

Owing to the robust enrollment numbers, the high levels of expressed student and family satisfaction with the school, and the academic successes achieved at NACA, word has begun to spread about what this alternative school has been able to do for the Albuquerque American Indian community and its students. As a result, multiple indigenous communities throughout Indian country have requested guidance from the founders and proprietors of NACA to assist with their own schooling deficiencies. NACA embraced these requests, and developed a system by which these communities could follow in the footsteps of the original Albuquerque stakeholders whose vision produced the school in the first place. Utilizing their own six core values, NACA has created a blueprint by which additional charter schools could be created based on the indigenous and academic values espoused by the original institution. Known as NISN (the NACA Inspired School Network), NACA officials have begun helping to incubate new schools or reform existing institutions to emulate the work being conducted at the Albuquerque site. Gallup, Shiprock, Navajo, Santa Clara Pueblo, Cochiti Pueblo in New Mexico and the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota each have begun schools through the incorporation of NISN.

In the final analysis, what was born through a robust series of engagements with dedicated professionals, parents, and indigenous community leaders, has led to the creation of an innovative and effective alternative model of education for American Indian students. This

model is now being emulated and outright replicated within other American Indian communities, suggesting both the efficacy of the NACA approach, and the still persistent need for new indigenous educational options throughout Indian country today.

Portland Public Schools; Portland, Oregon

Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) – Early College Academy (ECA)

Status: ADVANCED

The Portland Public School District provides educational services to just over 49,000 students. Of this total, roughly 950 are American Indian who matriculate through district schools each year. Through the use of federal Title VII funds, the Portland Public School District (PPS) founded its own Indian Education Department to support the American Indian student population attending its schools. As such, the Portland Indian Education Department (IED) adheres to an established set of academic objectives for American Indian students to achieve during their time within the mainstream school system. These goals have been encapsulated by the very general set of principles regarding the improvement of academic achievement, the improvement of student retention, and providing a greater awareness of Native American culture. With a staff of five drawn from indigenous communities, the Indian Education Department's efforts echo the work pursued by other similar departments within other urban centers. Professional development opportunities for faculty and staff are initiated by the department, hosting of events such as powwows throughout the school year, and the provision of supplies for families in need each autumn – all of which fall under the purview of the PPS Indian Education Department. Additionally, the department provides a roster of summer school activities for both elementary aged students to obtain proficiency within language arts and for high school students to earn additional credits needed for graduation. These summer activities are also designed to enhance student's cultural

understandings as indigenous people (referred to as the Arts and Culture Enrichment, or Summer ACE). Career training options in nursing and direct health care (known as the *Na-ha-shnee Nursing Institute* and the *American Indian Physician Association*), college preparation courses, and a variety of internships for upper classmen to pursue round out the IED offerings for the summer months. When taken together, the PPS IED has worked very hard over the years at increasing the likelihood that American Indian students within the district will have the support opportunities needed to stay in school, achieve academically, and potentially graduate. However, over time, the local American Indian community came to believe that the needs of their students were not being met to the fullest by the public education system, and that many American Indian students were failing hopelessly behind, if not falling through the cracks entirely.

In the year 1974, local American Indian community leaders and parents of American Indian students living in Portland came together to discuss what they felt was a burgeoning crisis around high student drop-out rates and low student performance within Portland's public schools by American Indian students. Through their convening, these key stakeholders began the work of creating a gathering place where the local American Indian population could come together in community, where they could provide assistance for one another, and where they could collectively provide academic tutoring for the youth who were struggling to succeed within Portland's public schools. These collective efforts would be the genesis of a new community-based organization known as the *Native American Youth Association* – or NAYA for short.

With initial services beginning in 1974 shortly after the community gatherings had outlined the work they thought necessary for their people, NAYA at first focused its efforts towards providing after school activities that would help students achieve academically, learn about their indigenous heritage, provide some vehicle for physical activity or recreation, and

develop the social and emotional skills necessary to navigate their way through the dominant culture omnipresent within this urban setting. Over the next forty-three years, what began as a small gathering space for indigenous people to come together, to share in each other's company, and to help assist students to achieve and to survive in school – grew into one of the premier indigenous 501c3's in all of Indian country. Today, NAYA (having since been rebranded as the *Native American Youth and Family Center* but still popularly referred to by its original acronym) provides a host of programs designed to uplift all sectors of the Portland American Indian community. Among these include homeownership support, community economic development (Individual Development Accounts, financial literacy classes, microenterprise assistance, etc.), college assistance programs, a host of wraparound social-emotional supportive services (referred to as "Critical Services"), and an on-site Elder's Services program complete with a permanent, designated space for community elders to gather each day. All of NAYA's work is pursued utilizing traditional indigenous knowledge and customs heralded by the local American Indian communities as the organizing principle for all that they do.

In the early 2000's, at the height of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) era, the challenges being encountered by Portland's American Indian students had grown more acute – as evidenced by the recently disaggregated academic achievement data as mandated by the NCLB federal legislation. The leadership of NAYA and the surrounding urban American Indian community came together once again to address the shockingly low graduation rates being earned by American Indian students within the district. From these latest gatherings, a plan was set forth to create an alternative school that would address and remedy the persistent academic shortcomings. To accomplish this task, NAYA leadership insisted that the new school embrace and rely upon indigenous culture in the same manner as the other programs housed at the

organization and offer a smaller learning environment whereby a genuine sense of relatedness could be shared between the students and the wider American Indian community present within NAYA's campus. In addition, students within this new alternative school would have full access to all of the other services and programs that were offered on-site – essentially creating a “one-stop shop” for American Indian students of Portland to utilize whenever they are in need. If administered in this way, this new school could serve as a second chance for those students that had yet to achieve academic success or who had grown disaffected with the mainstream school system. Through a generous grant awarded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2006, NAYA was able to bring in the necessary capital and human talent to make this new alternative school a reality.

At that time, Portland Public Schools already had in place an innovative program to help students who were at risk of dropping out of school as well as reengaging and reenrolling those students who already had. Known as the *Multiple Pathways to Graduation* initiative, this program saw PPS contract out to local non-profits in order to create a network of alternative learning centers to provide assistance and new learning opportunities for these at-risk students. NAYA, leveraging the assistance recently provided by the Gates Foundation, sought out and successfully procured a contract with PPS. The only difference between NAYA and the other alternative sites within the PPS program was that NAYA intentionally set out to engage American Indian students as a priority (although as a public school, all interested and eligible students – whether Native American or non-Native – are welcomed to enroll). In the fall of 2008, the doors opened to the new PPS contracted alternative school located within NAYA itself.

Known as the NAYA Early College Academy (NAYA-ECA), the school endeavored to create a learning environment that was deeply rooted within the culture, teachings, and practices

of the surrounding tribal nations. Also, in an echo of its founding principles and programs, ECA provides academically rigorous programming to ensure American Indian student achievement whereby the number of American Indian graduates grows each successive school year, and for those who do graduate, there is a successful transition into post-secondary institutions. In its essence, NAYA-ECA seeks to address the systemic shortcomings the community continues to believe exists within the Portland public education system that as a result, continues to fail so many students - particularly students from the local American Indian community.

To this end, NAYA-ECA has created a learning environment that intentionally deviates from what is traditionally experienced within a mainstream setting. There is a focus on small class sizes to foster a stronger relational element between students, staff, and faculty. More often than not this cannot be achieved within the comprehensive high schools of PPS for the amounts of students moving through district buildings each year is just too large. Upon enrollment in NAYA-ECA, students and staff develop an individualized educational blueprint to help guide students through their coursework at the school, as well to help keep them focused on achievement and graduation. This plan is reviewed and renewed each year until the student graduates.

In terms of academic offerings, NAYA-ECA seeks a balance between inculcating indigenous culture in all facets of its programming (curriculum, dispute resolution, project based learning, after school activities, etc.) with an academically rigorous engagement of the traditional core content areas required for graduation from PPS - and necessary for successful post-secondary matriculation. Through the combination of more individualized attention given to each learner, an adherence to indigenous culture and perspectives, and a focus upon academic rigor, NAYA-ECA has purposefully created an environment where students representing a wide array

of achievement and capabilities can enroll and find success. This is important to note, for NAYA-ECA – as a school under contract with PPS – is itself in effect a public school required to accept all students who apply to enroll (with the exception of some of the more intensive special education students whose needs are beyond the capacities of the school). For other alternative programming within Indian country, this is not always the case as some institutions can deny entry if the student doesn't meet the enrollment standards set by that particular school. NAYA-ECA, on the other hand, welcomes all who come – so long as they have room.

Overall, NAYA-ECA (and NAYA as an organization in general) formally adheres to the guiding principles of the *Relational Worldview Model* – an interactive paradigm that was based upon a similar ideology first developed by the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA). This model was drawn from indigenous belief systems that are reflected and shared across a multitude of indigenous cultures throughout North America. In its essence, this model emphasizes a circular or interconnected concept of reality predicated on interrelatedness and interdependence between all living things. When properly understood, a more healthy existence can be found by its practitioners whenever they act with a sense of mindfulness and balance. This model purposefully eschews the more Western European belief systems that have long since dominated U.S. public education, whereby life and society are overly dependent upon the concepts of linear time, scarcity, and hyper-individualism – all of which are viewed as contrary to the systems exhibited by the natural world - and therefore toxic by definition.

In its place, the Relational Worldview Model suggests that humans are comprised of four equal parts - reflecting mental and emotional development (the mind), physical well-being (the body), a timeless wisdom that is derived through prayer and ceremony (the spirit), and a commitment building positive relationships and social justice (context). Each of these four areas

comprise the totality of all living things – including that of human beings. By acknowledging and honoring each of these four arenas and working to maintain a balance between them all, the model suggests that an interdependent harmony can be created between life and its environment and between living beings themselves. As such, the four quadrants reflected within this model are repeatedly integrated into the educational plans of NAYA-ECA students, the functionality of the day-to-day classrooms within the building, as well as reinforced through NAYA-ECA faculty’s classroom management styles and the restorative justice practices. Additionally, this model also informs the critical thinking activities pursued by students as they continually assess the world in which they and their community live and how they might contribute to enhancing its overall health.

With regards to its incorporation of local indigenous culture into the curriculum and teaching methodologies employed by the school, NAYA-ECA provides culturally-contextualized art classes, indigenous language courses, and cross-generational project based learning activities that directly engage local community elders (who in turn serve as de facto staff and family to help NAYA-ECA students succeed). The school also operates a large outdoor garden where students can learn about indigenous horticulture and traditional medicines by actively growing and caring for such plants as a part of their coursework.

Additionally, the school also participates in an annual event known as the Canoe Journey. This event is put on through a collaboration with the Portland Youth and Elders Council, and whose sum total of activities transcends more than traditional canoeing on local waters (which is naturally the main event). Also included in this work are learning opportunities centered upon traditional practices that have upheld the indigenous nations of this region – activities such as traditional clothing production, indigenous singing, dancing, and drumming. Additionally, the

Canoe Journey affords students an opportunity to commune with a multitude of age groups – including elders and the very young – where traditional wisdom is shared and absorbed by all. One of the more powerful yet often overlooked aspects of Canoe Journey is the employment of STEM teachings for the students (Science, Engineering, Mathematics, and Science) as participants build and maintain traditional canoes while learning all about the natural environment that is found on their lands and beneath the water during the entirety of the experience. The incorporation of STEM supports many of the other content areas taught to students during the regular school day.

For the more traditional subject matter required for credit obtainment and graduation, the core content areas are taught in small classes throughout the day by licensed faculty but consistently inculcate American Indian perspectives, histories, and practices whenever applicable. Beyond this, NAYA also offers classes that utilize post-secondary curriculum for those students who are academically eligible. These crossover classes allow students to earn dual credits both for high school graduation but also potential credits that can be applied to a post-secondary institution *after* graduation. While the environment may be much smaller than the mainstream schools, the emphasis on graduation and college enrollment is no less intensive at NAYA-ECA than at any other high school. Student academic capabilities are cultivated within a supportive yet challenging environment that are guided by the same indigenous principles found in all other NAYA programming beyond NAYA-ECA.

To this end, the students of NAYA-ECA are situated in a unique and favorable environment not applicable to American Indian students within the mainstream schools. NAYA-ECA students and their families have full access and ability to utilize the variety of indigenous programming offered by the entire NAYA organization. These services represent a powerful

network of supports that can further stabilize the student, their families, and their living conditions as they pursue their studies. As mentioned before, these organizational offerings include job clubs for employment, home ownership assistance, career and college transition services, living assistance, emergency or critical services (emergency energy assistance, clothing, food supplies, homeless services, and domestic violence interventions), as well as the venerated NAYA Elders Program and an early childhood center. In essence, the organization has created a holistic approach to both student and community development by including a wide array of wraparound services that provide ongoing support and empowerment of its students and for the community as a whole. All of these offerings effectively encapsulate the relatedness model that drives the work undertaken within this organization.

One of the more integral programs within NAYA are the Parent Involvement Services that has a Parent Advocate position as a part of its staff. The Parent Advocate's role is to engage with and work shoulder-to-shoulder with the community's parents as a means of strengthening their capacities as caregivers, further stabilizing their homes through the creation of healthier environments, and to assist in goal setting and encouragement for the parents - who in turn support the students within their own household in a similar manner. The efforts of the Parent Advocate have proven to go a long way towards assisting *NAYA-ECA* students in their pursuit of academic achievement and a high school diploma.

As a result of these efforts over the first ten years of operation, *NAYA-ECA* has seen repeated increases in their student retention as more and more students stay in school, and return each fall after summer break. This commitment to attendance is in all reality new for many of these American Indian students who, up until their enrollment in *NAYA-ECA*, had already dropped out or were so woefully behind that they were in very real danger of exiting early

without a diploma or the skill sets needed to survive and thrive within the urban setting of Portland, Oregon.

As was evidenced within the other urban areas examined, it was through the insistence and action taken by community elders and leadership on behalf of their students, a community space was created to provide an alternative to the more traditional educational systems in place. Although it started off small, the ECA program at NAYA continues to grow – filling a need and meeting the desires of the local American Indian community to have their own school based on their own values, but one that can also educate their youth in a manner necessary to find wellness within the dominant culture and the academic capabilities to ensure their student’s and community’s future survival have been provided for.

Minneapolis Public Schools; Minneapolis, MN

Takoda Prep of AIOIC and Nawayee Center School

Status: ADVANCED

Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), as demonstrated through the work currently being conducted by its Indian Education office has become one of the most engaged and progressive school districts in the country regarding its work with American Indian students. This was no accident and certainly not achieved through a unilateral effort. Over the course of the past forty-five years, this office has come into close collaboration with the American Indian community of Minneapolis in order to provide better services that enhance and support the unique culture of the people, while simultaneously working to improve educational outcomes for their students.

Begun in 1972 on the heels of the passage of the federal Indian Education Act, the MPS Department of Indian Education sought to address the long-standing and seemingly intractable academic performance data for American Indian youth. Around this very same time, the city of

Minneapolis had become the epicenter of American Indian politics and activism. The American Indian Movement (AIM) had its genesis within the city four years prior, and by 1972 had become the preeminent indigenous activist group in the United States. Through the work of AIM and many other similar indigenous organizations that were also created during this era, the local American Indian community within the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, had become increasingly better informed, politically astute, and well organized.

Focusing on such critical issues as indigenous sovereignty, city policing, improved housing, employment, health care, and education, this particular urban American Indian community began to forcibly demand changes be made to the antiquated public systems charged with providing services for their people. The Minneapolis school district was not immune to such demands. With the onset of the new Indian Education Department, the district set to work to meet the demands being voiced by the people. Over the ensuing years, the department did so with varying degrees of success.

While the MPS Department of Indian Education was still in its infancy, the local American Indian community of the Twin Cities – leveraging its newly discovered powers of civic activism – successfully created their own alternative schools unaffiliated with any particular school district (The Little Red School House in St. Paul and Heart of the Earth Survival School in Minneapolis). These community-based and community-governed schools were established as an outlet for those American Indian families dissatisfied with the services being provided at that time within the mainstream public education systems – in particular community members were fed up with the ongoing denigration of indigenous histories and customs by both faculty and curriculum. To remedy this situation, these two small alternative schools sought to teach cultural traditions and practices as their sole curricular focus for ages

ranging from Kindergarten all the way through to high school. While these particular alternative learning centers would eventually close after decades of service, the dynamic that was established between an active American Indian community intent on bringing to reality to their vision of education for their students would serve to drive the relationship between the community and the public schools for the next four decades until present day.

Along the way, the district would introduce courses to revitalize indigenous languages within the schools – allowing high school students to learn their own Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) or Dakota language for credit that can be applied towards graduation requirements. New literature written by American Indian authors were introduced for faculty to use and supplemental history materials were also included to complement existing social studies curriculum in attempt to include indigenous perspectives. Yet these reforms were often slow to come about and less impactful towards accelerating American Indian academic achievement than what had been hoped for.

