

**Culturally Responsive/Relevant Professional Development: Impacts on Pre-service  
and In-service Educator Perceptions and Practice**

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Shawna Campbell-Daniels

Approved by:

Major Professor: Vanessa Anthony-Stevens, Ph.D.

Committee Members: Anne L. Kern, Ph.D.; Victor Begay, Ph.D.; Yolanda Bisbee, Ed.D.

Department Administrator: Raymond Dixon, Ph.D.

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## Abstract

In this dissertation, I explore how educators who experience culturally relevant/responsive professional development geared toward Indigenous education perceive the benefits to their identity as an educator, to their students, and to their profession. Informed by Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) (Brayboy, 2005) and Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model (TIPM) (Pewewardy, 2018) I examine stages for developing critical consciousness in Indigenous education using participant interviews, environmental observations, and document reviews. Findings reveal three main themes about the process of learning needed to *desettle* and *transform* educators serving Indigenous youth. Themes include the *necessary establishment of community connections, essential understandings of place, and holistic and ongoing professional development opportunities*. Participants went through a process of generative learning that led to disruptions in their preconceptions, stereotypes, prejudices, and assumptions about Indigenous peoples and experiences. Implications highlight the need for specialized professional development for educators of Indigenous youth and offer *transformational desettling* as a critical element of educator growth. Transformation occurs as educators become more conscious through a scaffolded approach to critical thinking with the goal of actualizing decolonial education through individual educator commitment and a collective commitment towards sustained practices.

## Acknowledgements

My journey through the Western education system has been long and tumultuous, yet emancipatory. When I began my doctoral work as part of a small cohort seeking to obtain an Indigenous research certification, the Indigenous-centered course offerings opened a new world for me in terms of what education could and should be, and called attention to the damage-centered, hegemonic system of Western schooling; a space where I felt invisible and underrepresented my whole life. Emancipatory knowing has led me to this space and time, and I am forever grateful that I have had the opportunity to share this journey with my husband and children, friends, and colleagues. They have all been doing this work alongside me, and we have learned how to be agents of change together.

To my schitsu'umsh family past, present and future, this work is in service to you, and I am so thankful and proud to be schitsu'umsh. I hope that this work honors and supports the needs of community and upholds the values of 'ats' qhnt' wesh (stewardship), t'u'lschint (membership), hnshat'qn (guardianship), snmiypnqwiln (scholarship), and chsnpa'silgwesn (spirituality). This work is one way to strengthen the educational services to our people; however, the next critical step is to secure more Indigenous teachers and administrators so that our children see themselves and their community in the classroom and within education.

Dr. Vanessa Anthony-Stevens, you have been part of this work nearly from the beginning, and your friendship, allyship and mentorship through this work has been transformational on so many levels; I am so thankful that you and your family came to this place and extended your circle of relatives. Dr. Anne Kern, I continue to be blessed

by your friendship, your encouragement, your unwavering honesty, and the work you do with and for Indigenous communities. Dr. Yolanda Bisbee, the work that you do around the state of Idaho, for your tribe, and on behalf of the University of Idaho is inspiring. Every time I have had the opportunity to work with you, I am reminded how important it is to continue working towards equitable education for our Indigenous youth, and that progress is happening and Indigenous leaders like you are fighting the good fight for all of us. Dr. Victor Begay, since the day I met you, I knew that north Idaho would be a better place. Your commitment to relationships, community, and strengthening identity bridges gaps in students' critical consciousness. Your guidance in this process has been challenging, enlightening, and greatly appreciated, and I have learned a lot from you. To all those who have been a part of this work, Dr. Chris Meyer, the six participants in this study, the school districts, my family—thank you for your time, your support, and the work you do to serve the schitsu'umsh children and families.

## **Dedication**

To family, my land, my people, my place: this work is in honor and service to you.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Dedication.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures.....	ix
Chapter 1: Origin Story.....	1
Background.....	1
Research Questions.....	12
Study Goals & Contributions to the Field.....	14
Dissertation Overview.....	17
Definitions of Terms.....	20
Chapter 2: The Struggle for Culturally Responsive Teaching/Teachers.....	22
Situating the Problem in Indian Education: A Literature Review.....	22
Lack of Positive Outcomes in Indian Education.....	24
The Role of Professional Development and Educators.....	25
Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy as a Framework.....	27
Both/And Approach to Indian Education: The Possibilities.....	29
Promising Practices in Preparing Teachers for CSRP.....	32
Towards Decolonial and Settler-Colonial Consciousness.....	34

Unpacking Critical Consciousness .....	36
Theoretical Approach.....	38
Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model (TIPM) .....	41
Chapter 3: Methodology .....	43
Critical Narrative Inquiry .....	44
A Story of Tribal Nation-Building Through Education.....	46
Study Context.....	49
Participant Selection .....	53
Interviews.....	56
Interview Sequence .....	57
Environmental Observations.....	58
Document Reviews .....	60
Data Analysis .....	61
Validity and Reliability.....	62
Partner Institution and Participant Confidentiality and Consent .....	63
Chapter 4: Findings.....	64
Role of Educator Background in CR Understandings .....	66
Key Commonalities .....	69
Pre-Service Perceptions. ....	71
Journey That Led to This Community. ....	72
Unpacking Themes .....	74

Necessary Establishment of Community Connections .....	77
Essential Understandings of Place (Place Consciousness) .....	85
Holistic and Ongoing Professional Development.....	89
Transformational Desettling .....	96
Assessment of Observations and Artifacts .....	98
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	103
Theory of Change: A Local Perspective .....	107
Implications.....	110
Limitations .....	112
Future Research Opportunities .....	113
References.....	114
APPENDIX A: TEACHER RECRUITMENT LETTER .....	127
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	128
APPENDIX C: ENVIRONMENTAL OBSERVATION PROTOCOL.....	131
APPENDIX D: DOCUMENT REVIEW PROTOCOL .....	132
APPENDIX D: DATA TABLE OF THEMES.....	133
APPENDIX E: IRB APPROVAL UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO .....	135