By the mid 1970's, a group of community elders who had members of their families attending Minneapolis Public Schools had grown concerned at the lack of demonstrable skill attainment being shown by their students. From their interactions with school officials, ongoing conversations with the students in their family as well as with other community members, this group felt that action needed to be taken on behalf of their youth. During the 1972-1973 school year, using the basement of a local Roman Catholic Church in south Minneapolis, these community leaders created an after school space where students could come and receive tutoring from American Indian elders and other community parents, and more significantly, receive teaching in the ways of their indigenous culture. It was this second point that the community leaders felt to be most lacking in the daily operations of Minneapolis public schools. In addition,

all youth were welcome to come and attend sessions, thus allowing a place for high school drop-outs to continue with their learning (to which the community began affectionately referring to their program as a “drop-in” center – eventually leading to the more formal community moniker of The Drop-In Center). Despite the changes being implemented by the school district, the steady flow of American Indian students on into the Drop-In Center reinforced the persistent shortfalls still very much present within the local public education system regarding indigenous people. Within two years’ time, this after school program was expanded to become a full-fledged community-governed high school whose name would be officially changed from the colloquial Drop-In Center to Nawayee Center School (“Nawayee” being an Anishinaabe term for the English word “center”). Nawayee would incorporate as a formal 501c3 under Minnesota statute and has provided education for the American Indian students in Minneapolis ever since.

Once underway as an official school, Nawayee purposefully set out to deconstruct the traditional delivery models of public education. In its wake, it would replace such structures with a less rigid, more relaxed learning environment predicated on American Indian cultural values. In this new space, the concept of “relatedness” became the organizing principal upon which the school was based. Similar to the guiding principles of the *Relational Worldview Model* employed by NAYA-ECA in Portland, Oregon – Nawayee Center School also employs an interactive paradigm that was reflective of the work that would eventually be formally developed by the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) some years later. Here again, the concept of relatedness was derived from a multitude of comparable indigenous belief systems reflected across multiple indigenous cultures throughout the Americas. As was being implemented at NACA some 1,700 miles away over and beyond the Rocky Mountains, the elders in Minneapolis also sought to incorporate these tenets into the work of their new school. As in other locations,

the concept of “relatedness” emphasizes a circular or interconnected model of reality based on interrelatedness and interdependence between all living things. When properly understood, a healthier existence can be obtained by its practitioners whenever they act with a sense of mindfulness and balance. Here in Minneapolis as in other American Indian communities - the intent was to purposefully remove the more negative aspects of the dominant culture that supported hyper-individualism, competition, and the Western European religions – all antithetical and corrosive towards traditional indigenous beliefs.

Over the course of Nawayee’s development, the school administrators worked hard to strike a balance between teaching the cultural components of local indigenous people and the standard core content areas required for graduation (within Minnesota there are principally two indigenous cultures represented by eleven federally recognized tribes – *Anishinaabe {Ojibwe}* and *Dakota*. However, within Minneapolis, nearly forty different tribal affiliations can be counted as a result of the federal Termination and Relocation policies of the mid-1950’s). Learning from some of the hardships that were being experienced by the graduates of the Little Red School House and the Heart of The Earth Survival School – whose nearly exclusive focus on cultural knowledge at the expense of traditional subject areas left many with pronounced skill deficiencies needed for employment or college matriculation - the founders of Nawayee sought balance between both approaches. As such, the students and eventual graduates of Nawayee were able to secure high school diplomas while also learning more about their own indigenous practices. Nawayee Center School has served to recapture American Indian students who had elected to leave Minneapolis public schools, and in turn delivered an education that uplifted both the academic capacities of the student and also further developed their cultural identities as indigenous people.

Currently, Nawayee continues to offer a blended approach to curriculum whereby traditional indigenous customs are interwoven with the standard school subjects. To this end, activities such as learning the drum, traditional singing, regalia construction, and beading find equal exposure to the students, along with the core subjects of Social Studies, English, Mathematics, Science, etc. However, even the standard subjects are inculcated with indigenous perspectives and histories at every opportunity – such as through the use of Native authors, indigenous creation stories, and political histories – all as a way of adding greater personal relevance to the material being covered. In some instances, in a nod to their earliest days, elders from the community are invited into the classes to teach alongside faculty – thus adding even further indigenous perspective to the core content offerings. In so doing, the school reinforces student concepts of what it means to be indigenous while living within the dominant culture, and with the assistance of community elders, provides a sense of individual purpose as to why it is necessary to do so.

Whenever possible, the students pursue their studies out of doors – expanding the notion of what constitutes a classroom and where learning can occur. Examples of their utilization of outdoors learning environments include the maintenance of a sizeable urban garden adjacent to their building where traditional foods and medicines are grown by the student body, canoe trips on local waters – including an annual mass outing on Lake Bde Maka Ska (formerly known as Lake Calhoun), trips to plant wild rice, or outings to collect maple syrup in a traditional manner on northern Minnesota forests (known as “sugar bushing”). These outdoor activities achieves the experiential learning components that have become a hallmark of the school.

Nawayee faculty and staff pay special attention to sustaining a positive and welcoming environment that is cognizant of the trauma endured by community members during their time in

the public education system or else in recognition of the trauma recently experienced by students or as a result of living in an urban environment. To this end, the faculty and staff utilize a trauma informed approach towards student engagement and classroom management. Trauma informed approaches makes special emphasis on recognizing all forms of potential trauma (physical, mental, spiritual) and taking time to create a safe and supportive environment where the students can learn strategies designed to empower themselves to navigate through the issues that might be triggering negative responses or poor choices.

Once again, key to the success of this approach is the inclusion of traditional ceremonial practices that sustain the supportive environment sought by Nawayee staff and that can engender healing amongst all who come through the school's doors. These practices include what the staff refer to as the Four Sacred Practices: Smudging (an indigenous purification custom using burning sage and prayer to cleanse the body and mind), Talking Circles (a form of collective communication between the entire student body and staff as a means of enacting an alternative dispute resolution process to further foster the sense of community within the school), Sweats (another indigenous purification ceremony whereby participants enter into a traditionally constructed lodge that uses extreme heat and steam to cleanse the physical body, coupled with song and prayer), and the Vision Journey (this is the school's interpretation of the individual communing with nature and the spiritual world through fasting and prayer until they feel a deep sense of connection - whereby a "vision" is then given to the student to guide them forward along their life's path. This is often typified by the annual trip taken to the Black Hills – a sacred Lakota landmass - with eligible seniors.). Throughout all of these processes, as well as through each and every day at the school, Nawayee goes to great lengths to incorporate the four sacred medicines of the Anishinaabe people – cedar, sage, tobacco, and sweet grass – to guide these

practices, to allow for traditional prayer, and to further teach students about their indigenous culture all within the models of relatedness and a trauma informed approach predicated on health and healing.

As Nawayee Center School provided these services to disaffected American Indian students throughout the course of the 1970's and 1980's, the faculty did remain in close contact with the Indian Education Department at MPS. During this time frame, the Indian Education Department began to see the value offered at Nawayee, and began to suggest the school as an alternative for those students unable to find success within the mainstream setting. This acknowledgement of Nawayee as a viable option by MPS opened up further discussions within the community regarding the need to better address the continued short-comings of the public schools for American Indian students. Despite the success being demonstrated by Nawayee through high enrollment rates, a stabilization of attendance rates for their students (many of whom were returning drop-outs), and an increase in American Indian graduates, many in the community felt that an added emphasis on college enrollment or career placement was still needed. Into this discussion entered another venerated indigenous 501c3 whose area of specialization was adult workforce development and who would add a second alternative program to work in concert with Nawayee.

The American Indian OIC (AIOIC – with the OIC standing for “Opportunities and Industrialization Center”) was founded in 1979 as a means of addressing the chronic poverty and lack of meaningful income that was still dramatically impacting the urban American Indian population of the Twin Cities since the days of Termination and Relocation. The American Indian OIC spent its first decades providing employment services, GED training, and career training through an accredited post-secondary school housed on their campus. Over the same

time period that Nawayee was providing education to the youth of the community, the AIOIC was providing on-ramps towards jobs and career placements through their combination of training and career counseling. At the start of the 1990's, as the local American Indian community continued to call on MPS to provide better options for career placement and college enrollment for its students, the organization decided to create its own alternative high school predicated on these specific needs. In 1994, empowered by a sizeable U.S. Department of Labor grant, the AIOIC started the School To Work High School. During its initial years of operation, School To Work High focused on employment preparation through vocational skill development in business applications and health care, soft skill development, and credit obtainment to allow students to both earn a high school diploma and simultaneously be placed in a career pathway upon completion. During their enrollment time, the school also provided the ability for students to spend part of each school day off-site working at a job – thus enabling them to earn money in the here and now so that they can address any financial issues that they or their families were currently experiencing. Students would also have full access to the employment services offered through the main programming at the AIOIC. Most of the students who enrolled at School To Work High at this time were American Indian youth who were either emanating from extreme poverty and were in need of work to assist with their family's financial obligations, or they were teenage parents in need of supporting their very own families. Owing to the available space within the facilities, School To Work High only had capacity for 40 students at a given time. This small class size leveraged the valuable ability for greater individual attention to be provided by the faculty towards each student.

In much the same manner as Nawayee, the administration and faculty of this new high school encountered an American Indian student population that had grown disaffected with the

mainstream school system and who were typically behind in skill set development, behind in academic credits, and had a burgeoning antipathy towards formalized education in general. To remedy this at the direction of local community leaders and elders, the AIOIC complimented the curriculum employed at their high school with the same traditional teachings and practices that had been used at Nawayee. By balancing the development of the employability of these students with indigenous practices, School To Work High aimed to also foster a deeper understanding for the students of their cultural heritage. To this end, the four sacred medicines were introduced and taught to the students, and whenever possible, indigenous perspectives and history were inculcated directly into the curriculum. This would be the principal mode of operation for this high school for the first twelve years of operation, until a dramatic shift would occur in 2006 (which will be discussed at a later point). Until that time, the Indian Education Department at MPS saw the value being added by the new AIOIC School To Work High, and much like its efforts with Nawayee, began to refer American Indian students over to the AIOIC who were not finding success within the comprehensive seven high schools within the district. This relationship between Nawayee, AIOIC, and MPS would soon blossom into a deeper pact between these organizations on behalf of the community's students.

During the second half of the 1990's, a collection of alternative schools that were in operation in the Twin Cities metropolitan area - being administered through a variety of differing non-profits - came together to form a collective body to share in best practices and to work together towards engagement with the public education system. The Metropolitan Federation of Alternative Schools (MFAS) became a first of its kind collaborative dedicated to redefining educational practices as a potential solution to the myriad of shortcomings plaguing the mainstream system. Nawayee Center School and the AIOIC (whose high school had since been

rebranded from School To Work to the AIOIC Career Immersion High School) were founding members of this federation and retain their membership to this today. In 1994, through the vehicle of MFAS, this collection of alternative schools was able to successfully negotiate a contract for services for each of its members with the Minneapolis Public School district.

To its credit, the school district itself recognized the value that these alternative schools were adding – essentially saving students from dropping out entirely by offering them a different approach towards completing their education. The district also recognized how these programs were addressing needs as called for by the community’s themselves. Through this partnership, in much the same manner as the Portland Public Schools recognized a very similar need, MPS joined forces with this network of non-profits to expand the educational offerings it could provide for its students. The MPS Indian Education Department specifically welcomed the formal addition of two alternative programs as additional tools and resources that would serve to accelerate the potential academic achievement of American Indian students. Once the contracts had been finalized, Nawayee Center School and the AIOIC Career Immersion High School became official MPS schools that offered alternative services. Now known as Contract Alternative Programs (CAP), both Nawayee Center School and the AIOIC have retained their contracts for over 23 years (This contract was recently renewed for each school for another 3-year time frame in August of 2017). These MPS CAPs retain full autonomy over how their schools look and operate with wide latitude given regarding the curriculum used within their day-to-day operations. The district retains its fiduciary oversight regarding the financial management of each alternative school as well as oversight regarding academic rigor typified by the academic calendar and daily schedules at each site, proper awarding of academic credits, and ongoing data management regarding attendance, behavioral intervention, GPA, and enrollment

figures. As each of the CAPs are considered a public school within the stable of program offerings of the district itself, each site must therefore enroll any student who wishes to attend their school so long as there is available space (with only modest exceptions given in regards to Special Education needs that may be beyond the capacities of the school). To this end, CAPs such as Nawayee and AIOIC must take in all comers irrespective of their culture, academic capabilities, or credit deficiencies. For the most part, both schools have retained an American Indian population in excess of 90% for the past decade.

By the year 2006, the push-and-pull working relationship between the American Indian community and the district would culminate with an historic and one-of-its-kind moment. By this time, the city of Minneapolis could count nearly thirty indigenous non-profits operating within city limits whose mission was to address a wide variety of needs for the American Indian people living there. The leadership of these organizations would eventually come together to form a collaborative known as the Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors Group (MUID) – through which they would collectively lobby on behalf of the people that they served and the organizations the collaborative was comprised of. To this end, MUID began working directly with the Minneapolis School Board to create a framework by which the educational and cultural priorities of the American Indian people of Minneapolis were enacted within the district schools in accordance with the community’s desires. The result was the formal adoption of a Memorandum of Agreement between MUID and the MPS School Board. This agreement would guarantee certain provisions regarding sustainment of indigenous culture and the attentiveness of the district when serving American Indian students. Additionally, special considerations were made to include the “Seven Ways of Knowing” – an esoteric indigenous approach towards fostering a climate for learning to occur that honors and supports indigenous values and culture. This MOA is the only

such document between an urban American Indian community and a sitting school board of a major metropolitan school district. Since its first iteration in 2006, this MOA has been refreshed and rededicated three successive times – with the most recent occurring in 2017.

Through this MOA, the American Indian community successfully negotiated the right to review the practices of the district towards improving the educational outcomes of American Indian students. The MPS Indian Education Department and the MUID Subcommittee on Education would be the two principal partners to monitor and enact this agreement to ensure that it was being honored by all parties. (The MUID Subcommittee on Education would adopt the name of “PIE”, an acronym for Phillips Indian Educators – suggestive of the Minneapolis Phillips Neighborhood where the largest contingent of the American Indian community lived.) To this end, the district agreed to provide robust professional development opportunities to all faculty and administration officials in order to broaden their understandings about the American Indian people of the state of Minnesota as well as those who live in the city itself. Additionally, the district would monitor its curriculum and whenever necessary upgrade its materials to ensure that all curriculum would be supportive and inclusive of indigenous histories and perspectives. Equally, the community would uphold a consistent effort to support student attendance in schools, implement and lead cultural events and activities as a means of supporting the academic activities occurring within the mainstream schools as well as to maintain the two alternative schools being administered by local community agencies (Nawayee and AIOIC). To date, this MOA has had positive impacts towards improving American Indian academic performance during its tenure. For the alternative sites, the MOA provided protection from those officials within the mainstream school system (in particular district officials outside of the Indian Education Department and on occasion Superintendents) who did not value alternative education

or culturally-contextualized, community-governed approaches to education. The MOA served to deflect these attacks, and prevent any attempts at closing the CAPs down or interfering with how these schools operated.

As the MOA came online, the AIOIC took it upon itself to reevaluate its own high school operations. With the onset of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2002, the new federal legislation called for steep improvement of academic achievement by all schools. This was to be accomplished through ongoing data analysis geared towards continuous improvement, coupled with annual high stakes standardized testing to measure progress. The format that had been used up until this time by the Career Immersion High School focused primarily on vocational training, employment, and working during the school day. With the new mandates now established by NCLB, and having been inspired by the MOA between Minneapolis Public Schools and MUID, these activities were believed to be no longer conducive for the school to survive. Additionally, the academic metrics being achieved by American Indian students within the district as a whole – as now clearly identifiable by newly disaggregated NCLB data collection – suggested additional help was needed for the community’s youth. In 2006, AIOIC underwent a complete turnover in its high school faculty and administration. The new incoming staff immediately set to work to reimagine how the AIOIC high school could honor its obligations to NCLB, the district, and most significantly to the American Indian community. As a result, a programmatic overhaul was instituted to further “indigenize” the school itself.

To begin, the curriculum was completely renovated – replacing the previous emphasis on vocational training with a return to the more standard content areas required for high school graduation with additional focus placed on transitioning into college matriculation. Additionally, further inclusion of indigenous customs and practices into the daily operations of the school were

also reintroduced in far greater measure – including the incorporation of Talking Circles, smudging, and the use of tobacco ties for individual prayer when requested or when used as part of a community ceremony. At all turns, indigenous histories, perspectives, customs, and stories were inculcated into the standard subjects to add relevance for students, and to reinforce the development of their own cultural identities. Leveraging its status as a state innovative program, the high school began introducing more and more American Indian elders into the classroom as a means of further deepening student understandings about their heritage and community. Whenever possible, students are taken out of doors to pursue their studies – often times participating in traditional activities as canoe trips (the school currently just completed constructing its own canoe utilizing traditional Anishinaabe techniques), wild ricing (planting and harvesting), “sugar bushing” (traditional indigenous maple syrup collection), along with a multitude of excursions exploring the natural features existing within the Twin Cities metropolitan areas (including lakes, rivers, and city parks) where projects linked to the standard school subjects are then pursued. Through these project based, experiential learning activities the students are challenged to incorporate indigenous value systems to enhance their understandings of the standard core subjects that are also being taught.

Once changes to the curriculum had been implemented, the delivery model of the school was then radically redesigned. Breaking free from the mainstream system of rigidly structured schools that separated pupils by age groupings or by capability levels, the high school at AIOIC also intentionally incorporated indigenous values around learning in community. To begin, the physical construct of the learning space was restructured. Students now sit in circles in small groups facing one another so as to foster better communication between participants. The room itself – a singular learning space predicated on old, rural one-room school houses, was arranged

in a circular pattern with three distinct teaching stations located on the perimeter - replete with white boards, video projectors, smart boards, and speaking podiums. In this way, the teachers are encouraged to utilize all teaching stations either within a class period or throughout the week in order to again reinforce the circular arrangement of the classroom – thus eliminating any notion of a “front” or “back” of the room. The circle is a powerful semiotic code for Anishinaabe, Dakota, and Lakota peoples – signifying natural and spiritual cycles observed within the wider, natural world as well as arrangements in ceremonial practices. Inclusion of circular arrangements within the learning space also helps activate prior knowledge associated with indigenous customs that the students might not even be aware of that they possess (what the community refers to as “blood memory”) as well as helps foster a genuine supportive comradery amongst the students.

Following up on the redesign of the physical space, all enrolled students were then transitioned away from highly individualized pursuits (typically arranged around the procurement of gainful employment) towards a more collective approach. Within the new setting, students function as a singular cohort. In this way, the entire student body (currently capped at 45 students for the entire school) remain as one group while the content and faculty rotate through the learning space, transitioning from one subject area to another. In this way, any artificial distinctions that are usually enforced within mainstream schools between ages, grade levels, or capabilities are removed. In its place is a community of learners possessing a variety of skill sets that can be harnessed for the construction of new knowledge amongst the students themselves. In this manner, faculty members serve not only as teachers, but adopt the role of facilitators *and* as students for they too must continually learn from their students to incorporate their views and experiences into their own practice. Once underway, the faculty and the students

then work collaboratively to address the curriculum. By and large, most activities are project based and dependent upon a series of critical thinking activities, self-reflection, and group presentation. The students then also function as an internal accountability network as the larger group and the smaller groups within the school take ownership in supporting one another to complete their work and accomplish their goals. This collective support often manifests in students volunteering to tutor to one another depending on where their individual skills sets reside, to create their own study groups in order to better prepare for projects and assessments, and to celebrate one another's success - whereby the group serves to propel itself onward to greater academic achievement.

The effects of these changes have resulted in a dramatic increase and stabilization of student attendance after enrollment, an increase in overall student credit obtainment, and an increase of students who had formerly been behind actually completing and earning their high school diploma. Above all, the new formatting of the school enabled the fostering of a genuine sense of belonging within a community of learners that had never been felt by these students within the mainstream system. When combined with an academically rigorous approach to the standard curriculum and the inculcation of indigenous culture woven throughout the practices of the school, students have been able to find themselves as indigenous people while reengaging and finding success with their academics.

In 2008, the high school was once again rebranded with its current moniker of Takoda Prep of AIOIC ("takoda" being a Dakota term meaning "all are welcome") – evocative of the new balanced approach between cultural-contextualization, academic rigor, and learning in community. In 2016, MPS would produce a new record number of American Indian graduates – 71 in total, of which 10 came from Takoda Prep of AIOIC alone. Takoda Prep has sustained a

collective attendance rate at or above 80% during this same time frame, achieved Adequate Yearly Progress for each of the final years of NCLB (2007 – 2012), and holds a consistent graduation rate of eligible seniors above 90%. It is safe to say that the methods being employed at Takoda Prep are yielding the results long sought after by the local American Indian community.

For both Nawayee Center School and Takoda Prep of AIOIC, leadership development and civic engagement have also been strongly incorporated into the overall requirements of both schools. Time and again students participate in large civic demonstrations on behalf of their community (such as protesting against racist mascots, the Dakota Access Pipeline project, the Enbridge Pipeline project, etc.), or by speaking to media and elected officials about issues important to both them as students or to their community (such as testifying at the Minnesota State Legislature about potential policy changes, or hosting elected officials such as U.S. Senators, U.S. Congressmen, state Senators and Representatives, and the Governor of Minnesota – all of whom at one time or another spent a day at either location visiting with students). Through the development of advocacy and leadership skills within the students, the youth begin to understand their future roles as the next wave of leadership for their community. In so doing, the students begin to buy in to the requirements of the school as a means of accelerating their ascendancy into accepting larger responsibilities on behalf of their own community. In this way, their engagement with their studies begins to improve as the standard subject material studied in class takes on heightened importance. Once the student has come to recognize their own potential as American Indian people and feel truly valued by both peers and teachers as the next generation of leaders, the core content tends to be valued in a different way. No classwork was viewed as powerful tools that can assist students towards challenging the status quo of the

dominant culture in defense of American Indian sovereignty – as opposed to just being mere arbitrary exercises in knowledge acquisition merely because it has been assigned. To support this focus on leadership development, ongoing examinations of current events (at the local, national, and global levels) have become an integral part of the overall offerings within both Nawayee and Takoda Prep. For these students in Minneapolis, there is a direct connection between their civic engagement activities currently pursued as a part of their academics with what was accomplished decades prior by members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the work that they pursued for self-determination and indigenous sovereignty. Another vital educational component woven into each school’s coursework is a critical focus towards deconstructing mindsets that are often too ingratiated within the dominant culture that had usurped traditional indigenous ways of life. Referred to “decolonization work”, the curriculum used at both schools emphasize a reexamination of the civilizing aspects of traditional American Indian culture and how it can be brought to bear on the more stultifying, decadent, and decaying order currently found within American culture. In this way, students are challenged to think critically so that they can become better adept at utilizing their base of traditional knowledge and cultural teachings as a means of navigating through the wider world without succumbing to its vices and inherently racist attitudes. In so doing, students become better equipped to provide leadership to their own people.

Going forward, these two schools look to deepen the indigenization of each institution. Both have become part of a national project to expand summer school offerings created around traditional indigenous activities. As CAPs, Takoda and Nawayee already offer summer programming for the purposes of credit acquisition, but through this new national project known as “Resurgence Schools” each will be able to expand their summer offerings and further inculcate American Indian culture into their programming. For Takoda Prep, this expansion of

summer programming will also be leveraged by the school to institute a full transition into year-round schooling predicated upon the natural seasons and inherent life-cycles of the region. In so doing, Takoda Prep intends to add additional indigenous practices that are seasonal in their application while simultaneously expanding the amount of out of doors activities that are in alignment with local tribal customs during each time period. The increase in experiential learning will also afford students additional opportunities to earn credits that can be applied towards graduation.

Additionally, the two schools have begun negotiations looking into ways each can better support and advance the work that the other is pursuing. As an example, Nawayee Center School offers a language revitalization course that teaches students the Anishinaabe language – whereas Takoda Prep at this time does not have the ability to offer such language classes. Simultaneously, Takoda Prep has begun reintroducing career training classes in IT – leveraging talent and curriculum from its own accredited post-secondary institution that is housed on its campus at the American Indian OIC, to which Nawayee Center School does not have such access. In attempt to remedy these perceived needs, each school has begun discussions of sharing resources, staff, and curriculum between each site as a means of assisting one another to provide such expanded offerings to their students.

Externally, both Nawayee and Takoda Prep have also engaged with the other various Minneapolis-based indigenous non-profits providing services to the community beyond schooling. Partnerships designed to improve the overall social-emotional and physical health of the students have been incorporated into the offerings at each school. To this end, local American Indian non-profits have begun sending their staff into both Takoda and Nawayee to work directly with students to provide one-on-one counseling, health check-ups, financial

literacy trainings, and employment services. In this way, these external partnerships have allowed enrolled students to have a variety of their needs met that were not necessarily available to them within the mainstream schools – thus providing them with a more comprehensive form of development and support all within a culturally-contextualized manner.

Throughout the course of all these programmatic shifts and innovations, the Indian Education Department and MPS have remained a committed partner to both Nawayee and Takoda Prep. During the recent refresh of the MOA between the district and the community as implemented in 2017, both schools were officially deemed “Best Practice Sites” by the MPS Indian Education Department with an emphasis on assisting both with their innovative endeavors to meet the unique needs of the American Indian students attending school in Minneapolis. In the years to come, both schools would like to expand – replicating their models so as to allow for greater numbers of students to enroll, as well as to play their part in helping American Indian students achieve the highest academic potential that they can.

When looking back over the combined histories of these three institutions, here again lies strong evidence that the academic programming was informed – if not outright created - by strong community engagement within the city of Minneapolis by the American Indian people. The evolution of the MPS Indian Education Department came to fruition after several years of dramatic political activity by the community as led by such organizations like the American Indian Movement – who itself demonstrated the feasibility of inventing alternative learning sites predicated on indigenous teachings and values as a viable option to the mainstream educational system. Although their schools were around for a finite amount of time, they did however succeed in inspiring new indigenous organizations to open their own alternative schools that

were also predicated upon indigenous values – such as Nawayee Center School and Takoda Prep of AIOIC who are still in operation today.

Additionally, it was through the efforts of the community – namely the Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors Group (MUID) – that succeeded in landing an historic accord between the Minneapolis School Board and the community to ensure proper attention and resources remain focused on the American Indian community and specifically its students. Through this MOA, the community has enabled Nawayee and Takoda Prep to innovate and succeed as each were protected by the MOA from any outside interests that did not value alternative approaches to education – especially those originating from the source-point of indigenous culture itself. In this manner, there is a direct and living connection between these two schools and the civic engagement of the elders who took to the streets and to the halls of power nearly fifty years prior fighting for indigenous culture and sovereignty. Through the collective power expressed by the American Indian community of Minneapolis, on behalf of its own interests, it was able to create its own learning environments beneficial for its own youth both within the established public education system, as well as outside the scope of the mainstream schools. Through the efforts of the indigenous people living within this city lies powerful examples that community-governed approaches to education can and do work, examples by which other urban centers can follow.

Los Angeles Public Schools; Los Angeles, California

Anahuacalmecac International University Preparatory and Semillas Sociedad Civil

Status: ADVANCED

In East Los Angeles lies three small campuses providing comprehensive educational services for nearly 400 students at all levels of schooling – from Kindergarten through the 12th grade. These campuses are all part of an alternative design to education not found anywhere else

within the greater Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Operated by a community organization known as Semillas Community Schools, these campuses comprise three educational operations of a single charter school entitled *Anahuacalmecac International University Preparatory*. This school was founded and operates on the principles of harnessing the culture, belief systems, and the values of indigenous Mesoamerican cultures of their base community through their direct inclusion of learning environment. The administrators of these schools believe that weaving their culture throughout all functions of the school would be the most beneficial approach to benefit their student's academic achievement. As was typical in other urban settings, the outcomes yielded by the mainstream school system were wholly inadequate for the needs of the indigenous people living within Los Angeles. More often than not, students were not able to achieve academically and even worse, believed that they were essentially unwelcome within most mainstream institutions who did not support the student's heritage as indigenous people (In many instances, students and families found themselves swept up in the waves of anti-immigration contempt now common throughout the region – despite their indigenous status). As a result, the community began to organize and call for changes from LAUSD – specifically a need to create a school that can meet the needs of their youth while supporting the development of their cultural identities.

For many years, a vision of public educational offerings fully contextualized within local indigenous culture drove the activities of several students from the University of New Mexico and the University of California-Los Angeles. Leveraging faculty support from the Chicano and Indigenous Studies programs at each of these institutions, these students set out within their base communities in an attempt to implement the needed changes within the public education system. Many became licensed instructors and began careers teaching within local public schools.

However, it became evident to these community members that the system was not flexible enough to integrate indigenous values and culture to the extent that was needed by students. It was their intent to introduce key elements of the culture that could be used as larger platform for indigenous students to leverage for support as they pursue their academics. Issues around sage conservation and water rights were used as jumping off point for students to learn more about their own culture.

Simultaneously, a Montessori school had been opened and had either been staffed or directly supported by many of these same university students. During the initial years of operation, this Montessori school utilized its already widely-accepted alternative approach to education as vehicle to introduce indigenous culture. Namely, traditional Aztec dance was taught to students and used as an organizing principle by which the other curriculum within the school could be centered on. But after a few years financial issues would arise, causing the LAUSD to step in and commandeer the operations of the school. In the process, any vestiges of indigenous culture were removed once it was reopened by the district. Thus began a four-year journey as these educational practitioners set out to create and implement a culturally contextualized learning center for the youth of their own community.

Along the way, these advocates would meet regularly with indigenous elders within the community to seek guidance as to how to proceed. This group of dedicated community members came to be known as the *Escuelas Autonomas Dignidad* (roughly translated as Autonomous Dignity Schools) and worked tirelessly to found a charter school to meet the needs of the community in a way that would preserve their indigenous language and culture, while simultaneously teaching their youth the academic skill sets needed to survive and thrive within the dominant culture of Los Angeles and beyond. The majority of the community's youth

attending mainstream schools were still not achieving the same level of success as their non-Native counterparts, and many of the students continued to express feelings that their culture was being openly denigrated by their school and its inhabitants on a daily basis in favor of an emphasis on English-only, U.S.-focused curriculum. Exacerbating the situation, critical resource investment within the schools intended for the community were not commensurate with the needs of the students, or with the age of the facilities. As a result, most public schools that indigenous students attended were run down and without adequate materials to support their studies. For four years, the practitioners, elders, community parents and leaders worked together to lay the foundation for what would become a first-of-its kind charter school in the region. As an informed consensus was achieved after much planning, blessings were given by the community for the new school to be created.

Almost instantly, fierce and concerted resistance was launched against the community's efforts. Strong, racially-charged sentiments of preserving the concept of "Americanism" fueled the pushback against the desires of the local indigenous population. The call for a culturally-contextualized approach was ignorantly and erroneously conflated by the opposition into the wider issue of anti-immigrant and illegal immigration issues. As community leadership pursued the authorizations of a charter to begin Kindergarten through 3rd grade school, they were repeatedly confronted with a harsh and at times inhumane resistance that included threats of violence. Some instances of pushback were of the seemingly innocuous "red-tape" variety of bureaucratic resistance. While in other moments, masked individuals would drive by community gatherings and point weapons, hurl racial epithets, and threaten physical violence if any further efforts to pursue the school should continue. Nevertheless, the community leaders persisted and continued on with their plans.

The first attempt at a charter – through the LAUSD School Board – was summarily rejected on the grounds that it was unnecessary, and that the introduction of any culturally-based education that did not reinforce the dominant American culture was unwelcome. Undeterred, these indigenous leaders and indigenous educators would travel all the way to Sacramento, California in order to secure authorization of their school’s charter through the California State Department of Education – essentially circumventing the intransigent LAUSD and the local school board. In 2002, the K-3rd grade *Academia Semillas del Pueblo Charter School* (the first Semillas Sociedad Civil School) opened its doors to indigenous students.

Almost immediately, the local indigenous community took full advantage this newly created educational option and began enrolling their youngest students to receive their formalized education at *Academia Semillas del Pueblo Charter School* – openly eschewing the mainstream schools of LAUSD. The first enrollment in 2002 would top out at an incredible 139 students. Even in the face of such large initial enrollment figures, there was an even more impressive element that spoke to the powerful desire of the community to have their own indigenous school. This new public charter school as yet did not have a building! Instead, making full use of the temperate Southern California climate, school during this initial year was convened in a local park (El Sereno Park amongst the natural elements found therein). Faculty and administrators brought the curriculum and learning materials to the site via cars, vans, and carts – unfolding and distributing materials as needed as each day progressed. What would seem as a tremendous difficulty was quickly turned into a structural advantage for Semillas. The natural environment within which the school was forced to operate during its initial years was immediately woven into the teachings offered to the young students as a powerful tool

reinforcing the community's cultural belief systems as having a responsibility to serve as stewards of Mother Earth in accordance with the ways of their ancestral teachings.

As each successive grade progressed through its studies, Semillas leadership expanded course offerings and eventually expanded additional grade levels to accommodate the progression of older students in need of upper grade schooling. By the year 2008, Semillas provided indigenous education through two distinct programs, K-8th grade, and 9th-12th grades respectively. Today, the name *Anahuacalmecac International University Preparatory* is the umbrella term for the entirety of educational services provided through their K-12 state charter. Over the past three years, many of the high school graduates of Anahuacalmecac that have earned their diplomas have spent their entire public school career within Anahuacalmecac, beginning their time as kindergartners.