## List of Figures

Figure 1. Description of Professional Development Experiences .....	13
Figure 2. Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model .....	16
Figure 3. Critical Race Theory v. Tribal Critical Race Theory .....	39
Figure 4. Education Pipeline.....	47
Figure 5. School Demographics.....	50
Figure 6. Participant Professional Development Completion.....	55
Figure 7. Overview of themes.....	65
Figure 8. Summary of Educator Backgrounds.....	69
Figure 10. Document Review Demonstrating Tribal Values.....	85
Figure 11. Environmental Observation of Hallways: Tribal Core Values Poster.....	87
Figure 12. Tribal Village Model .....	89
Figure 13. Salmon in the Classroom Curriculum Example .....	91
Figure 14. In-Service Agenda: Culturally Responsive Instruction .....	100
Figure 15. Theory of Change for Decolonizing Education.....	108

## **Chapter 1: Origin Story**

As a schitsu'umsh (Coeur d'Alene Tribe), wife, mother, current doctoral student, and graduate research assistant who has experienced rural public schooling on a reservation, I see a critical urgency to address education as an absolute fundamental right of Indigenous peoples: to experience an education that is self-determined and upholds and strengthens tribal sovereignty (Brayboy, 2005; McCarty & Lee, 2014). The journey of Indigenous education and the bedrock of research that informs current theories and practices is much more than an abstract body of research; it is a lived experience that I am continuing to unpack, learn from, and strengthen my identity as an Indigenous person working towards self-determination and sovereignty of self and my nation.

### **Background**

Throughout my adulthood, I have worked in Indigenous education. Upon completion of my undergraduate degree, I began working as the program manager for my tribe's early childhood department. In the fourteen years that I was in that capacity, the early childhood center operated, for the most part, under a colonial worldview that privileged standards-driven child development practices, services to families, and training for teacher professional development. During this time of my career, I recall feelings of frustration, inadequacy, and turmoil over our center's lack of local epistemological, ontological, and axiological influence, although I did not have the language to articulate this frustration at the time. I also recall finding it so challenging to recruit community collaboration and co-construction in curriculum, language restoration and revitalization

and teacher training in resource pedagogies such as culturally responsive, culturally, relevant, culturally sustaining, and culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogies and practices (Cazden & Leggett, 1976; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 200; Alim, 2007; Paris, 2012).

In our center, we had three Indigenous community members working in the center, including myself. Of the three, one was a classroom teacher. The teacher would work on language and other cultural practices within their classroom but seemed unwilling to help other teachers grow in their understanding of local culture, norms, history, and language. Though perhaps unintentional, however, when discussions arose about our need to be more culturally relevant, responsive, and reflective, the two local Indigenous employees would only speak up to tell somebody, “That’s not the way we do it/that’s how we do things,” with no additional guidance or explanation. I could see in the young, impressionable children, as evidenced through their social-emotional behaviors and developmental assessment reports, as well as in their parents’ resistance to engaging in activities designed to serve them, that our approach to teaching and learning and family service did not demonstrate the local communities’ values and epistemologies. The center had overwhelmingly been driven by federal standards and the latest early childhood trends, when it needed to be driven by local and historically accumulated, culturally developed bodies of knowledge that Moll et al. (1995) calls community funds of knowledge. Funds of knowledge are essential for individual and community well-being and enhance a peoples’ ability to survive and thrive (Moll et al., 1995). Additionally, land-based pedagogies (Tuck et al., 2014; Simpson, 2014; Bang et al.,

2014; Corntassel, 2012) determined by families, elders, and leaders in the community support and sustain funds of knowledge.

I moved on to K-12 education, when I had the opportunity to lead the Office of Indian Education-funded State Tribal Education Partnership (STEP) grant awarded to my tribe's department of education. STEP was designed to develop intentional partnerships formalized through a written and signed partnership agreement with both the state and local school district, which served a high population of Indigenous youth. A major focus of this grant was to design curriculum rooted in the Coeur d'Alene Tribe's ways of knowing for 4<sup>th</sup> grade history. During this curriculum development process, the various resource pedagogies and subsequent models of culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy came to life as our team of tribal employees, tribal members, community members, partnering schoolteachers and higher education allies learned together to design a curriculum framework honoring local tribal history, culture, and language. The curriculum was developed over four years of Saturday STEP meetings, monthly small group meetings, and classroom support for participating teachers when they implemented lessons.

The curriculum pilot phase was conducted in two schools on the Coeur d'Alene Reservation: one public school and one tribal school, with a total of three classrooms. During the pilot phase, our team witnessed the strengthening of identities of students in those classrooms through increased engagement during the curriculum lesson plan pilots, and the students' critical reflections about the content of their learning, as they questioned why they had not previously had opportunities to learn their history in school. During our monthly Saturday team meetings, participating teachers and other members of the STEP

group would share observations from the pilot lessons conducted in classrooms. I heard teachers describe how their students would explicitly communicate their interest by asking questions, participating in activities, sharing their personal experiences, and asking for opportunities to further understand more about themselves, their families, and their communities.

One Saturday, one of the three teachers who attended the monthly Saturday STEP meetings, told the group that one of her students asked her what we did at these monthly meetings and then stated, “I want to go to those Saturday meetings - why don’t we get to go learn about that stuff?” Further evidence of student longing was demonstrated in their questions and considerations. Some students brought artifacts from home that were relevant to a pilot lesson - a phenomenon that had not occurred before. The Saturday STEP group discussed the students feeling safe to share their home culture in their classroom, demonstrating that their funds of knowledge were important and valued (Moll et al., 1995). There was also prolonged attention to the material. One student commented at the end of a lesson, “oh... I don’t want it to end, I could talk about this stuff forever.” Students raised questions about land acquisitions and lack of equity and expressed feelings of frustration that this history had previously been absent from their classroom. They asked questions such as how it came to be that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people live on the reservation, and why an image of tribal land is forested while a local timber company’s land has huge clear cuts.