The focus of the curriculum within each grade level is to provide students with an education fully contextualized within the culture and language of the indigenous communities living in Los Angeles. For many, this is the traditional culture of the Aztec people and their language of Nahuatl is the primary language engaged in throughout much of the educational pursuits within Anahuacalmecac. In reality however, and duly recognized by Anahuacalmecac staff, this particular urban center encompasses nearly 40 to 50 other indigenous affiliations reflected in a wide diversity of indigenous people and languages living within the Los Angeles basin (a fact that owes its origins to the dramatic increases occurring after the enactment of federal Termination and Relocation policies of the 1950's – as it was in other urban centers). Through the adoption of such an educational approach, the founders of Anahuacalmecac strive to educate their students not only in their own culture but to further the student's understanding about the rights and dignity of all indigenous cultures globally.

During the course of the academic year, students are engaged with critical thinking activities and civic engagement opportunities to allow for actual activities towards supporting indigenous community rights and to work towards deconstructing antiquated colonial tactics of the dominant culture that seek the continuance of oppression against first nations. Within the early grades, students learn cultural values reflecting learning and behavior norms held in esteem by their indigenous community. These cultural values are taught or reinforced within all classes, often times having been integrated within student daily work or by allowing their exhibition during various group activities and games that are enacted throughout the course of each school day.

Language immersion classes are offered throughout the continuum of educational services at Anahuacalmecac, right through the 12th grade, with Nahuatl being the primary focus. Through the inclusion of their indigenous language, students are better able to engage in and learn more from the other cultural practices that are employed within the school – including daily welcome and prayers (referred to as morning protocols) as well as participating in traditional Aztec drum and dance ceremonies (known as Danza) which also plays an integral role for all age groups within the school towards understanding the essence of the culture and its values. Also, through the acquisition and refinement of their indigenous language, the youth become better prepared to sustain their indigenous culture for future generations to use and live by, thereby counteracting the corrosive effects of the dominant culture that seeks to homogenize all citizens within its own image. Beyond Nahuatl, the school also teaches English and Spanish to ensure students retain strong communication between their extended families, and further develop their capacities to successfully navigate through the practices required of the dominant culture of Los

Angeles. In this respect, many of the graduates of Anahuacalmecac have learned the skills to become trilingual and possess a distinct advantage over most mainstream high school graduates.

All of this is balanced out with an academically rigorous curriculum that seeks to prepare students for immediate transition into post-secondary enrollments or into meaningful career placement. Anahuacalmecac is an approved International Baccalaureate (IB) school which calls for the inclusion of curriculum that includes global perspectives, cross-cultural examinations, and a level of rigor that is considered to be optimum for post-secondary matriculation. Similar to Advanced Placement courses (AP courses), IB schools differ by integrating the concepts of global cultures and global perspectives throughout all classes, and at all grade levels. Unlike the high stakes testing affiliated with AP work, IB classes and assessments typically involve more research, writing, and hands-on appraisals focusing primarily on the development of the student's critical thinking capacities, whereas AP course have a tendency at times to focus more on rote memorization of facts and figures. As an IB school, Anahuacalmecac provides its students with an ability to think deeply about their own culture and its place within the global diaspora of indigenous peoples, the effects of colonization, and the remaining work yet to be accomplished towards actively decolonizing society to the point where all indigenous communities can thrive and live in peace.

In addition, the Anahuacalmecac has incorporated *Danza* – the traditional practice of Aztec dance and drumming. For all intents and purposes, *Danza* has become an important organizing principle for both students and staff alike. This ancestral expression of spirit, art, community, language, music, strength, and health has been woven into many aspects of the academic programs as well. For those students willing to participate, *Danza* is taught both expressly so that students can learn the movements and meaning behind the ritual of dancing and

the art form of drumming in the culturally appropriate manner – as well as learning about the cultural and historical significance of such activities. Through it all, Danza represents a physical manifestation of the community’s culture amongst the people and so is highly valued as academic tool to further develop the youth of the people. In many instances, students and staff lead Danza activities within the public sphere in direct support of the civic engagement activities pursued by the school as a whole. Through Danza, the cultural contextualization of Anahuacalmecac is sustained in a very visceral and dramatic fashion.

There is much regarding the narrative arc of Anahuacalmecac and the Semillas Community Schools that echoes many of the same elements found within the stories of the other sites examined within this work. Here again, the creation of an alternative approach to education was born out of the dogged insistency of the local indigenous community. Once in place, this particular community-governed school was focused on inculcating indigenous culture as the central structure around which the educational enterprise was then constructed. Broad and enthusiastic support by both students and community members helped sustain the school’s daily operations. However, there are several significant differences that set this school apart from the others, and elevate its evaluation within this particular examination to the status of being an *Advanced* program despite lacking some of the criterion established and defined at the beginning of this section.

The most significant characteristic that set this program apart from its contemporaries is the fact that it is operating in near isolation within a very hostile environment. So extreme is the antipathy felt by the existing systems and by some of the non-Indigenous communities living nearby that Semillas - and Anahuacalmecac in particular – have had to endure extreme and incredibly harsh abuses. Death threats, unexpected and abusive visits by local law enforcement,

repeated and unnecessary calls to prove legitimacy and qualifications of school administrators, vandalism of school property, public trolling on social media, crank calls to local health departments – all have polluted the school’s ability to function normally. In reality, while not compromising the integrity of the quality of work provided by Anahuacalmecac’s staff for their students, these ongoing harassments have served to detract in small ways from the staff from being able to focus exclusively on the needs of the students. These hostile actions by certain members of Los Angeles’s general population have – from time to time - had an impact on the morale of the adults working within the school as well as the perceptions of the youth regarding the existing systems of the city and some of its more deplorable denizens.

When trying to understand why Anahuacalmecac has been targeted in this way, it is the belief of school officials that they are the victims of a rising political tide of hate speech, anti-immigrant, and anti-Mexican rage fuming in the more ignorant sectors of Los Angeles society. Even prior to the election of Donald Trump to the Presidency of the United States, such instances of harassment had been occurring – only now the perpetrators have become brazen and visible in their executing their despicable acts (one report had a person pull up in their car and shout racial epithets and violent threats towards faculty in front of students from their vehicle before driving off). The irony here is that these are indigenous people whose claim to live on this land pre-dates the existing political boundaries of the United States and Mexico. Added to this that they are citizens of the United States and in fact are learning three languages within their schools (Nahuatl as the primary language, English and Spanish as secondary languages) in an attempt towards fostering intergenerational and intercultural communication which should in reality be lauded and supported. While their political teachings for their students echo the same liberation and sovereignty strategies echoed by the curriculum used in Minneapolis, Portland, and

Albuquerque, it has been interpreted here within this environment by a misguided minority as being some form of seditious activity intent on destroying the integrity of the U.S. as a nation-state. It is fair to say that the approach within Anahuacalmecac is indeed subversive towards the status quo - with its focus on decolonization and the empowerment and liberation of the oppressed – but this work has always been conducted within a lawful framework anchored in academic study and protected by the United States Constitution and a citizen’s civil rights. Additionally, many of the guiding philosophies governing Anahuacalmecac are derived directly from the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples Rights essentially aligning the school with much of the opinions of the world itself. As is the same for all the other alternative organizations presented here within this work – all of their efforts have been undertaken to subvert the status quo as represented by the public education system, a system that has marginalized and traumatized indigenous people for several generations.

In no way does Semillas seek to dissolve the American jurisprudence system, or compromise the political boundaries of the nation. Rather it is just the opposite. The work of Anahuacalmecac is to train their students so that once they graduate from high school, they can go on to college and continue the struggle to ensure that the government of the United States is functioning properly for *all* people – especially for members of the first nations of this continent. Unfortunately, in this current context, Anahuacalmecac finds itself engaged in a perpetual fight defending its right to exist, defending the beliefs of the indigenous populations that it represents, and fighting to defend the students who already have been victimized by the system of public schools. Anahuacalmecac has no choice in the matter, they have not the luxury for soft evasion or for “turning the other cheek” - its students and its community are wholly dependent on the

survival and continued success of this school – for the success of Anahuacalmecac means that the future success of their community remains assured.

Owing to these factors, this particular enterprise stands apart at a level of sophistication unique to its own experiences and not really shared by the other alternative sights featured within this work. They are a school ensconced and isolated within an urban battlefield of the 21st century - directly engaged in an ideological war over the rights to adhere to one's preferred culture and heritage despite the pressure coming down on them by those in the dominant culture who oppose such rights. It is the most recent and most visceral manifestation of a contest of cultures first engaged in bloody battles on the prairies of North America one hundred and fifty years ago, only to be carried forward into the brutality of the boarding schools, reemerging once again in the foothills of Chiapas as the indigenous people continued to resist as a defense to protect their right to exist. What remains clear is that this seemingly interminable battle has not ended, only that the front lines have just shifted, moving now to the streets of East Los Angeles. For the other urban sites examined in this work, there is much to be learned and emulated from the amazing work underway at Semillas Community Schools.

Conclusions

Ultimately what was presented within this section were the remarkable stories of seven unique programs – all operating within major cities and providing services to large urban populations of American Indian students. Each of these operations demonstrated an exceptional drive to educate indigenous youth in a manner consistent with the principles of their own indigenous community. With varying degrees of sophistication, these programs have boldly initiated their very own educational services that are not only supportive of the student's academic development but are also conducted in a manner that sustains their indigenous culture

for future generations. What these programs have collectively demonstrated is the fact that community-governed, alternative schools have a place, are needed, and are valued by the very people they serve.

Even now in the 21st century, there remains large numbers of American Indian communities still languishing within the doldrums of a failing, antiquated, and insufficient public education system. For these people, the work presented within this section will hopefully be seen as viable examples as to how they themselves can become empowered to seize control of their public schools. Following a pathway similar to what was set out upon by the programs examined within this section, perhaps these other indigenous communities can yet experience such a resurgence. Perhaps once they find their own collective voice and shared vision, they will also find their footing and begin the work to reshape their own schools – if not create their own alternative, culturally-contextualized programming on behalf of their students.

For non-indigenous communities, and especially for those professionals who work within the public education system, perhaps the programs examined within this section will offer a new perspective as to how youth can learn and the massive importance of culture being woven into educational practices. Perhaps by further investigating these programs, new ways of seeing the positive impacts that community-governed schools and alternative methodologies can have for the people that employ them will in turn enable new ways of supporting and expanding such practices throughout the system itself. Then, working collaboratively with the urban American Indian communities, real and lasting reforms can be implemented to finally redesign public education in a radical new way. Once accomplished, then finally those historical and seemingly intractable academic disparities for American Indian students can finally be relegated to the footnotes of history, just like George Custer.

Section IV - Insights

“Chinigchinich then proceeded to make a new people from the clay, and they became the Indians of today. He placed these Indians in groups all over the country and gave them what they needed to survive. He gave them their languages and their customs and all was good.”

- *Gabrielino creation story* (Cleary, 1996, p. 57)

Part I: Introduction to Section IV

In total, some 14,919 miles were traveled in the course of conducting site visits to the various alternative programs and alternative schools examined within this work. Seven sites in total were visited, in six different states, all within each of those state's largest cities. The geographic climates were as disparate and varied as the wide distances between each would suggest – from the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, the red-rocked deserts of the American Southwest, along the tree-lined ridges of the Cascade Mountains and the gray waters of Puget Sound of the Pacific Northwest, or near the lake-filled prairies of Minnesota, and finally watching a pink sun fall below the Pacific Ocean as it burned the skies above the urban hub that is the Los Angeles basin. Almost every climate and every topographical feature known within North America was encountered. Equally as varied were the indigenous communities that were generous enough to open their doors and spend some time visiting. The amount of tribal associations receiving services at each of these sites is almost too numerous to count, but a rough estimate puts it at nearly 80 affiliations of America's First Nations who make regular use of these schools.

Yet, in spite of all the variation in location, language, custom, and natural settings, it was the commonalities shared by these institutions and their communities that feelings of *déjà vu* repeatedly emerged during these travels. At each one of these locations the processes that had birthed the alternative programs in operation there had unfolded in uncannily similar ways. Communities separated by thousands of miles arrived at very much the same conclusions and elected to take a course of action that paralleled each of the other sites – *despite* the great geographic distances or the fact that some were developed into their current iterations during different time periods altogether. It was as though the same story, or some unspoken script, had

been passed along from one community to the next to be followed – despite there being any evidence that such communications or collaboration had in fact occurred. From here to there, from the deserts to the Rocky Mountains to the plains to the Pacific Ocean, the educational methods and the resulting practices – as shared at each place by the stories of their administrators - were eerie in their similarity.

When processing the experiences of these site visits during the construction of this work, a conscious effort was made towards being mindful about all the other American Indian communities – both urban and rural - who remain in desperate need of such alternative programming. For these folks, the local public school system is still their only option for formalized education, and for now they continue to watch this aged machine chew up and spit out their youth with little regard. With this in mind, an intentional effort was made to identify any potential characteristics that were valued by the visited sites in the hopes that these elements would be of use to those communities still in need. Therefore, on behalf of students still at the mercy of the public education system and seemingly without recourse, identifying these valued characteristics that could in some degree be replicated became a principle goal of this work.

What unexpectedly emerged was a discernable evolutionary pattern that detailed a progressive and deepening immersion of the community within the functions of their public schools. Traveling from location to location, a model was detected that was both familiar and that coincided with the state of alternative program development present within each urban setting. In this sense, a correlation could be drawn between the sophistication of the alternative, culturally-based educational methodologies being utilized within each urban setting with that of the level of community involvement within their local public school system. By illustrating this pattern of community immersion, it is the hope that the readership of this work will be able to

self-identify where their community currently stands regarding this process and what commensurate services could potentially be provided at that level or the next if they desired to move forward.

In addition to the detection of this evolutionary process, there were also several identifiable educational strategies employed by these sites that were, in essence, very much in common with what was being conducted across locations. These particular strategies had been deliberately crafted and implemented by the local American Indian community as a means of inculcating their culture within the coursework and supporting their youth academically (which has now come to be commonly referred to as “indigenizing” educational practices). The fact that multiple indigenous communities living in disparate geographic locations took the initiative to get involved, with all arriving at implementing similar educational approaches, suggests something larger than mere innovation born from need was occurring here. What could be derived from what was observed is the first composite outlines of a unique *indigenous pedagogy*, initiated by need, but crafted through a unique process involving community discourse and the application of indigenous wisdom.

To be sure, the nature and the depth of the evolution of community immersion and the employed educational strategies does have subtle variations between programs, but these patterns were undeniably present nonetheless. As a result, it is hard not to arrive at the conclusion that these patterns of development and the selected culturally-influenced strategies must possess a certain utility, as well as a proclivity for generating the types of positive results sought by each urban American Indian community involved with them. When taken together, these unique commonalities found at each featured site presented real insights that are worth exploring further.

The intent within this section is to detail the evolutionary process these communities experienced as a result of the long-standing failures of public schools to create their own path forward. In so doing, it is the hope that membership in other indigenous communities can use this information to assess their own positionality and potentially seek out those activities that can further advance their own peoples engagement with schooling. Additionally, by sharing the most ubiquitous of the education strategies designed to infuse indigenous practices into formalized education, it is also hoped that this information could be used by other indigenous communities as a means of either validating their approach, or inspiring them to incorporate additional strategies on behalf of their students.

Ultimately, this work would like to serve as a roadmap pointing to different possibilities by which our people can come together and work on behalf of their own. For American Indian communities that are still in need of such alternative methodologies, this section has the potential to offer suggestive guidance as to how they can develop their own. For non-Indigenous populations, perhaps a greater understanding can be obtained as to how and why these systems were created and employed – thereby potentially dispelling any lingering misconceptions, and opening the door for increased support. Ultimately, the objective of providing a synthesized analysis is to continue forward and *accelerate* the educational resurgence that is now underway within many urban American Indian communities.

Part II: The Trail Out of Darkness

The road towards educational resurgence as undertaken by the visited sites was often marked by common touch points and similar occurrences, often times unfolding within a narrative arc resembling the stories told at each location. In general, there were essentially four phases of community immersion that could be identified which detailed an evolutionary process

of deepening engagement with the local public school system. Here again, it is important to note that each phase occurred with varying degrees of intensity and for differing lengths in time – with some urban locations moving quite quickly through each step, and others perhaps transcending levels a bit slower on account of unique external circumstances. However, there remains a distinct sequencing associated with each phase that was common amongst all sites visited. Through a basic understanding of each level, it is the hope that other American Indian communities will be able to self-identify where they are at currently on this trail and then anticipate what actions need to be taken in order to move forward and achieve the goals that they desire that have already been exemplified by these other locations.

What is most notable about this entire process of community immersion - as observed through the urban centers examined - is that it was invariably an endeavor created, initiated, and executed *by the local American Indian community itself on its own behalf*. There were never any “rescuers” who, appearing from outside the American Indian community, came in to “save” them. Contrary to their own ongoing misguided mythology relating to supporting student achievement, the public education system did nothing to alleviate their own shortcomings beyond cosmetic reforms and a harsh insistence that it was the students and the indigenous community who were failing within public schools. What has been brought to light by these communities is the inverse reality that the public education system had never really been designed to empower American Indian students and that since its inception was in essence performing perfunctorily in its acquiescence to the desired “Americanization” of the nation’s youth.

Without a thought given towards seeking help from the outside and no longer tolerant of giving the public school system itself any further credence than was necessary, the American

Indian people within these cities united around the general concept that they themselves already possessed the answers needed to help their own. Operating within this central understanding, they elected to stand as the authors of the future they sought for their indigenous community and students. In every example offered within this work, it was the American Indian community stepping forward to take care of their own – motivated purely out of compassion and self-preservation. It was the community who envisioned a way by which a student’s cultural identity could be further developed in concert with his schooling. Originating from the community itself was a new vision about how education *could be* that was brought into corporeal existence. This process - by which the community awoke, took control, and became involved – is what the delineation of these phases aim to define for others to follow.

Ultimately, as stated before, four phases tended to emerge from these stories that provided an ability to track the experiences of each group as they unfolded, and defined the depth and breadth of the local indigenous community’s involvement within their local public education system. In an attempt to define and categorize this sequence of community immersion, the following classes were created: *Community Critical Mass*; *Community Support*; *Community Engagement*; and *Community Driven*. As each urban locale progressed through these four stages, a series of newfound educational practices began to manifest – including the creation of community-governed alternative education programs, direct involvement of indigenous cultural teachings and perspectives, and a more sophisticated organizational approach towards ongoing interaction with the local public school system. To this end, the further along this process each community progressed, the more developed their programming became – enabling correlations to be made directly with the previous section’s status designations of *Emerging*, *Developed*, and *Advanced*.

Phase I: *Community Critical Mass*

Invariably, at some point within these shared experiences, the local American Indian community became so disaffected, so angered with the poorly performing public schools within their area that they felt compelled to take action - to do something, anything, on behalf of their students. Driving this slow-building rage were all the hallmarks of a public education system that was failing to develop the youth that it had been charged with supporting. Drop-out rates were accelerating and occurring at earlier ages, graduation rates were plummeting, higher than average behavioral interventions and expulsions were running rampant, an increase in criminal activity among youth (including gang violence) began to spread, and a precipitous decline in employment and college enrollment –were all afflicting the youth. It was in the midst of such maelstroms when the community would stand up in defense of its own.

Typically, it begins with the elders but eventually includes parents and sympathetic educators (some of whom are members of these indigenous communities). During this first phase the concerned members began to have meetings after work, on weekends, and informal gatherings during cultural events. Sometimes a concrete plan forward is presented or quickly materializes, but more often than not it is the first time that leadership within these urban American Indian communities actually came together to discuss *school*. At times, communities within this initial period of awakening begin to provide supplemental activities to assist students to learn their culture and to support their academics. These activities would manifest with parents and community elders opening up their homes, convening in local churches, or if available, indigenous community centers and common spaces in housing complexes – all to work with their youth.

The supportive elements themselves are deeply invested with the cultural practices and wisdom of the surrounding tribal nations. Through this connection to their heritage, the community believed (correctly) that students would find purpose not only in their lives but within their scholastic pursuits as well. In this way, the support provided for their students sought to heal the rift created by the public schools regarding their indigenous cultural identities. The community felt a responsibility to act in this way and did not hesitate when opportunities to infuse culture into the work being pursued by the youth presented themselves.

For their part during this phase, the public school system has minimal interaction with the local community beyond federal requirements to retain Title VII funding.

On the whole, with regards to community-based, culturally contextualized academic programming at this level, most occurrences would be considered as being at the *Emerging* status of development, with little in the way of alternative, indigenized services beyond the bare minimum programs provided by Title VII funded programming. However, there remains clear evidence of a burgeoning community recognition of the systemic failures of public schools for American Indian students and a growing desire to proactively implement their own approach based on their own cultural knowledge. As a result, present within this stage are the readily identifiable characteristics of a movement that could quickly accelerate the onset of the next evolutionary phase and perhaps enable the construction of the next stage of development regarding alternative, culturally-based educational methodologies.

Phase II: *Community Support*

The next step in this progression was the sustainment - on a permanent basis – of the supportive elements initiated by the community in response to the failures of the public schools. In this more advanced state, we see the development of new non-profit organizations built

around the organically created programming instituted by the elders and parents or the inclusion of this programming within existing American Indian 501c3's. To this end, a more organized and strategic approach to fundraising is employed to secure resources on behalf of sustaining this work. Additionally, a more formalized curriculum is employed centered on indigenous cultural knowledge and customs (examples include after school language revitalization courses, traditional food cultivation, indigenous historical classes, regalia construction, traditional singing and drumming, etc.). Also present are self-organized student-orientated clubs or groups to bring further identity, stability, and credence to the outside-of-school work being executed by the community within these external organizations (indigenous language clubs, drum and dance groups, indigenous student groups, etc.).

There is the beginning of a professionalization of the services offered amongst the participating community members who provide guidance and knowledge on behalf of the American Indian students. While elder and parent volunteers still comprise the base of this support, there begins to be an increasing number of paid positions incorporated expressly to deliver these services – more often than not employing local community members to fulfill these roles at the indigenous non-profits. In some instances, there may be licensed social workers and licensed educators who deliver services in concert with what is provided by the schools.

As a result of these strong and well-organized community practices, the community within this stage typically has a greater tendency to interact with the public school system in a more deliberate fashion. The district will often times be encouraged to leverage these existing community-based programs to augment their own internal efforts at supporting American Indian academic achievement. This can include the use of local flyers and promotional material within the schools as a way of connecting students to these outside-of-school events. The local school

districts might also agree to provide information regarding cultural events occurring within the indigenous community as a means of demonstrating partnership. In addition, the community might work with schools to provide space for the student groups to convene or perform and potentially persuade schools to allow these groups to utilize their activities as a means of informing their daily academic work - such as providing in-class demonstrations or presentations of cultural practices for credit.

With regards to the staffing, there might be a small number of indigenous people employed within the Indian Education department – some of whom have direct ties to the local American Indian community. In terms of services, the district limits available programming to only those students and families that can prove enrollment or descendency from a federally recognized tribe. For those students and families who are a part of the local community via lineage or descendency, the ability to receive services within the district becomes far more problematic with the very real risk of exclusion of recognition of their indigenous heritage within the public school system, despite their active membership within the local American Indian community.

When considering community-governed, culturally contextualized academic programming at this level, most occurrences would be considered as being at the *Emerging* status of development, with occasional examples of the *Developed* status starting to come on line. As the support and relationship between the community and the local school district takes on greater emphasis within this phase, there begins to be a larger usage of alternative, indigenized services beyond the bare minimum programs provided by Title VII funded programming. The result of this developing relationship is a greater sense of influence and ownership over schooling practices on the part of the local American Indian community and in

most instances, a demonstrable improvement (however slight) of academic performance on behalf of American Indian students.

Phase III: *Community Engagement*

Within this phase, the local American Indian community possesses a strong and active network of indigenous non-profit entities that provide a wide variety of services for their people. In turn, these organizations are directly sought out for partnerships by the public school system to support both academic services for American Indian students as well as to provide culturally relevant events for both students and families to participate in throughout the course of the school year. The indigenous cultural events that do occur are openly supported and often times formally incorporated into learning activities offered by the schools operating within these urban locations (pow-wows, graduation ceremonies, canoe trips, traditional food cultivation excursions, wilderness explorations, etc.). Leading community experts and cultural carriers (typically community elders and parents) participate in these events in partnership with faculty and administrators.

Beyond the non-profit structures, there is also a well-developed and ongoing process of interaction between the school district and the local indigenous population itself. Programming is often arrived at after consultation between the district schools and the local community to ensure community endorsement. To ensure that this partnership is authentic, there are usually formalized parent-educator groups that meet regularly to review the work being conducted by the Title VII Indian Education programming and whenever possible, to co-create new endeavors that can further accelerate American Indian student development. Whenever possible, textbooks, films, and all other curricular supplements are made widely available by the community for both families and faculty to augment existing academic services specifically to accelerate American

Indian academic achievement. Additionally, there might be groups comprised of both indigenous community leaders and district leadership dedicated strictly to curriculum evaluation throughout the course of the school year to ensure culturally appropriate offerings within the schools. At the urging of the community, the district might also provide more courses at all levels of schooling that have either been inculcated with American Indian culture or are in direct support of the culture (such as language revitalization courses, indigenous history, indigenous horticulture, etc.). These courses are also credit bearing classes that can contribute towards the student's ability to earn a high school diploma.

The Title VII programming and the Indian Education Department within the district employs indigenous people as their staff (including representation from the local tribal affiliations). A key distinction with district Indian Education programming within this particular stage of development is that it no longer constricts itself to provide services to only those students and families that are enrolled members of federally recognized tribes – and instead has made sure to honor federal statutes to broaden the eligibility provisions to include descendency as well. In this way, the district has brought itself into better alignment with the demographic realities present within the local indigenous communities as well as to ensure that no family or student seeking services from the district Indian Education department will have to go without.

Additionally, the Indian Education Department, in partnership with local indigenous 501c3's and local universities that have indigenous studies programs provide robust professional development trainings for their faculty and administration as well as provide credit bearing classes directly supporting American Indian heritage, history, and languages. Additionally, the district also possesses staff specifically for instruction and social-emotional supportive services to be provided directly to American Indian students within the district. Much of these services

are also provided in concert with the established indigenous non-profit network who also provide many complimentary or similar services to the very same families living within the local American Indian community. The resulting efforts comprise a large and very active Indian Education Department that pursues goals associated with academic achievement and cultural development far beyond the statutory requirements associated with securing Title VII funding from the U.S. Department of Education.

Within some areas, the district might even outsource educational activities to indigenous non-profits for the express purposes of providing for-credit schooling. These can take the form either as seasonal programming such as summer sessions activities or can be more long term in their application such as district authorization of charter schools or alternative schools operated by local indigenous non-profits that are then put under contract with the school district to enroll American Indian students. These outside learning centers are then permitted greater liberality towards applying learning methodologies and structural designs more consistent with community and cultural practices than the mainstream schools are – and as such are more flexible and better able to work with disaffected students as well as to incorporate a greater depth of cultural contextualization within their day-to-day operations.

The high proclivity to employ community-governed, culturally contextualized academic programming at this level would have most occurrences in this phase considered as being at the *Developed* status of development. However, a growing number of examples now obtaining the *Advanced* status marker are present in this phase as well - owing to their sophisticated integration of alternative methodologies as well as cultural contextualization within their programming or due to their usage of community-based organizations to provide culturally relevant alternative programming. As the support and relationship between the community and the local school

district is now an established dynamic within this phase, the employment of alternative, indigenized services as desired by the community has been generally accepted as a standard to be upheld in concert with the programming provided within district schools provided by Title VII. The result of this evolved relationship sustains the local indigenous community's sense of influence and ownership of the educational processes at work within the district and typically secures their ongoing engagement. Here again, in most instances, a demonstrable improvement (occurring in greater numbers) of academic performance on behalf of American Indian students is present within the local district.

Phase IV: *Community Driven*

Within this most advanced stage, the local American Indian community utilizes a well-organized network of indigenous non-profits to not only work collaboratively with the local school district but is also capable of establishing formalized agreements (Memorandums of Agreements, Memorandums of Understanding) to ensure the nature by which these partnerships are to function. Through these agreements, the community has taken on a leadership role in providing guidance towards how programming, curriculum, and professional development within the school district should operate to ensure proper inclusion of indigenous culture and practices within the schools that serve American Indian youth.

Here again, the Title VII programming and Indian Education Department within the district makes a concerted effort to employ qualified indigenous people as a part of their staff (including representation from the local tribal affiliations and urban American Indian community) for both academic, cultural, and social-emotional support. Additionally, career and college advising specifically for American Indian students is also offered by both the district and by community-based organizations to provide additional support towards post-graduation

transition planning (many members of the community remain first in their family to attend college). The local indigenous non-profits also actively leverage their partnerships with the Indian Education Department, as well as with local universities (particularly those that have indigenous studies programs) to provide robust professional development trainings for their faculty and administration throughout the school year. Additionally, these partnerships will also co-create and provide credit bearing classes for students directly supporting American Indian heritage, history, and languages. The district's Indian Education Department staff also possesses positions specifically for cultural instruction, as well as for supportive services to be provided directly to American Indian students both internally within their schools and externally as provided by the local indigenous non-profits.

The partnership between the community and the district also coordinates student groups within district schools for leadership development as well as to support the cultural activities occurring within and sponsored by the district. In addition, the district's Indian Education department also convenes formalized parent-educator groups that meet regularly to review the work being conducted by the Title VII Indian Education programming, as well as to provide ongoing input as to the curriculum used both in culturally-specific courses (such as indigenous language or history classes) but also with regards to the curriculum utilized within all content areas at all academic grade levels to ensure cultural sensitivity and inclusivity.

Much of the supportive services provided are intentionally coordinated between the community organizations and the district owing to the fact that many are complimentary or are similar in nature as to what each are providing to the very same families living within the local American Indian community. The resulting efforts comprise a large and very active Indian Education Department that pursues goals associated with academic achievement and cultural

development far beyond the statutory requirements associated with securing Title VII funding from the U.S. Department of Education.

The community itself remains actively engaged with the work of the school district throughout the course of the school year. Specialized workgroups are facilitated between community organizations, academic providers, professional educators, and the district staff and faculty to monitor district efforts. These workgroups meet on a regular basis – often times in accordance with established memorandums of agreement – to ensure academic progress is being achieved by American Indian students within the district. Also, it is where the planning and co-creation of cultural events occur within these workgroups to ensure that all relevant stakeholders within the American Indian community have an ability to provide input and shape all events so that both students and families will be able to participate. Finally, representatives from these workgroups meet regularly on a consistent basis with school board members and the superintendent of the district to ensure ongoing and strong communication is occurring between all parties involved in providing formalized educational services to American Indian students (typically involved in these meetings are the superintendent, district administrators, school faculty, community leadership, alternative school faculty and staff, and parents).

Within this most evolved phase of community immersion, community-governed, culturally contextualized academic programming are generally considered as being at the *Advanced* status of development owing to their sophisticated integration of alternative methodologies as well as cultural contextualization within their programming and due to the districts' reliance upon the usage of alternative schools to provide culturally relevant programming for American Indian students. As the support and relationship between the community and the local school district is now an established pattern within this phase, the

employment of alternative, indigenized services has become traditionally accepted as a standard to be upheld in concert with Title VII funded programming. The result of this evolved relationship continues to sustain the local indigenous community's sense of influence and ownership of the educational processes at work within the district and typically sustains their ongoing engagement. Moreover, the community within this phase also possess a palpable and direct sense of leadership towards directing public educational programming on behalf of their own. Here again, in most instances, a demonstrable improvement (occurring in greater numbers) of academic performance on behalf of American Indian students is present within the local district.

Part III: The Seven Learnings Towards Indigenizing School Practices

As stated previously within this section, another resulting product emerging from the site visits (and the in-depth conversations held therein) was a second intriguing pattern. A replication of pedagogical approaches - seemingly unknown as to be occurring at other locations - was clearly identifiable at each site in some form or another. This particular pattern pertained to the educational practices constructed and employed by the local indigenous community on behalf of their own students. Specifically, a repeated cluster of strategies were being used to varying degrees at each site to directly inculcate indigenous culture into the overall coursework and daily operations. The intent in doing so – as unwittingly mirrored by each community - was to provide direct support towards the development of the cultural identities of their students while simultaneously improving their academic achievement. At a minimum, roughly seven types of approaches could be identified as being employed at these alternative programs with many characteristics of their application echoed throughout each site. To be clear, not all seven were completely in operation, or being realized to their fullest potential at every location. Some

programs that were visited might have had evidence of multiple strategies within this cluster, but perhaps not all seven were entirely present. Also, not every application of these seven strategies were as consistently robust or implemented as frequently from site to site. However, despite some of these subtle variations, there was a definite indication of at least seven strategies employed in some manner at each location.

For the purposes of this work, these applications have been referred to as *The Seven Learnings* – or seven approaches that were learned of during the course of the site visits. It was apparent that for each program, these particular learning strategies were held in high regard by their base American Indian community – hence their employment. These strategies were also believed to be deeply integral towards creating an indigenized educational model that would serve to reinforce and sustain the local indigenous culture, while simultaneously furthering the development of student’s own personal cultural identities. Without any designation of importance, here are the seven learnings that were detected throughout the course of the site visits that have now been provided here with a brief descriptor.