One particularly profound artifact came from a student who, after participating in a classroom lesson on the tribe’s five core values and their connections to the tribe’s people, place, and land, brought in a handwritten memoir from her great- great-

grandmother. The memoir was rich with local history, detailed family connections and historical events. The cultural resource specialist from our STEP team was able to take the memoir, transcribe it electronically, and design a corresponding presentation that brought to life the experiences of this student's great, great grandmother. Several of the children in the classroom were also related to people referenced in the memoir.

These student responses demonstrate a contrast with the usual approach to education for Indigenous students, which is typically focused on mainstream, Western approaches to learning, where student's home culture, community, and worldviews are absent from the curriculum. This latter approach to schooling fails to include all students and is often met with resistance and disengagement, resulting in the educational disenfranchisement, not only Indigenous students, but millions of low-income and culturally diverse students (Kohl, 1995; Howard, 2010; Sabzalian, 2019) who do not receive equitable education services. This is what I see in the halls of the public school on the reservation town I grew up in, both today and when I attended school there. Now I realize that it is educational disenfranchisement that I both experienced as a student, and then witnessed at our early childhood learning center; both in the children and families. Disenfranchisement is to deprive a person of some privilege or right; when one lacks that privilege, one is disenfranchised. In this case, students and parents on the reservation lack equal access to education or family services that meet the unique needs and desires of their community and culture.

Experiences such as these are what have led me to make an urgent call to repair the damage-centered narrative imposed on Indigenous students through constructs of settler colonialism, structural racism, hegemonic claims to knowledge and power, and the

stereotypes, myths, and misrepresentations of Indigenous students in our schools (Tuck, 2009). The essential understandings, core values and pedagogical frameworks developed during the STEP project illuminate the ways education at all levels can and should be culturally responsive, revitalizing and sustaining. Critical to nurturing and strengthening identity, schools are social spaces that can uplift or suppress positive identity formation. The student examples during the STEP pilot lessons show how a narrow scope in curriculum and pedagogy offer very limited opportunities for students to bring their full selves to the school setting, constraining their perceptions of themselves and their futures. Some of the deeper questions of creating school learning spaces that allow students to pursue engaging or meaningful identities, particularly for minoritized students, revolve around how we might “enable transformative experiences that change students’ understanding of themselves as learners” (Anthony-Stevens, 2013; Wenger, 1998).

The Coeur d’Alene Tribe’s STEP project was designed to develop intentional partnerships formalized through a written and signed partnership agreement with both the state and local school districts serving high populations of Indigenous youth. In this case the partnership included two local schools; one of which was a Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)-funded school, and the other, a state-funded local public school. Additional key partnerships that proved to be critical in the STEP partnership web were the University of Idaho, the state’s land grant institution, and the Idaho State Indian Education Committee. The Idaho State Indian Education committee played a key role in bringing one of STEP’s objectives to fruition by incorporating tribal history, culture, and language expectations into the State’s history standards.

Another major function of this grant was to build the capacity of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe to conduct certain administrative functions under certain Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) formula grant programs. For the Tribe, a key understanding is that at the heart of student achievement is pedagogy, which is why we focused on the design of a curriculum rooted in a framework built upon a culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy (McCarty & Lee, 2014), and provided supporting professional development for teachers and administrators, prioritizing the needs of the community to exercise educational self-determination. McCarty and Lee's culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy extends Paris and Alim's (2014) notion of culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). CSP furthers the work of culturally responsive education by Cazden and Leggett (1978) and Ladson-Billings (1995), as Paris (2012) explains how CSP goes beyond being culturally responsive to minoritized youth and moves to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling (p. 95).

Focusing specifically on Native communities, McCarty and Lee (2014), on a quest to uphold cultural and linguistic survival, re-visit Paris and Alim's (2014) question, "what are we seeking to sustain?" The colonial institution of schooling provides no space for Indigenous people's ways of knowing, their languages, lands, and worldviews, and thus school essentially separates students from their identities. When one is unable to themselves in the curriculum, or sees their community or ways of knowing misrepresented, or unacknowledged in the classroom or school, the result can be a sense of confusion, loss, and separation. For these reasons, McCarty and Lee (2014) demonstrate the necessity of including culturally revitalizing pedagogy. Bridging



culturally *sustaining* and *revitalizing* pedagogies critically attends to the sociohistorical and contemporary contexts of schooling (McCarty & Lee, 2014). The STEP team found CSRP to be the most relevant pedagogical approach to designing local, land-based curriculum because its sole focus is to address the needs of Indigenous communities as those needs are defined by those communities. This service is reflected in the following three main components that center Indigenous communities' rights to self-determining education.

The first component of CSRP calls out asymmetrical power relations with the goal of transforming legacies of colonization. The ideological framework of STEP has helped to provide access to a curriculum that gives a more balanced and equitable perspective of historical and modern-day events, along with training teachers through a CSRP lens that begins the process of transforming legacies of colonization. The second component is the recognition of the need to reclaim and revitalize what has been disrupted by colonization. The work that went into designing a curriculum framework rooted in CSRP resulted in the conception of core values rooted in the tribal language that provided the essential understandings that flowed through the curriculum and professional development. The core values were so well articulated through the Coeur d'Alene Tribe's language that they ended up being officially adopted by the Tribe and are used across Tribal government and programs. The final component of CSRP recognizes the need for community-based accountability. Community-based accountability is enacted through what Brayboy, Gough, Leonard, Roehl, and Solyom (2012, p. 436) call the four Rs—respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and relationship. These four Rs are part

of the curriculum's conceptual framework and help facilitate discussions about how to *enact* the Tribe's core values.