Learning Out of Doors (on Land and on Water)

This particular strategy emphasizes the need for students to directly engage with the surrounding natural environment during their time spent within a formalized educational setting. It is believed to be a necessary application of experiential scholarship that also provides opportunities for kinesthetic learning as well. In this particular context, the student’s learning experience can manifest in a multitude of forms all throughout the year including, but not exclusive to, field trips to sites of cultural or indigenous historic significance, physical activities within or upon sites of natural beauty or wonder, or through the utilization of the immediate outdoor surroundings directly adjacent to their school building itself. Through such direct

interaction with the natural environment, students are afforded the opportunity to apply traditional teachings regarding responsibilities for stewardship of Mother Earth. Additionally, students can also interweave concepts and skills translatable to the dominant culture in relation to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), as well as Physical Education and Health - all the while applying culturally contextualized techniques and different modes of inquiry as they pursue their studies.

Potential Examples Include:

- Traditional Canoe Trips
- Traditional Wild Ricing Trips
- Traditional Sugar Bushing Trips
- Traditional Fishing Excursions
- Hiking and Camping Trips
- Horticulture Activities / Urban Gardening
- Field Trips to Historical Sites
- Forest Exploration / Urban Arboretums
- Urban Water Conservation and Study (using urban lakes or rivers)

Learning In Community

This area focuses on the benefits of using relatively static cohort models within which students engage with curriculum and school activities throughout the entirety of their learning experience. The source point for this learning comes from the traditional constructs of family and community where relatedness and interdependence are highly valued as a means of securing the health and vitality of the people – as opposed to the hyper-individualization and competition championed by the dominant culture of the United States. These communal values are still an

active part of indigenous communities to this day and have been reflected throughout these communities for millennia. Transposing these practices into the learning environment was believed to be a logical and natural extension.

As actionable as possible, these groups are devoid of any artificial or arbitrary factors of separation that might divide the students from one another. Such factors can include age, grade level, credit accumulation totals, gender, etc. Through the sustainment of a consistent group of learners comprised of differing academic capacities and learning styles, each student is then called upon to activate prior knowledge and to acclimate to a perpetually collaborative model that is equally supportive of each student's personal development. The end result is the creation of community of learners – who are intent on individual development as well as mutual support and collective progression through ongoing knowledge construction.

Beyond this, as a means of mitigating negative developments from the implicit power hierarchy often times subtly reinforced by mainstream schools, the cohort model affords unique opportunities to strengthen the communal bonds for all involved. Examples include the practice of the instructor and students addressing each other by their first names, students being granted some autonomy as to where and by whom they choose to sit each day, and to the organic creation of partnerships and study groups. Each of these characteristics serve as a mechanism that can further validate the inherent equality between students as well as between students and faculty, all of whom are human beings. Simultaneously, this practice can reduce any latent anxiety or hostility posed between the student-instructor dynamic often associated with formalized education.

Learning Across Generations

For this learning to become activated, students are continually exposed to members from vastly differing age groups for the express purposes of knowledge transmission and the development of culturally appropriate socialization practices. Here again, the inspiration for this learning comes from the traditional constructs of family or community as reflected throughout indigenous communities since time immemorial. In action, these activities include student engagement with community elders as well as activities with students younger than themselves. When working with elders, the students are able to learn about their community's culture, leadership development, practices and customs, and history, among many other topics. On the other side of the spectrum, there is real value in having the students participate in service-learning activities with younger age groups as a way to illustrate modeling behaviors for the younger set, as well as to provide an opportunity to re-teach fundamental academic skills (which in turn furthers the students' own understandings and capabilities). On balance, one of the more significant developments to emerge from this particular learning is yet another way in which the intentional strengthening of the communal bonds between generations can occur. Too often, the sense of living in community, of being your neighbor's keeper, and the offering of mutual support all are too often strained within the complexity of living within the dominant culture. This particular learning has been employed specifically to remedy this.

Learning in Redefined Spaces

This particular learning centers upon the physical space and facilities within which students are to pursue their schooling. The most effective applications of this learning involve intentional deviations from traditional classroom settings that had been strictly predicated on the need for classroom management with an emphasis on behavioral control and indoctrination. In the standard model, students were often assigned a seat within a grid or rows of desks, prohibited

from moving around, prohibited from eating food or chewing gum, strictly monitored by the instructor (who themselves were free to move about the room), rigidly controlled and monitored with regards to the use of the bathroom, were forced to devote their attention on the classroom space directly in front of them (where nearly all of the instruction typically occurred). Most connections to the natural world are minimalized or outright omitted – such as windows being covered by blinds or shades (if the room has windows at all), or perhaps the inclusion of a plant might be situated within the room. Additionally, students were also prohibited from speaking out of turn and were more often than not restricted from learning or working in partnership with their classmates. All in all, the traditional classroom environment has been structured intentionally to sustain an implicit (and at times explicit) power hierarchy that perpetually reinforces the subservience of the student to the instructor, to the material that was to be learned, and to the public education system itself.

Within an indigenized setting, the physical space is determined by relational and physical needs of the human beings occupying that particular space followed then by the learning goals for the institution. In this respect, the redefined learning space is much more human centered. Elements of an indigenized learning environment include the ability for students to self-select their seat (often times changing multiple times throughout their time in the learning space). As opposed to sitting in rows, students instead sit in circles facing one another in small groups with an ability to interact while making eye contact – with many having the entire learning space set within a wider circle - thus eliminating any front-of-the-room or rear-of-the-room designations within the space. There is also the freedom for students to periodically get up and move their bodies (stretch) or use the bathroom whenever needed without much in the way of seeking permission or consultation from the instructor. Additionally, food consumption restrictions are

oftentimes very loose, in some instances students are allowed to eat throughout the day whenever they are hungry.

In all, the indigenized classroom is predicated on making the students comfortable and reflects a practice that supports greater communication and collaboration between all participants (including faculty), all the while serving to reduce implicit and explicit power biases and behavioral control structures within the learning space.

Learning Leadership and Advocacy

Another common element within indigenized, alternative programs is their ongoing effort to develop leadership capabilities within each of their students as well as providing instruction and opportunities to exercise these leadership skill sets through direct action and advocacy. In its application, students are exposed to leaders from their own community (both current and historic), learn about the situational occurrence that led these leaders to prominence, and then challenged to think critically as to what skill sets were exemplified and utilized by these leaders. From there current events are then often explored by the students to apply the same type of analysis – only this time presupposing that the students themselves are in the leadership role. From there, oftentimes these programs then select an issue or policy that is currently impacting the student's lives or community at which point the student and their learning cohort are then allowed to openly pursue action towards this issue or policy in an attempt to synthesize that which they have learned about regarding previous leaders themselves, their understanding of current issues, and the development of an action plan or service-learning activity to then be pursued. Additionally, key characteristics of leaders are examined and then applied within the course of daily activities to help students develop these very traits within themselves.

When done consistently throughout the learning community and as a part of the ongoing development of the student, the ability for new leaders to emerge is greatly improved as well as to secure the sustainability of the community by further fostering greater critical thinking and civic engagement capacities found within individuals from each new successive generation.

Learning Indigenous Languages (Language Revitalization)

For so many American Indian communities, traditional language usage was openly forbidden by the formalized education system – oftentimes brutally enforced through corporal punishment, while simultaneously being systematically usurped by an “English-only” focus by schools (this was particularly true during the height of the boarding school era). To remedy the growing disappearance of fluent indigenous language speakers, a renewed focus on language instruction has taken hold as an integral function of alternative, culturally-contextualized schooling. By revitalizing the usage of the traditional languages of American Indian people, the community saw a direct ability to then further sustain their culture while developing the cultural identities of the participating youth. The application of indigenous languages is commonly viewed as a direct support of a multitude of activities and avenues of study – including indigenous histories, ceremonial practices, as well as traditional customs – all viewed as integral in cultivating American Indian student achievement.

Within the realm of schooling, these revitalization efforts typically take the form of indigenous language classes, whereby students who complete coursework successfully are also able to earn credit that can be applied towards graduation. Additionally, efforts at teaching the preferred indigenous languages can also be seamlessly interwoven into daily activities - complete with interspersed signage throughout the campus indicating everyday objects and rooms within the native tongue of the community – all as a measure to reinforce the language’s primacy and its

usage by students and staff alike. In most instances, a full-fledged immersion class has been offered, and is taught either by a licensed educational professional or through a partnership between the school and a local community elder who retains fluency capabilities.

Learning Indigenous Cultural Practices

This strategy captures all efforts related to the transmission of cultural knowledge from one person to the next within the day-to-day operations of the educational program, irrespective of age or academic capacity. Within this particular approach, all relevant cultural practices have been intentionally incorporated throughout the school day (and year) as a means of sustaining the local indigenous community and their identity. What can comprise these activities are wide and varied in expression and are determined by the value ascribed to each by the local indigenous community. Drumming, singing, dancing, regalia construction, art creation, storytelling, elder interaction, demonstrations of courage or physical prowess, canoeing, hunting, horticulture, leadership development, conflict resolution, etc. – all serve as potential areas of study within this strategy. While the options for the inclusion of cultural teachings at first can seem quite immense, those topics that are chosen are done so for they were uniquely tied to the definitions of self-value as put forth by the people themselves.

In practice, these teachings typically manifest within programming as an effort that is taught to students by participating cultural carriers (usually community elders). However, there have been instances when such cultural practices are taught by licensed staff, or shared between differing generations of students as one group of youth teaches another (typically as guided by elders or staff). Another common characteristic is the intentional use of experiential learning (“learning by doing”) and kinesthetic activities (“learning through the physical engagement and

motion”) as a means of stimulating the growth of students by accessing a multiplicity of sensory stimulants.

These efforts result in a broadening of student understandings about their people, their heritage, and their own cultural identities. All the while, the students are afforded an opportunity to learn relevant information that supports their academic development – thus making the standard content areas less arbitrary and more meaningful as supporting elements to the development of their roles as future cultural carriers and leaders.

Conclusions

Throughout all of the site visits conducted for this work, the most significant takeaway ultimately relates to the continued ingenuity, perseverance, and compassion exhibited by the indigenous people living in these six urban centers. Owing to their tenacity and commitment to their indigenous heritage, as well as to their youth, a remarkable wave of innovation washed over the educational systems within these cities. For so long, the formalized schooling of American Indian students was a process that had been dictated to community without any consideration given as to *what the people valued* or to *what the people preferred*. Owing to the hubris of the public education system’s proprietors - seemingly negligent and uncaring as to the failures of their own civically-funded enterprise - the situation deteriorated to such an abysmal extent that these local indigenous communities had no choice but to act. Now, it is they, the indigenous people who are dictating how their schools will work and the methodologies by which their students will be taught. This community-governed approach to education was arrived at only after the people decided to stand-up and take action. Upon awakening, the previous manner of existence, whereby the school system was thrust upon them and into which their youth were forcibly conscripted, was permanently disavowed.

Once the pursuit of an educational endeavor of their own design was underway, these communities sought regular guidance from their own trusted leadership to ensure that their work reflected the desire of the people. When creating this reformed approach to education, their first priority was to incorporate the community's indigenous culture directly into the proceedings at every turn. The unintentional results of their efforts was the creation of a new, indigenous pedagogy that reflected the history of the community, the desire to sustain their own culture, and the unyielding commitment to support their youth to achieve academically. Through their efforts, a new way forward was shown for the rest of Indian country, a path for any who dared to potentially follow and wrest back from an intransigent and decaying structure their own fortunes.

Yet this path forward was not easy. Through trial and error, progress and setback, these communities were forced to mature as they asserted more and more influence over their children's education. Oftentimes they were met by an intransigent public school system – with whom they had no choice but to engage and tangle with until their vision – a vision created by the community for the community – was finally implemented. This evolutionary process was shared by multiple indigenous communities – which suggests that it is a necessary right-of-passage that must be endured. It also suggests a course of action that is replicable and therefore of value for further examination and application.

When considered together, this pathway forward to an indigenous variant of pedagogy presents a real opportunity towards reinventing public education as we know it. If not for the sites featured in this work, many indigenous communities would remain at a loss, desperate for some method to help their youth. Fortunately for them – and others – the answers were readily available as they came from within the deeply held traditional knowledge possessed by all indigenous people. Perhaps now it can be enacted on a far grander scale . . .

Section V – Conclusions and Recommendations

“We must let you know we love our children too well to send them so great a way . . . We allow it to be good, and we thank you for your invitation; but our customs differing from yours you will be so good as to excuse us.”

- *Canassatego, Haudenosaunee* (Cleary, 1996, p. 44)

Part I: Looking Over Our Shoulder

As was explored in Section One, the relationship between the American Indian people and the American public school systems has been one fraught with contention, controversy, and trauma. The occurrence of such a checkered past was by no means an accident. It was never in the founding vision of public schooling to endow citizenry to rise and challenge the efficacy of the status quo. It was never intended to uplift those who aspire to roles of societal leadership, or to help hold accountable those who had already obtained such status. Nor was it ever purposed with the intentions of providing anyone – especially indigenous people - the capability to obtain a prosperous life whereby the people’s own chosen culture would survive and flourish. Such efforts at empowerment and self-sustainment were antithetical to the actual designs sought by this nation’s early ruling class. Therefore, they were never part of the system’s original construct.

Rather, public education was intended to be a blunt instrument of swift pacification and assimilation, committed to the forcible implementation of a fabricated national identity upon its citizenry. After over 200 years, we know now that this preferred identity had been built upon the shifting sands of a fallacy regarding a mythological homogeneity devoid of authentic cultural diversity. Through the public schools, all youth would now become “Americanized”. No matter how brutal or how inhumane the formalized process was, this prime objective must be obtained if the nation were to survive. The only quarter offered were the humble allowances of menial skill development - just enough to allow “graduates” of American schools the ability to earn a modicum of income through their labor. In so doing, the hope was for the public to continue to support the financial fortunes of the nation’s economic scions through ongoing purchases of goods and services – all the while humbly paying their taxes, tithing to their church, and casting their ballots in accordance with the desires of the established political class.

In return for their efforts, the government pledged to continue to provide an education to each successive generation of children free of charge – so long as those children adhered to the system’s principles. Only through the successful completion of public school, as dictated by the system itself could the average person become a *good American*. Only through the successful completion of public school, as dictated by the system itself, could an average person properly retain their status as United States citizens. This is what the architects and progenitors of public education would have the American people believe. For so many, within the African American community during years of Reconstruction, as well as for those within the waves of incoming immigrants during the early 20th century, it was a deal they felt compelled to make.

If such adherences could not be sustained by the youth of these communities, if these students could not adapt to the strictures of the public educational system, then the failures would have no choice but be quickly removed - banished to the netherworlds of ignorance, isolation, destitution, and possibly crime. These rejects would be quickly discarded from the assembly line, in favor of those future workers more apt to abide by the doctrines being espoused by professional educators who stood at the head of all the rigid rows of desks each day. In this way, the successful student could progress in their development from one gradation to the next after the completion of each annual cycle - eventually graduating on into American society after only 12 short years.

For those who found themselves suddenly on the outside of this system, perhaps because of their audacity to uphold their own unique cultural values, or because they braved learning challenges and unique cognitive practices, they were merely bypassed. The hard-charging steamship-railroad-interstate-driven progress of the American Dream had zero ability to do anything but continue forward towards ever greater largess. It would sustain itself by

replenishing the ranks with only those citizens able to contribute towards fueling the system itself. Such compulsions appear to be still coursing through the veins of the country today like so much of the digital data flying about the ethereal paradise of “the cloud”, unfazed by the ever-present and persistent “achievement gap”.

Many communities remain boldly living outside the parameters of the artificial homogeneity historically championed by public schools, but who now find themselves stigmatized through repeated public reports regarding how their students remain perpetually on the perceived “losing” side of an immense academic chasm. How is it, the proprietors of the public education system ask, that the youth of these communities still fail within our schools? What can our system do to prevent them from falling behind or from dropping out entirely? Nevertheless, despite the self-awareness regarding academic disparities, very seldom do practitioners actually seek reform strategies that specifically address - or at least attempt to redefine - the very rationale of public education itself. For all intents and purposes, it appears that the original sin committed during its creation might be a source point too close to the very core of public education so as to escape its current proprietor’s very conceptions of it.

In this sense, public education has essentially assumed the form of a government-mandated mass delusion, an intellectual medium suitable for the destruction of unwanted cultures through a militant adherence to orthodoxy and the perpetual demonstration of unyielding loyalty. It has become a beast with an insatiable appetite, camouflaged by its refined professionalism and proclivity for data and order. The public school systems have been sanctioned to stalk this country’s families for its chosen prey – the youth, for the young ones are far too impressionable and ill-equipped to resist its powerful influence. In so many instances around the nation, the public education system remains sanguine in the comfort afforded by its

own self-righteousness – reinforced by its own self-derived methodologies and the flag-waving true believers that uphold them. To the republic for which it serves, it remains indivisible, as one nation, under its own preferred God, where no child would ever be *left behind*. How then, could it be possible to introduce real – if not radical – reforms to be implemented by a system that is run by membership who are its very own products? In this situation, there emerges a definite and repeated failure of imagination, a significant conceptual blindness towards what changes need to be made to ensure that authentic learning and true personal development are actually occurring. To be clear, there is a distinction to be made here between the system’s administrators and stewards - who repeatedly appear to be prohibitively unable to comprehend an educational approach beyond what generated their own credentials and professional bona fides – with that of the system’s *teachers*. For the most part, teachers have by the very nature of their profession no choice but to keep an eye out for innovation and retain a pliant capacity for experimentation. This unspoken requirement allows teachers to effectively engage the myriad of learning styles that sit before them, and that routinely change from year to year. Yet more often than not, these educational artisans fall victim in much the same manner as their pupils towards the unyielding and inflexible constructs of the antiquated system within which they practice their craft.