Over the four years of the STEP project, partnerships were not only strengthened between the two local schools and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, but also with the Idaho State Department of Education and University of Idaho, with support from the Idaho State Indian Education committee. Locally based professional development occurred organically through the monthly STEP team meetings that involved the Tribe, two schools, and State partners. This STEP team spent four years learning about Tribal history, studied Indigenous curriculum development efforts, read journal articles rooted in Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy, and piloted curriculum in classrooms. Two teachers who participated have shared their work and their experiences in university pre-service teacher classrooms, regional Indian Education Summits, and with their own colleagues. Culturally relevant and responsive professional development was provided consistently to teachers and administrators. The BIE tribal school received on-site monthly professional development in-service trainings for a one and a half years. Administrators from both schools (BIE and public) including superintendents and principals participated in five professional development sessions designed specifically for them. The relationships built through these experiences prompted both schools' administrators to fund schoolwide participation in an Indian Education summit designed by the STEP leadership team and the State Indian Education Committee.

Subsequently, STEP was able to offer a cohort of six educators collectively from both schools an opportunity to participate in University of Washington's Native education certificate program. This cohort included four teachers and one administrator

from the BIE school and one Tribe Department of Education teacher who worked directly with local public-school students. Shortly after, a local community college instituted an American Indian Studies certificate, in which another cohort of six teachers from the public school enrolled, though I am unaware of how many finished the complete certificate program. The collaborative design of STEP led to strong partnerships on the federal, state, and local levels through cross-agency training, information-sharing, and collaborations that established critical attention, dialog, and movement towards improved American Indian Education in Idaho.

Following completion of the STEP project in 2019, I re-enrolled at the University of Idaho (UI), a land grant and leading research institution, to finish my doctoral studies that had been on hold for almost two years while attending to the various moving parts of the STEP project and family life. Once re-enrolled, I connected with a professor who was a key partner in the STEP curriculum team and the leadership team that helped plan the professional development path, and who became my major professor. It is through this established relationship that I received the honor of working as a research assistant for the Indigenous Knowledge for Effective Education Program (IKEEP), for which my major professor is the project director. I was first introduced to the program when I was the STEP Manager and the IKEEP Director invited me to share my experiences with the IKEEP students and participate in some of their workshops. The first grant for IKEEP was awarded to UI in 2016, with funding from the US Department of Education's Office of Indian Education. IKEEP has developed expertise in Indigenous teacher recruitment and retention, centering Indigenous knowledge in education coursework, and designing

and implementing place-based and culture-based professional development to rural teachers (Anthony-Stevens, Mahfouz, & Bisbee, 2020).

The development of these interconnected relationships and alliances between the University of Idaho, Idaho State Indian Education committee, partnering schools and other collaborators, elicits a strong sense of responsibility to continue this critical need to create space for Indigenous community voices, education sovereignty and to challenge the asymmetrical power relations that are causing harm to Indigenous student identities. The work of STEP with in-service teachers and educators, along with the pre-service work of IKEEP and witnessing the possibilities of CSRP in action by providing safe spaces where Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators can critically engage in the work motivates me to strive for decolonial education systems that produce sustainable change in the education of Indigenous students and all students. The promise I have seen in pre-service and in-service professional development programming led me to envision a system of change that is both a cognitive, epistemological process and a personal, transformative process that disrupts hegemonic assumptions about others, leading towards a more *critical consciousness* of settler coloniality, its impacts, and its continued damage to Indigenous personhood. In anthropology, personhood is often described as an indication of who, within any given culture, is considered either fully functioning and accepted member of society or considered to be on their way to being fully functional (Appell-Warren, 2007). Freire (1993) describes critical consciousness as an essential factor in gaining self-control and direction in one's education and to empower and activate an individual's sense of learning. Once *critical consciousness* is undergone, this

system of change needs to move beyond perception and disposition towards sustained change in policy and practice.

### **Research Questions**

The varied and deep level of professional development offered through both the STEP program and IKEEP, has led to my research inquiries, which sought to understand how educators who experience culturally responsive professional development geared toward Indigenous education perceive the benefits to 1) their educator identity, 2) their students, and 3) their profession. The specific research questions this study seeks to understand are:

- 1) To what extent do educators who engage in culturally responsive professional development geared toward Indigenous education attain new knowledge, skills, and dispositions supportive of educating Indigenous learners?
  - a. What aspects or processes involved in culturally responsive professional development impacted educators' understanding of effective education for Indigenous students?
  - b. How and in what ways do educators articulate the value of culturally responsive teaching and schooling?
  - c. How and in what ways do educators incorporate culturally responsive teaching/schooling into their everyday practices?
  - d. What are the perceived benefits and challenges of culturally responsive professional development geared toward Indigenous education to educators professionally, and within their institution of schooling?

The professional development opportunities provided to the six participants in this study were a cumulation of formal, informal, and collaborative in nature, with the Coeur d'Alene tribe at the center of providing and facilitating professional development rooted in culturally relevant, responsive, sustaining pedagogies and practices to support Indigenous students. Figure 1 below gives a description of professional development opportunities provided by or in partnership with the state of Idaho Indian education committee or local college and universities that hold partnership agreements with the tribe.