In the end, no matter how strenuous the efforts to coerce its own specialized brand of acculturation onto the nation’s children, the reality is that the dream of public schooling is just that – a vivid hallucination of “what ought to be” with zero resemblance to the diverse and complicated truth that is the United States of America. Yet such divergence from truth is immaterial, for the purpose remains simply to manufacture citizens with high levels of labor functionality and limited intellectual agility - all sewn up tightly within a red, white, and blue ethos that would guarantee national loyalty. For that very reason, when evaluating its efficacy

today, the public educational system of the United States has in fact been a relative *success* performing in much the same manner as it was intended and yielding the stultified results commensurate with the expectations of its original architects.

Benito Mussolini repeatedly argued that for fascism to manifest in full, all considerations - including those of the individual or unique groups - must be jettisoned in favor of the needs and concepts of the state, thus making fascism what Mussolini interpreted as the new de facto religion by which all citizens of the state must abide by in totality. If Mussolini's concept of fascism was to be the religion of Central Europe during the mid-20th Century, then the public education system - as it was designed - could easily be considered the original cult of the United States. This systemic, American monster's very survival was predicated upon universal conformity and groupthink - as achieved through the forced assimilation of both mind and spirit of its students. This was never more clearly expressed than during the relationship of the American Indian people with this very institution. Viewing it within the context of being cult-like in its functionality, it is with no small amount of irony that one must remember the origins of public schools within the United States. They began at the behest of a struggling, desperate refugee population fearful for their own survival - as well as the sustainment of their own piety - within the chaos of a perceived untamed wilderness. Before the altars of numerous New England villages, upon lands freshly wrested from an incredulous indigenous population, an idea was born to educate the youth in the ways of the faithful, and to redefine their "new world" in a manner that validated such beliefs. With an indefatigable zealotry, the proprietors of public education would see their progeny spread west with frightful speed, fully encompassing all of the lands to be occupied by their new and growing nation as well as all of the people living therein. Today's classrooms are their direct legacy.

We must also remember that from the earliest days, the federal government's plan for "co-existing" with American Indians was either to exterminate us outright or else to forcibly relocate and assimilate our ancestors directly into the dominant U.S. culture. This was to be accomplished in order to obtain the one true American objective – the unfettered procurement of our land. The militant and violent insurgency occurring throughout Indian Country during that time was a result of American incursions and annexation of indigenous land holdings. After years of rolling warfare throughout the American frontier (what the United States would refer to as the "Indian Wars" but what the indigenous people refer to as our fight for survival) a deep desire to pacify the Native American people *once and for all* permeated the halls of Washington D.C. The brutality of these engagements eventually inspired the U.S. government to let loose the proprietors of assimilation as a means of supporting - and eventually relieving - the military campaigns out west. The chosen vehicle to accomplish this task, after warfare had annihilated all who could resist through arms, would be the schools and churches. The targets of these assimilative practices, the prey for this new beast, were the most impressionable and vulnerable population to be found – indigenous youth.

Yet even before the bloody conflicts of the 18th century came to their malicious conclusion with the massacre at Wounded Knee and before the first bricks were laid building the many boarding schools of the west, the dominant culture had made sure to philosophically justify the subjugation of indigenous people through their own legal opinions. Courtesy of the Marshall Trilogy of Supreme Court rulings during the 1820's, our ancestors were deemed as nothing more than "wards of the state" – wayward orphans in need of the continual guidance and protection as rendered only by the federal government. After the enactments of the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and the Dawes Act roughly forty years later, a growing belief of many elected officials was

that the United States possessed an obligation to incorporate American Indians into the greater American diaspora for their own good while enabling the nation to acquire more indigenous lands as it did so. More importantly, the federal government sought to prevent us from disrupting the successful westward expansion of white settlement as could be effected through armed resistance. By pulling us into their society, the United States leadership believed that the will to fight would wane and eventually cease to exist. Yet to effect this assimilation, our own culture would have to be deconstructed first – even if doing so was against the will of the American Indian people.

It cannot be over-emphasized that these developments were by far *the most significant public determinants* regarding American Indian people thus far. These court cases and federal laws would go on to directly influence formalized education deep into the 21st century. In its purest distillation, the American Indian people were forbidden from being indigenous, for if it were allowed the American Indian people would continue to represent a material threat to American growth, as well as contradicting the indoctrination messaging being taught within the nation's classrooms. It had become the solemn duty of the public education system to destroy indigenous culture and supplant it with one officially sanctioned by U.S. society. In essence, it would be the public schools who were tasked with enforcing the illegality of being an Indian.

Far too often this salient point has become lost through the mists of time, or disguised under the misguided applications of materialism and consumer development currently occurring within the framework of a capitalist society. For our people, it was never a question about how large a house we might own or how many cars we might possess. Employment was never a means to allow our community to “keep up with the Joneses” – no matter how insistent contrary assertions were made by proprietors of the educational system or by their gaggle of lackey

reformers. For us, the sustainment of our culture was paramount, the very key to our survival. Without our culture, our traditions, our ceremonies, our languages, our own ways, we would cease to be. Public schools (in particular boarding schools) therefore represented a very real and very serious existential threat.

For those who could resist, they would. Their struggle took the form of secretly meeting with other indigenous students, quietly speaking their languages and reminding each other through stories the ceremonies and cultural practices that made them who they were. Together, their efforts kept our culture alive – like a huddle of people protecting a faint, flickering candle from an immense wind. For those that could not endure, escape was their preferred option, often times breaking free from their schools and walking hundreds of miles alone just to return to their homes, their families, and their culture. Through it all, the spirit of the people *refused* to be broken – in spite of the fierce and often times brutal recriminations brought down upon these American Indian youth. Yet due to their courageous resistance, the knowledge of indigenous language and culture survived and was passed down to future generations. In the end, the efforts at forced conformity and indoctrination of this cult-like system failed to claim the minds of all people, and as a result, our ways survived.

By the 1920's, it became apparent that the forced assimilative practices of the boarding schools were failing to produce the desired results sought by government officials (i.e. the complete eradication of indigenous cultures in North America). Mainstream public schools in surrounding municipalities were then turned to as the next phase for acculturating American Indian youth. It was at this point where indigenous communities began transitioning into the formalized school districts still present to this day. Here, as before, no considerations were ever given regarding our unique cultural status or our people's desire to preserve it, despite many

repeated public calls (from both indigenous and non-indigenous voices alike) to do so. *The Merriam Report* of 1928 was one such call. Roughly forty years later, the issuance of the report *Indian Education: A National Tragedy - A National Challenge* was yet another. Twenty years after that came another call - *Indians At Risk: An Educational Strategy for Action* – a federal report echoing the very same sentiments as its predecessors. Despite these highly publicized and widely reviewed national reports, minimal allowances and equally slight funding allocations were made for any type of educational offering that would directly support our indigenous cultural identities. Each time, after a brief period of consideration and the inclusion of some reforms (such as the creation of Title VII funding), the system would simply reassert itself as it was originally intended to perform and proceed to steamroll forward.

As a result, our students continued to be enrolled into a public education model that had exemplified the values of an industrialized, capitalist society desperate to achieve homogeneity. All along the way until the present day, indigenous youth, their non-indigenous peers, and students who are recent immigrants are all continually force fed into an academic machine through compulsory attendance laws. Utilizing its dedicated application of assembly line educational practices designed to produce “citizen widgets”, the majority of the final product was to be capable of little more than holding down menial, low-skill jobs upon graduation. Our boys were taught rudimentary skills within the industrial arts, and our girls were schooled only in the ways of home economics and child rearing. Such a narrow focus reflected the limited nature to which educators viewed the prospective futures for American Indian youth. These methods would continue on without disruption for the next forty years.

Not until the political upheavals of the late 1960’s, where the civil rights movement and identity politics surged to the forefront of American consciousness, is when the American Indian

community began to galvanize for change. For our people, the work of Vine Delora, Jr., Richard Oakes, John Trudell, and the founders of the American Indian Movement all brought forth a new awakening that called upon the need to practice and teach our culture in more overt ways – particularly if it were to survive for future generations. As detailed within Judy Davis’ 2013 work, *Survival Schools*, by the early 1970’s the American Indian people began to assert emphasis on the practices and traditions of our people over the insistence of an industrialized educational system that had thus far failed to provide a stable life or hopeful future for our people. (Davis, 2013) It was at this moment in time when many urban American Indian populations decided to rise up on behalf of their youth and fight for something better from their public schools.

Part II: The Return of the Indigenous Resistance

By the close of the last century, within these new small community-controlled schools the American Indian culture became the fulcrum upon which the development of our youth would hinge. Yet despite these modest successes occurring in rather isolated pockets, the majority of our youth remain ensnared within the machinery of American public schools. Their academic achievements continue to wilt under the stifling pressures of conformity and through the continued denial of the life-giving traditions and indigenous customs by so many public school districts. For so many of our students, academic success still remains a near impossible realization as they find themselves being ground up between the gears of a system that continually fails to truly and authentically embrace the cultural distinctions existing among its students.

Now as the 21st century is well underway, a host of new and progressive educational approaches have begun to surface in several different locations and have been applied directly towards improving American Indian education - many of which were pioneered within the sites

that were examined within this work in Albuquerque, Denver, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Portland, and Seattle. Within these urban centers, the local American Indian communities have taken it upon themselves to create a new educational model, suited to their own desires and culturally contextualized. The communities have taken it upon themselves to operate schools for American Indian students that possess a strong hybrid of American Indian culture and traditional pursuits within standard academic content areas. These alternative programs stand as powerful testimony to the efficacy and the growth potential of a new vanguard of an *Indigenous Pedagogy*.

Unfortunately, the programs within these cities remain the exception and not the rule. Beyond the supportive school districts within the examples shared within this work, widespread promotion, expansion, and replication have yet to germinate much further than the seven programs operating within these six cities. Funding remains a perennial challenge – rationed out even by the more supportive districts – to where operating budgets are perpetually stretched to the breaking point. When considering what is occurring within other urban centers across the country, and more significantly, when including the strikingly similar needs of additional cultural groups beyond that of the American Indian people who also find themselves on the wrong side of the achievement gap, the reasoning for such a lack of material support by the established public education system begins to take on a different connotation altogether.

As current academic data from the urban centers examined in this work indicate, the youth of our people continue to struggle mightily to achieve within the structure of this current educational system. For so many, diplomas are never obtained as they instead prefer to just exit early. Without a secondary educational credential, the prospects for indigenous young adults becomes rather bleak – oftentimes causing many to populate the roles of government assistance

programs just to survive. In today's world, as American Indian students reach adulthood, many cannot help but to escape from public schools only to live lives that resemble the very "wards of the state" designation bestowed upon our people by Chief Justice John Marshall nearly 200 years ago. Yet despite its recurring failings, the current public education system remains incredibly rigid and astonishingly resistant to change – still slavishly adhering to its own industrialized design and sense of self-import. *Why?*

Despite all of the innovations being engineered by indigenous communities on behalf of their own students and in the light of amazing advancements in modern pedagogy, the data continues to clearly illustrate how public schools of this country continue to fail the majority of American Indian students. In addition, the data also suggests the system is failing students from almost *all* communities of color. How can this problem still persist if cultural communities and teachers continue to explore new and alternative methodologies by which to teach? Only when one once again considers what America's education system was originally designed to do by its architects that an answer to these questions emerges. It can very well be argued that this nation's public schools *continue* to perform exactly as they were intended to when crafted over two centuries ago – all at the insistence and direction of the system's administrators and stewards.

At the dawn of the 20th century, the provision of a proper education for our people that also included our culture supported by a full complement of resources was believed to be a dangerous enterprise. To do so would be tantamount to reinvigorating designated enemy combatants of the United States and would put American lives in jeopardy. As far as the United States was concerned, such measures would invariably reconstitute an indigenous resistance and once reformed would have to yet again be contended with by the military – but perhaps now on more equal footing. This was simply never in the plans for this republic during its infancy, whose

citizens found themselves squatting on foreign land and feigning ownership of a continent that was not theirs. Through the denial of such services, the federal government ensured that the subjugation of the American Indian people could be effected.

Additionally, as the most powerful ruling colonial power on the North American continent, the United States could not afford to allow any credence to the culture of the indigenous people or acknowledgement of their way of life as a valid method of existence lest the Americans come to grips with their continued violation of international treaties, genocidal practices, and lust for the illegal acquisition of more tribal lands. The first nations of this continent would have to be invalidated and eliminated as a contestable force (commonly referred to today as the practice of “invisiblizing”) if the United States were to retain its altruism and self-professed “exceptionalism” – key characteristics integral to further profligate the nation’s own fabricated identity in her schools.

Here now today, the evidence continues to pour in each year demonstrating how the public education system simply does not work for all students – and in particular for American Indian youth. Instead of diversifying their approaches and further supporting differentiated delivery models that offer culturally contextualized programming, so many administrators within this system continue to insist upon the preeminence of their own authority and their own efficacy as agents of reform – *despite the data*. Such visible hubris is at once infuriating to contend with but also alarming when considering what the possible outcomes would be if fox is allowed to investigate the henhouse for the purposes of making reform recommendations.

For our community, such insistence by the system in favor of itself makes us wonder what its true motivations are. From our perspective, it is hard to see much difference from what has come before and what is in effect today. The perpetuation of a seemingly unchanged public

education system to this late date suggests that perhaps fears regarding cultural empowerment and organized resistance to the status quo might still remain. As we tend to our children and grandchildren, we are no longer interested in feeding them into a machine that will kill their culture, indoctrinate them with falsehoods, and merely produce new wards of the state. With the seemingly intractable recalcitrance in today's world to invest and empower community-based, culturally-contextualized education as determined by the American Indian people themselves, it remains increasingly more difficult to differentiate between the past and the present. The indigenous communities within the urban centers examined in this work however, proceeded to demand something different. Then, they acted.

Part III: A Community-Governed Approach

Through the course of conducting this work, details regarding an evolutionary pattern centered on civic engagement - as experienced by urban American Indian communities - was clearly evidenced. So too was the presence of a unique indigenous pedagogy that had been constructed and implemented by the community in order to support its own students. In its purest essence, these developments reflected the capability of the indigenous people living within these urban centers to rise up and demand greater control over the educational services provided to their youth. Short of that, they were fully prepared to take matters into their own hands and create their own schools – to which many did and now through which these local school districts partner. In so doing, these communities brought to light a perpetuated fallacy that permeates public education as well as uncovered an enduring truth. Their stories and actions represent two sides of this same coin that now point to a pathway forward for many others to follow.

First, the fallacy must be called out. What has long been touted as a fundamental precept of the American public education system is the idea of “local control” - whereby resident

populations have the power to dictate how their schools operate. This theoretical democratization of the system is supposed to be reinforced and supported by local districts and school boards, empowered by the people's ability to leverage the power of their ongoing investment of tax dollars, ballots cast for school board members, and the periodic support of local levies. What many within the American Indian populations living within urban centers will tell you is that this precept is more aspirational than real, if not an outright canard. From their experiences, the public school system was slow to respond to their concerns about how their students were not achieving success. When these local districts and school boards did respond, their suggested course of action was often at odds with the desires of the community, and typically devoid of the inclusion of indigenous culture.

An example of this dynamic involves the curious relationship between the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and the Anahuacalmecac University Preparatory School based in East Los Angeles (the alternative education site included within this work). LAUSD does in fact have in operation its own Indian Education program financed by federal Title VII dollars. However, the LAUSD Indian Education program will only serve those students who have demonstrable credentials establishing that they are in fact enrolled in a U.S. federally recognized tribe. Owing to the fact that many people within the indigenous community of Los Angeles have descendants and lineage lines that originate outside of the modern day political boundaries of the United States or have intermarried with members from differing tribes – thus diluting their tribal blood quantum standards - it would necessarily preclude huge portions of indigenous students from being able to access services offered by the LAUSD Indian Education program. It would also preclude LAUSD from accessing additional resources on behalf of a suddenly growing base of indigenous students living within their district.

In the face of these concerns, the surrounding indigenous community came together to support the creation of Anahuacalmecac, insisting that a culturally-contextualized approach to education was what was sorely needed for Los Angeles' indigenous students – a program administered by and for the local indigenous community in partnership with the public school district. For a myriad of reasons – some explicable and some not – LAUSD not only refused authorization of Anahuacalmecac's charter, the district outright challenged the creation of the school. School founders were forced to travel all the way to Sacramento, California to seek (and successfully acquire) a charter authorization through the California State Department of Education.