*Figure 1. Description of Professional Development Experiences*

<b>Professional Development</b>	<b>Description</b>
STEP Team	Formal and informal PD such as curriculum mining, culturally sustaining & revitalizing pedagogy, CSRP curriculum design & developing, lesson piloting, reflections
Idaho Indian Education Summit(s)	Two-day summits organized by Idaho State Indian Education Committee with a focus on improving Indian education across the State. Collaborative agenda with surrounding tribes and higher education institutions
STEP Indian Education Summit	Regionally focused summit targeting local schools and rooted in tribal community leadership, perspectives, and education experiences
In-Service provided by Native American Studies Professor from local community college	Guest speaker: Native American Studies Professor from local community college talking about Indigenous student identity and schooling
In-Service provided by STEP program	Ranged from introduction to Indian education to culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy and its incorporation into everyday practice
University of Idaho: Tribal Sovereignty & Federal Indian Policy course (3-credit)	Offered through a regional higher education institution, the course provides foundational context of local tribes and the impacts of federal Indian policy historically and today
Indigenous Education Summit for teachers	Another Idaho tribe who also operates a STEP grant provided local school districts with culturally relevant

	and responsive professional development rooted in land-based pedagogy
Native Knowledge 360	Held in Washington D.C. at the National Museum of the American Indian, provides educators with tools and resources towards transforming teaching and learning about Native Americans
IKEEP Pre-Service Program	Recruits, supports, and certifies culturally and linguistically responsive Indigenous educators to serve in schools with high populations of American Indian and Alaskan Native youth
STEP Administrator's Professional Development	Focused on key administrators from both school districts, provided foundational professional development on culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy and explored the opportunities to enact CSRP in practice
University of Washington: Native Education Certificate Program (Funded by STEP for 5 educators)	Designed to cultivate the educator's ability to create meaningful and effective relationships with Native American students through a perspective of being a community-based teacher. The goal is to develop educators with expertise in engaging Native students, families, and communities in instruction to ensure Native students thrive and succeed making school and future careers relevant to the pressing needs of Native communities

### **Study Goals & Contributions to the Field**

In this study, I am looking at educators who work in two rural school districts within the boundaries of a reservation with a history of continuous teacher turnover. Research highlights the concern that schools with large numbers of students from lower socio-economic categories and students of color have more teachers who are less satisfied and are more likely not to return to the position after one or two years of service (Grissom, 2011; Ingersoll, 2004). Turnover is happening at alarming rates in the very schools that this turnover disparity poses the greatest risk for education equity, educational opportunity, and student performance gaps. The problem of teacher turnover

poses an additional challenge to the potential benefits of localized professional development rooted in community.

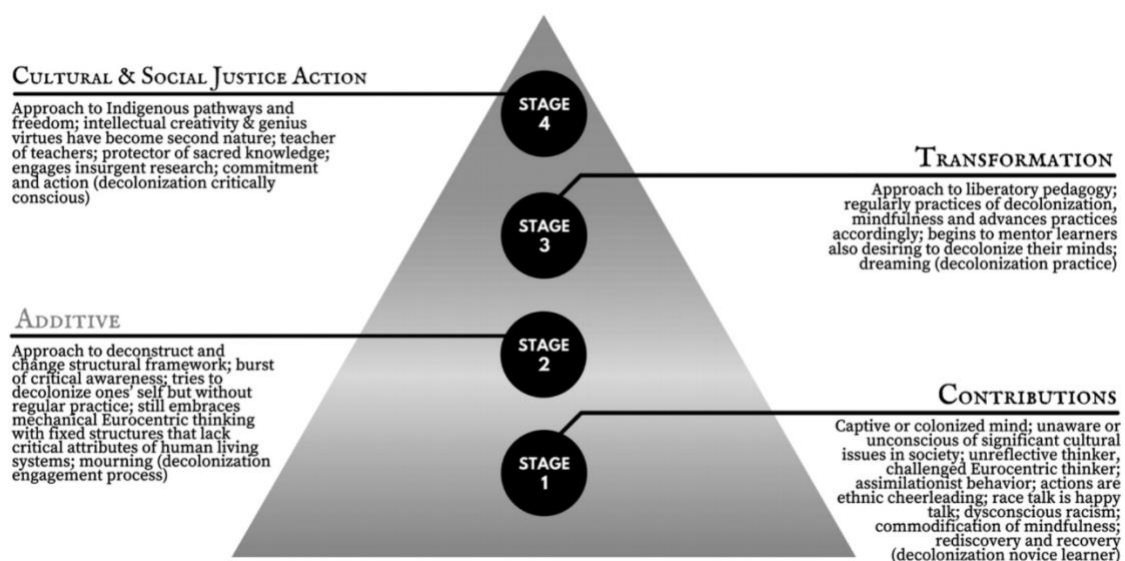
In this study, all six of the educators who participated, whose commonality is engagement in specified professional development geared towards Indian education, have all been retained. Each interviewee has expressed the value of building community relationships and the positive impact that those relationships and subsequent community understandings have had on their connection with students and families. The opportunities these educators have been provided have created a safe space to go beyond the walls of the school to learn about and engage with the community. Wyman and Kashatok (2008) describe *triangle teachers* who rarely venture beyond the triangular path between their homes, the school, and the local store (p. 299). Triangle teachers describes many teachers in these two school districts who have not been afforded these professional development opportunities, furthering the likelihood that they will leave the community.

Educators are often intermediaries that bridge institutional and interpersonal domains, (Hung, Lee, & Lim, 2012) which is why this study seeks to interrogate educators' knowledge, skills and dispositions toward Indigenous student learners and the ways in which professional development rooted in Indigenous education impacts those ideologies. Dr. Cornel Pewewardy, a Comanche and Kiowa citizen of the Comanche Nation, and Professor Emeritus of Indigenous Nations Studies at Portland State University developed the Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model (TIPM) to promote critical awareness and cultural consciousness among educators (Pewewardy, et. al., 2018). This four-stage model includes the contributions approach (Stage 1), additive approach (Stage 2), transformation approach (Stage 3) and cultural and social justice



action (Stage 4). The TIPM model describes the transformation educators undergo as they become more conscious. As they become more conscious, they begin to develop their students' consciousness as well, which is reflected in the latter two stages of the model.

*Figure 2. Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model*



The TIPM framework and the well-articulated stages provide a way to measure the level of growth participants experience through the development of critical consciousness in Indigenous education. Participants demonstrate knowledge, skill, and dispositional changes that the TIPM model helps articulate in a tangible way. Data analysis of participant interviews revealed three critical elements of professional development geared towards Indigenous education that is needed to develop settler critical consciousness and critical Indigenous consciousness. 1) necessary establishment of community connections, 2) essential understandings of place (place conscious), and 3) holistic and ongoing professional development. These critical elements of professional development and the measurement of growth along the spectrum of the TIPM model

offers steps toward what I pose as *transformational desettling*; a critical element of educator growth, that will help stakeholders of this study determine a path forward to scale and sustain a specialized professional development model for educators of Indigenous youth and their communities.

### **Dissertation Overview**

I begin this dissertation with a review of literature that examines the historical and contemporary struggle for Indigenous education to become emancipatory, liberatory and actively decolonizing education. With a focus on educator professional development geared towards Indigenous students, the literature review describes trends in curriculum and instruction that contribute to improved educational opportunity for Indigenous youth. Furthermore, I examine the ideological, pedagogical, and context considerations for Indigenous youth to access both cultural ways of knowing and mainstream Western ways of knowing in school - a both/and approach to schooling (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009).

Next is an exploration of the innovations in pre-service and in-service professional development programs that support teachers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to carry out culturally responsive teacher practices with Indigenous youth. Highlighted is the need for both a critical Indigenous consciousness and a critical settler colonial consciousness to build a strong foundation for a liberatory teacher (Kulago, 2019). Kulago argues that if settler colonial consciousness did exist, it is possible to imagine a kind of powerful teaching and learning experience for everyone (p. 250).

I conclude Chapter Two by describing the theoretical framework that situates this work. Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) is used broadly as an overarching framework that keeps decolonizing education as a central outcome to all work serving

Indigenous nations. TribalCrit is a framework specifically designed to examine and address the historical and contemporary experiences of Indigenous peoples in the United States towards an embodiment of educational sovereignty and Indigenous ideologies (Brayboy, 2006, p. 48). The use of TribalCrit helps this study to maintain a broad focus on the needs of tribal nations to uphold and strengthen tribal sovereignty and self-determination. TIPM provides a map for gauging an educator's shifts in critical settler colonial and critical Indigenous consciousness towards decolonizing education, and therefore provides a way to measure growth towards TribalCrit's goal of using Indigenous students' cultural knowledge combined with Western conceptions to engage in survivance, self-determination and tribal autonomy (Brayboy, 2005).

Chapter Three describes the methodological approach used in this study, which focuses on two rural school districts within the boundaries of the Coeur d'Alene Reservation. Critical narrative inquiry is utilized in this study as a tool to deconstruct stories of the six participants and explore their knowledge, skills, and dispositions towards Indian education and serving Indigenous students. A Critical Indigenous Research paradigm and Critical Narrative Inquiry are discussed as ways to gather and analyze data in a way that honors Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies in this work. Critical consciousness is noted as an outcome of educators participating in specialized professional development geared towards Indian education because it became an important factor in how I came to understand the impacts on their knowledge, skills, and dispositional orientations. Also, it was important to me as an Indigenous researcher to utilize methodological approaches that ensure community is connected to the research, invested in the outcomes, and collaborators in determining the findings.

Chapter Four outlines the findings, which are packaged into three themes that identify critical elements of professional development geared towards Indigenous education, which produced growth in participant knowledge, skills, and dispositions. A theory of change was identified that demonstrates the critical consciousness developed when exposed to specialized professional development, leading educators towards decolonizing education practices. Pewewardy et al. (2018) Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model (TIPM) provides a way to gauge where educators may be along a spectrum from shallow dysconsciousness (lacking critical reflection) towards deep consciousness, by outlining four stages of transformation. The culmination of findings led to the conception of *transformational desettling*. Creating and maintaining space for educators to be *desettled*, leads to disruptions in their preconceptions, stereotypes, biases, and assumptions about Indigenous peoples and their experiences (Hopkins, 2020), developing *transformational* growth that awakens educators towards new knowledge, skills, and dispositions supportive of educating Native learners.

The final chapter closes with conclusions that highlight implications of this study as a call to action for tribal nations, schools, and institutions of higher education. Community-centered collaboration is critical to establish sustainable systems and structures that enable pre-service and in-service professional development reform, as this research is suggesting. Chapter Five concludes with the articulation of a theory of change: a local perspective that encompasses all elements of specialized professional development and its impacts on educators' critical consciousness towards decolonizing education. Finally, limitations and opportunities for future research are discussed. Throughout the dissertation, I notably use the term Indigenous to describe federally

recognized sovereign Indigenous nations in America and specifically Coeur d'Alene tribal community members, which is the territory that this study takes place. Although the U.S. constitution utilizes the term American Indian, Indigenous people themselves have multiple descriptions for themselves including Indian, Native, and American Indian which reflects the complex sociohistorical and contemporary dynamics of Indigenous peoples in the United States of America that has complicated structures of identity.

### **Definitions of Terms**

*Colonial Consciousness* – Underlies and informs public school culture, curricula, and pedagogies (Howard, 2018).

*Critical Consciousness* – Developing skills to critically critique the systems, values, cultural norms, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 162). Culturally relevant teaching expects students to engage with others and the world with purpose and intent to identify and call out inequities and be agents of change. Another aspect of critical consciousness is to enable students to identify the knowledge represented in their schools and textbooks and to counter one-dimensional narratives.

*Critical Indigenous Consciousness* - Centers Indigenous communities and teaches scholars how to critically engage in counter narratives (Kulago, 2019, p. 252)

*Critical Settler Colonial Consciousness* – A counterpart to critical Indigenous consciousness, promotes listening, learning, and self-reflection. Settler colonial comes from Patrick Wolfe (2006): “elimination is an organizing principal of settler-colonial society; a structure rather than an event because settlers come to stay” (p. 388, as cited by Kulago, 2019).

*Indigenizing Education* - Aims to be truthful, accurate, and inclusive, correcting the misunderstandings about Indigenous peoples and their histories, cultures, and worldviews.