With so many more students unable to access additional supports as offered by the LAUSD Indian Education department, it would stand to reason that such arrangement would only further contribute to the already poor academic data being yielded by this school district. In this context, it is surprising that the LAUSD Indian Education program – who works with many of the same community members that the charter school would provide services to - did not support the effort to sponsor a charter for Anahuacalmecac University Preparatory School in a manner strong enough to get it approved by the LAUSD School Board. Then again, as an entrenched extension of the very same system that the local indigenous population was seeking a reprieve from, perhaps it was yet another example of the system insisting upon itself to solve its own failures. Where in this process is the precept of “local control”? This example is only one story within the context of several hundred other familiar stories where the pleas and demands of a local community simply fell on deaf ears of the public school district.

Part of the reason for such disconnects as the example that seemingly invalidates the tenet of “local control” harkens back to the arguments made earlier – namely that the leadership and

principle administrators of public education are the very products of their own system and therefore are unwilling or unable to conceive of any form of alternative approaches. As such these people simply cannot imagine a world where such culturally-contextualized, alternative methodologies would need to be applied. Symptomatic of such myopia, many community members who have encountered such resistance share the common experience of proprietors of the system essentially invalidating “local control” applications through a habitual assertion of their own professional credentials and expertise. These assertions are then applied as the determinative factor when deciding how the system will respond to the demands for reform made by community members.

Time and again, reports from disgruntled parents and community leaders echo the familiar charge that the administrators of their local schools and district had repeatedly disavowed their concerns or their plans for culturally-contextualized alternative programming because the members of the public did not possess the professional bona fides in the arena of education – either through credentialing, experience, or training - to legitimize any such suggestions. For the many indigenous leaders who encountered this particular brand of resistance, it was an especially frustrating experience – one parent who shared their story during the construction of this work said that they had been made to feel ashamed and belittled before the school district, as though they were not smart enough about schooling to make any worthwhile criticisms or suggestions. All too often it appears that the system prefers to insist upon its own primacy over the concerns of the general public, and in the process subvert the supposedly inborn failsafe known as “local control”.

Had the indigenous communities whose efforts were examined within this work given up at the first point of conflict, it would most likely have resulted in the public education system

merely redoubling their own efforts and steamrolling forward without concern to the objections or ideas being raised by our people. Looking at the data presented in Section II, it does not suggest that the proprietors of the public education system have cornered the market on innovation or have installed viable solutions that are enabling the success of American Indian students.

This is the departure point where the other side of this coin was revealed – an enduring truth worth noting. These indigenous communities did not give up. They persisted. When their efforts were ignored or rejected by the system, they went on to create their own programs, even providing academic services outside within a city park where students and families both participated willingly. Through the determination and the sheer force of will exhibited by these urban American Indian populations, they were eventually able to start implementing fundamental changes to the dynamic within their home school districts. With or without support by the local school districts, these communities began operating their own supportive programs to help their youth. What they immediately identified and utilized was the strength and tenets of their own indigenous culture. They engaged other community leaders and elders to help deploy their shared vision, and collectively rallied around their students. After time, some local school districts came around to see the value of their work and became amenable to partnering in an effort to collaborate towards a goal that both parties shared.

In this sense, the indigenous communities featured within this work actually illustrated that “local control” can in fact be a reality if it is willing to be struggled over and fought for. It will only manifest if the community insists upon exerting that control and then actually pursues such measures in their own right - irrespective of official acknowledgement or consent from the public education system. Within the context of the urban sites examined here, the system never

deferred to a prior acceptance that they would have to submit to the direction of the tax payers within their districts, nor did they provide guidance as to how the local population could exercise their influence over the system. Only after continuous, direct action was taken by the people to create the very change they sought did local districts and school boards eventually come around. These particular urban American Indian communities saw what needed to be done, and then went forward and did it. Within their stories presented here lies powerful examples as to how other communities – both native and non-Native alike – can take back their authority to help their children learn, grow, and succeed.

Part IV: Looking Forward, Recommendations, Next Steps

Life continues to move forward unabated. New students from the local indigenous communities across the country continue to line up each year, wearing tiny backpacks, shiny new shoes, and large smiles - all eager to begin their journey within America's public education system. As nervous parents surrender their progeny to the professional practitioners standing outside of brick buildings drenched in an early morning autumn sun awaiting their arrival, their minds are beset with the questions that all parents feel during such moments. *What will my child's time in school be like? How will my culture and family beliefs be received or even included within the classrooms that my little ones will sit in and learn? Will my children learn and grow in a manner that sustains our community and honors the ways of our elders? Or will their journey mirror that which was endured by myself and so many of our elders and ancestors? Will my little ones have to also traverse a rocky path strewn with hardship, alienation, and cultural belittlement as a result of an unrelenting push for assimilation within the dominant culture? If trouble should arise, how receptive will this public school be towards meeting the needs of my child, or even listen to them if they begin to struggle? Just how much will the*

administration of these schools really work me as a parent, or with our community leaders if we feel compelled to approach them with concerns about the system not meeting the needs of our children?

Irrespective of how these questions might be answered – as they will assuredly be answered differently from one state to another, from one district to another – today’s urban indigenous communities in fact remain in a much more favorable position to implement reform than at any other time in history. One of the principle reasons this is true is due to the fact that they are in possession of a very powerful tool, an incredible gift that at first blanch would appear anything but. This leads to the first of five recommendations by this work, the call for urban American Indian populations to access and fully utilize this powerful tool that lies at their disposal. Once they do, they will have reset the current dynamic by placing themselves into a leadership role.

One of the most significant products of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (NCLB) was the perpetual collection and analyzation of disaggregated data – for the first time detailing the academic achievements of specific cultural groups within the United States public education system. This data collection and analyzation process has since become systematized by all public school districts, with each year new numbers being released to measure the overall efficacy of the work being done. To this end, the data relating to American Indian students (as well as students from nearly all communities of color) have been unquestionably abhorrent. Previous data during the close of the 20th century had strongly indicated that American Indian students had fallen further behind their white counterparts. The NCLB data would go on to confirm this trend - and it also confirmed that very little had changed over the years despite the various public calls, federal reports, and internal attempts at systemic reforms. Since the disclosure of this evidence

these chronic disparities have been labeled as the “achievement gap” (or more recently as the “opportunity gap”). Each successive year, the annual data disclosures since NCLB’s passage (as also included in Section II of this work) continue to illustrate the failings of the public school system towards educating and empowering indigenous youth. This recurring data is, in fact, a gift for the American Indian people.

So long as these numbers remain dour, the system has no ability to assert its authority or “expertise” over the general community. Each year that this data reflects the failures of the system, the community retains an authentic right to assail the public education system and demand something different. As long as the achievement gap persists, America’s public schools have abdicated their role as leaders. Not unlike the small toddler who has spilled their milk over the kitchen table yet again, this child must not be taken seriously if they forcibly demand to be allowed to “fix” the issue themselves by lamely trying to push the liquid back into the overturned glass with their hands and then proceed to spill it all over again. Instead, America’s public schools will have to challenge their own calcified hubris and reorient themselves to a more subservient role of *supporter* – a supporter of innovation, a supporter of experimentation, a supporter of alternative approaches, and most importantly, a supporter of community-governed initiatives rooted within that community’s very own culture. Unless the data suggests different, the school system is in no position to argue that it is they – and they alone - who are best equipped to put the milk back into the glass.

In this sense, the abhorrent data points that are churned out by school districts across this country year after year can be used by urban indigenous communities as a form of talisman, a defensive shield protecting them from the ongoing subjugation of an unrelenting system - providing enough defilade to empower these communities to continue on pursuing alternative

methodologies based on their culture. Additionally, this talisman can be wielded directly against their local public schools as a weapon to hold them accountable for chronic shortcomings and poor performance. If the public education system has the temerity to once again insist upon itself as the only and best option to remedy the very problem that they are responsible for creating (which is their longstanding historical pattern of behavior), these indigenous communities will have no choice but to wield this talisman again and again against the schools, cutting through such delusional assertions and demanding that the community's preferred methodologies are implemented and reinforced. Although quite harsh to contend with upon first site, the dissemination of performance data is in all reality an immeasurable gift for urban American Indian people. The recommendation is twofold: this data must be made as easily accessible as possible for all people, and American Indian communities across the nation must procure and analyze this data every year so that they will remain well informed. Doing so will assuredly better equip them with the truth regarding the actually effectiveness of their public schools and give them stronger footing upon which they can reassert their role as the real leaders of the system.

Once this data is utilized, indigenous communities will find that there already is a body of work operating in the field today to which they can turn for inspiration or replication. Hence another of the central purposes of this work – to spread the word about what is in fact possible and how other people can begin to build their own alternative programming that is fully contextualized within indigenous culture. Perhaps by showcasing the work being done at the seven sites featured here, more urban indigenous communities will come out to make similar demands for reform – equipped with data and a variety of examples of working alternative models from which they could adopt.

This leads to the second recommendation. It is imperative to initiate or possibly accelerate the development of additional alternative educational models predicated on indigenous culture – but to do so with commensurate resources required to accomplish this task. What is abundantly clear, is the fact that these alternative methodologies need to be supported with far greater resources in order to broaden their work and deepen their positive impact on the students of the urban American Indian population. Owing to the historic and perpetual poor performance by the public schools with regards to the American Indian community, their students have been essentially voting with their feet regarding the efficacy of the district’s efforts by walking out en masse. If it were not for these community-governed alternative programs, many would just keep walking.

In this sense, increasing investments by the district into these alternative programs would actually serve to protect established revenue streams by sustaining the per pupil income the district would earn by reducing the number of annual drop-outs. Since these programs are working in concert with their home districts, there is a natural fit for these school districts to allocate additional or supplemental resources to further advance the work being pursued at these sites. By investing additional monies into these programs the district would in essence be working to shore up its own overall performance and utilization rates by the general public to whom they serve, and in partnership with these alternative programs, work towards keeping more American Indian youth in school and achieving academically until graduation.

Additionally, there is an acute need for wider recognition and financial support for these existing alternative programs as offered by the philanthropic community. Too often, these alternative sites are limited by scant resources as provided through their relationships with local school district or through their charter. Typically, the local school district’s resource allocations

do not go beyond mandated payments for average daily membership, compensatory education dollars, and federal Title I and Title VII funding. Seldom do these financial resources meet the needs of the American Indian students who have chosen to enroll at these alternative sites. What has now become common practice for these programs is to do more with less on behalf of their students - stretching all of their programmatic dollars to their fullest potential. Compensation packages, curriculum renewal, professional development – all functions that must be considered to sustain the overall operations for these alternative sites – become increasingly difficult to fulfill as a result of the financial constraints placed on these sites. For those alternative programs who are adjoined to an indigenous non-profit, the non-profit experiences increased challenges towards procuring philanthropic support for day-to-day school operations as many in the philanthropic community prefer to fund outside of school activities rather than what they feel is a supplanting of government dollars already dedicated for daily operations.

Further complicating the situation, the staff of these sites are typically stretched to the breaking point administering to the needs of their schools on shoestring budgets. This makes coordinated and ongoing fundraising efforts an additional burden that many struggle to provide for. Yet another factor pertains to the fact that many of these alternative programs are under contract or are authorized by their home school district. During such arrangements, when the philanthropic community does engage with funding opportunities for educational purposes the work being pursued within the indigenous communities is seldom mentioned. Instead it is typically overshadowed by larger, district-preferred or district-led projects. When educational pursuits specific to American Indian students are explored by members of the philanthropic community, these discussions almost exclusively revolve around the Title VII funded Indian Education Departments operating within each district (as discussed earlier, these departments are

infrequently the drivers of innovative or alternative methodologies for indigenous youth).

Philanthropic and public investments need to be broadened purposefully to also include community-based alternative education sites so that they too have a fair shot at procuring such additional funding.

A third recommendation pertains to enacting meaningful reforms to existing educational policies - or the creation of new policies - in an effort to provide assistance to these alternative programs. The purpose behind such reforms (or new policies) would be the deliberate deepening of the positive impact that these alternative, community-governed programs are having on urban American Indian communities as well as to allow for greater replication by those indigenous communities still in need of such innovations. Examples include greater allowances for lateral pathways to teacher licensure, an increase in the use of innovative program waivers to allow for both fast-tracking teaching licensures, or to allow non-licensed instructors to teach in tandem with licensed instructors. This would dramatically increase the amount of available the culture carriers of the local American Indian community – such as community elders - who could then enter into classrooms to teach language and other culturally-contextualized subjects unique to indigenous peoples. Additionally, for those school districts who have yet to explore contracted services with local indigenous non-profits, (replicating the work being pursued by both Portland Public Schools and Minneapolis Public Schools) they might be engendered with additional policy support at the local level.

Another important policy change consideration involves how indigenous students are identified. Following the lead of the recent work accomplished by Seattle Public Schools, a broadening of criteria defining how indigenous students are to be identified by school personnel could lead to better services and increased resources for the local district. By disavowing a strict

identifier along the lines of tribal membership or blood quantum (the latter generally accepted by most indigenous people as a foreign tool of genocide), districts should also consider descendancy and lineage characteristics as well. By broadening the definitions in this way, the district will be able to provide greater access to services for all indigenous students present within their boundaries as well as to procure additional resources (such as federal dollars to provide these services to their now larger American Indian student population).

The fourth recommendation calls for ongoing training and cross-community interaction between the various urban indigenous populations to empower each to learn from one another in regarding how they can engage with their public school district, assert local control, and develop their own alternative academic programming. As discussed Section IV of this work, within each of the sites that were visited was evidence of a similar evolutionary journey that each community underwent as they sought to address the academic disparities affecting their youth. Roughly four phases of evolution could be detected with each producing their own graduated sophistication of community-governed programming.

Through an ongoing series of professional development opportunities as well as through regular convenings of the leadership and education specialists within the various urban indigenous communities, an ongoing venue for the sharing of best practices as it relates to the unique space of community-governed alternative education should be created. Additionally, through this same forum, an ongoing examination of new and innovative strategies regarding civic engagement can be shared - potentially accelerating the evolutionary processes within each community as they gain new skills around community organizing and advocacy. Finally, the construction of a larger community centered on alternative indigenous education would most

certainly be of value with regards to the establishment of comradery and the sustainment of morale.

The fifth and final recommendation is to explore further the beginning precepts of the Indigenous Pedagogy that was evidenced at the sites examined within this work. What appears to have real merit and support by the people who are utilizing them, this indigenous pedagogy is a uniquely indigenous approach to formalized schooling that has successfully merged the tenets of the mainstream public school system (modern pedagogy, data-driven decision making, and student-centered curriculum) with that of traditional practices of the American Indian people. This approach, described in the previous section as *The Seven Learnings*, spoke of actual strategies used by urban American Indian people to teach their youth the ways of their culture *and* to instruct them in the standard content areas needed to successfully navigate the dominant culture. What makes these strategies successful is that they were created (in multiple locations separated by wide geographic distances) through the incorporation of the community's own belief systems as espoused by local leaders, parents, and elders. In this way, The Seven Learnings reflect the product of many community discussions around pedagogy and learning, the intent of many community convenings centered on inculcating culture within the classroom, and the spirit of many community gatherings to create ways in which their youth would feel supported and excited by learning. Owing to such authentic and ongoing interactions with their own respected leaders, the strategies that were generated (and inexplicably replicated in one way or another in several locations) suggest a powerful truth and honest effectiveness within each of these strategies. That being said, the further use and widespread dissemination of these approaches could potentially have a powerful and positive effect throughout Indian Country. At the very least, further study and conversations are warranted by all key stakeholders (leadership

from the indigenous community, policy makers, professional educators, and members of the philanthropic community) - along with additional applications of this Indigenous Pedagogy.

In the final analysis, let this work be the latest addition to these historical community discussions. Let us all continue to critically assess the impact and nature of America's public education system and ensure that local control is in fact an actual reality. Let us fully support those alternative programs already in service that are so valued by the people who created and operate them so that they can continue on and grow in size and impact. Let this work serve as a reference as to how local urban American Indian communities can self-start an evolutionary process whereby their actions, their desires, and their chosen approaches can serve as the catalyst to create alternative methodologies and alternative schools on their own for their own. Let details of common educational strategies employed by these communities serve as topics for additional examinations and refinements to further define just what an Indigenous Pedagogy is and how it can function. Let us all keep endeavoring to explore and implement the ways in which we choose to educate our young and sustain our culture as indigenous people – as our teachers and students keep diligently working towards creating a future unencumbered by the mistakes of the past. Perhaps by working together, we will be able to truly reinvent the public education system to serve as an authentic mechanism to uphold democratic principles as arrived at by a multitude of diverse yet human cultures, honestly endorsed, supported through free will, and held accountable through intellectual appraisal.

With that, this work has come to its conclusion. Much like the ancestral fisherman who has taken some time to gently examine a fish that they had pulled into their canoe, it is now time

to return it back to where it belongs. And so, with a soft hand, it is placed back into the water, and then quickly swims away. . .

Section VI – Sources

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