*Desettling* – A transformative learning process that White teachers undergo to undo the damage that settler colonialism has imposed on schools, curriculum, pedagogy, policies, and practices (Hopkins, 2018).

*Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model (TIPM)* –Designed in response to profound inequities detrimental to the well-being of Indigenous children and communities. This four-stage model supports the development of critical consciousness in Indigenous education.

*Transformational Desettling* – Creating and maintaining space for educators to be *desettled*, leads to disruptions in their preconceptions, stereotypes, biases, and assumptions about Indigenous peoples and their experiences; developing *transformational* growth that awakens educators towards new knowledge, skills, and dispositions supportive of educating Indigenous learners.

*Decolonizing Education* – Identifying how colonization has impacted education and working to unsettle colonial structures, systems, and dynamics in educational contexts. Decolonization education fits within larger understandings of decolonization and Indigenization at socio-political levels.

## **Chapter 2: The Struggle for Culturally Responsive Teaching/Teachers**

### **Situating the Problem in Indian Education: A Literature Review**

Since the inception of formalized schooling systems, rooted in settler colonial agendas and imposed upon Indigenous peoples by the United States, there has been contentious debate between Indigenous peoples and the federal government to determine who should educate Indigenous children, in what spaces, with what knowledge systems, and for the purpose and aims of whom (Hopkins, 2020). Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, schooling for Indigenous people has been built on institutional and colonial systems and structures, a form of schooling that has sought to colonize and assimilate Indigenous peoples' lands, bodies, and consciousness. Institutionalized Indigenous schooling began with 'Indian' boarding schools that displaced children from their families and indoctrinated Indigenous students with its imposed ideologies, values, and epistemologies (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; Reyhner & Eder, 2017).

Though decades of research on culturally relevant education exist, and multiple enactments of legislation and reform initiatives have been passed, Anthony-Stevens (forthcoming) points out that Indigenous students continue to have little to no access to social, cultural, linguistic, and place-relevant instruction, and they rarely have access to Indigenous teachers. Within these educational institutions there continue to be deficit-centered statistics that highlight Indigenous students as being heavily referred to special education services, disciplinary referrals, while teachers set low expectations for them and high push-out rates continue (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; McCarty, 2009; Sabzalian, 2019).

Deloria and Wildcat (2001) highlight how the mainstream American education system lacks a coherent worldview in which to find meaning. The American education system is a system of indoctrination which fails to provide students with an adequate understanding of how to think critically and curiously and how to live responsibly in the world (pg. 10). Deloria and Wildcat's assessment of the American education system is further materialized in Patrick Wolfe's (2006) description of settler colonialism, as he states that "elimination is an organizing principal of settler-colonial society" (p. 388) and defines settler colonialism as not an event but a systemic structure. Therefore, the "structure" is continuously working to eliminate the native (Kulago, 2019). American schooling systematically erases the Indigenous student through practices such as whitewashed curriculum; a colorblind approach to pedagogy and practice; the absence of Indigenous languages, knowledge systems, and worldviews; and severe underrepresentation of Indigenous teachers and administrators.

Social reproductionists posit individuals as passive actors in a pre-determined existence (Eisenhart, 2001). That is the unidimensional, Eurocentric discourse that has harmed Indigenous students in America. Wills' *Learning to Labor* (1997) describes the institution of schooling well when he explains how the 'lads' were caught in an 'in-between' state of existence—they were caught between the structure of schooling and individual agency. If tribal educational sovereignty is not at the center and the heart of these Indigenous education reform initiatives, then the initiatives will only go as far as Indigenizing curriculum, but lack the systemic progress needed for true Indigenous educational reform that honors and upholds tribal sovereignty and self-determination towards nation-building.



### ***Lack of Positive Outcomes in Indian Education***

Indigenous students in public schools across America have been and continue to be victims of cultural deficit orientations (Sabzalian, 2019). Cultural Deficit Paradigm is deeply rooted in racist and Eurocentric mainstream educational theories (Bloom et al., 1967) asserting that school failure among students of color and students impacted by poverty is the fault of students' cultural or linguistic background (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Accounts of deficit thinking that are essentially victim blaming, or a way of shifting deep-seated structural inequities to individual, family and community deficits (Ryan, 1971). For Indigenous students specifically, the role of and experience with public education was a direct assault on Indigenous people attempting to exterminate them through genocidal acts of violence, assimilation, and policies designed to "kill the Indian to save the man." In response to deficit thinking, several scholars have argued that students from diverse backgrounds are not deficient, but different; thus arose the Cultural Difference Theory (Ford, 1996; Howard, 2010; Irvine, 2003; Lee, 2007). The transition from deficit to difference viewpoints is intended to help move us away from a need to transform the child to a need to transform the school. However, race and racism are so deeply embedded in the historical, political, sociocultural, educational, and economic fiber of our country that there is still a lot of work to be done in the project of social justice.

One of the most common phrases in today's education literature is "achievement gap." To analyze the "achievement gap" in America, we must unpack the role of racism in the United States. Though there are many schools of thought on the role of race, the most balanced perspective centers the *institutional responsibility-individual*

*accountability* approach. This approach acknowledges progress that has been made in racial reconciliation yet attends to the fact that there is still a lot of work to do (Noguera, 2003; Tough 2008, as cited in Howard, 2010).

A key hindrance of racial equity is when educators ignore race or adopt a colorblind approach, failing to realize that the greater avoidance of the topic denies students an essential part of their identity, which only increases the likelihood of the topic becoming explosive (Howard, 2010; Lewis, 2006). As explanations become clearer concerning what race and racism have to do with the widespread failure of students of color, we can begin to understand the influences of inequality, discrimination and most importantly race and racism, and how they influence achievement disparities (Howard, 2010). Lewis (2006) contends that “race (then) is a set of signifiers projected onto these bodies—signifiers we must learn about and negotiate in order to successfully move through the social world” (p. 6). The work laid out in this study in part, is an effort to move towards what Howard (2010) calls a post-racial paradigm—a paradigm that recognizes the human connectedness that binds all citizens and calls for the interrogation and interpretation of human behavior to be tied to individual characteristics, as opposed to group classifications allowing for a deeper structural, class-based, and gendered analysis to be conducted on group disparities (p. 110). The hope of this paradigm is to remove the ambiguity, fear, and dissonance that we currently experience around race.

### **The Role of Professional Development and Educators.**

The work of in-service and pre-service teacher preparation is critical because in the current culture of the American school system, there is only one mainstream dominant culture: the one that is built on Euro-American values, beliefs, and

epistemologies. These Euro-American ways, both implicitly and explicitly, view Indigenous cultures as deficient (Swaney, 2006). Indigenous educational reform needs to counter assimilative educational practices built on deficit assumptions about the ‘Other’ and build space in teacher education for both a *critical Indigenous consciousness* and a *critical settler colonial consciousness* as a necessary counterpart (Kulago, 2019). Educators’ development of critical consciousness and their ability to expand their pedagogies and praxis to better serve Indigenous students moves us closer to a post-racial paradigm described by Howard (2010).

In both the public school system and within teacher education programs, there needs to be space for inclusive conversations between educators, tribal nations, and communities about the colonizing history of Indigenous schooling with intentions to specifically build critical settler colonial consciousness alongside critical decolonial consciousness. Otherwise, there will continue to be an unequal power relationship between nation-state and tribes (Hopkins, 2020). Without attending to critical consciousness, it may not be possible to disrupt these unequal power relationships that have been intentionally designed to uphold its ethnocentric structure and assimilation practices. For educators to *see* the insidious forms of colonization currently operating in curriculum, pedagogy, and practices, they need to go through a process of transformation that exposes preconceptions, prejudices, and assumptions about tribal experiences, indigeneity, and Whiteness; a process Hopkins (2020) calls *Desettling*, a theory of learning. It is in this space of desettling that critical consciousness emerges, and skills develop to question and counteract settler colonialism towards a more pluralistic and democratic education.

### **Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy as a Framework.**

McCarty and Lee's (2014) Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy (CSRP) places educational sovereignty at the center of how schools and teachers determine curricula and pedagogy for Indigenous students. CSRP is built on the field of educational research's resource pedagogies such as culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), culturally responsive education (Gay, 2018), and culture-based education (Demmert & Towner, 2003) as affirmations of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and most effective for supporting Indigenous and minoritized youth (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). CSRP specifically extends the work of Paris's (2012) and Paris and Alim's (2014) call for culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP), which "seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (p. 95). Paris and Alim assert that CSP exists wherever education sustains the lifeways of communities that have been and continue to be damaged and erased through schooling (Alim & Paris, 2017). McCarty and Lee extend the conversation to Indigenous communities when asking Paris and Alim's (2014) question, "what are we seeking to sustain?" These theories of teaching and learning draw from critical sociocultural approaches to education which emphasize the significance of culture, language, and social context in the circumstances and surrounding conditions of education. These educational paradigms interrupt deficit theorizing about non-dominant students, and call attention to the Eurocentric frameworks used to inform and assess school learning. In place of Eurocentric bias, research on culturally responsive pedagogy promotes curriculum and practice becoming responsive or relevant to the cultural experiences of minoritized youth.

Martin et al. (2017) seeks to go beyond culturally responsive/relevant pedagogy towards decolonizing teacher education. They argue that culturally responsive or relevant pedagogy is never going to be effective in the ways it was originally intended (Ladson-Billings, 1992; 1995; Gay, 2002; 2013) because it does not speak to educators in intelligible ways—much is lost in translation. They argue that CRP, by its very name, encourages a focus on the Other, albeit from a positive rather than deficit position; enables teachers (who are predominantly white) to avoid facing their own whiteness and white privilege; and does not address the “epistemic blindness” (Andreotti, 2016) of whiteness and Eurocentric worldviews (p. 236). Lastly, Martin et. al. (2017) conclude that CRP may have some impact on individual teachers in which it is focused but does not address systemic and structural inequalities inherent in education systems. Education systems that were and still are built from a colonial framework and sustained through unidimensional pedagogy and practice, rendering what I call a ‘dysconsciousness’ of multiculturalism, meaning that students are undergoing education in a system that is strategically designed to favor a White, Eurocentric view of the world and deceptively presented as though it is universal and ubiquitous. Therefore, students have a limited and distorted understanding about diversity and equity (King, 1991), underscoring why Indigenous narratives need to center on building conscience and consciousness among White, mainstream populations.

Working in a system that has been predicated on systematically eradicating Indigenous languages, religions, beliefs, and practices, (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Grande, 2004), the question arises: how to move towards a system that provides adequate preservice and inservice programs that further the agenda

of tribal sovereignty or tribal nation-building and self-determination in education. Through an exploration of preservice and inservice programs working towards a more equitable and appropriate schooling experience for native youth, I highlight some examples of programs that are designed for Indigenous teachers' specifically and programs for all teachers; Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

McCarty and Lee's (2014) conceptualization of a culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy goes beyond service to minority students focusing specifically on the unique nature of American Indian tribes and their status as sovereign nations who have a government-to-government relationship with the U.S. This is a crucial distinction between CSRP, CSP and culture-based pedagogy because CSRP explicitly calls out the need for teacher educators to become critically conscious of settler colonial history and its present-day impacts on tribal life and experience, whereas CSP "seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (p. 95) Impacts of Western schooling have separated Indigenous peoples' identities from their languages, lands, and worldviews. Sustaining and revitalizing is an approach to address the sociohistorical and contemporary conditions of American Indian schooling. CSRP also upholds Paris and Alim's (2014) notion of culturally sustaining pedagogy to democratize schooling "by supporting both traditional and evolving ways of cultural connectedness for contemporary youth" (p. 95).

### **Both/And Approach to Indian Education: The Possibilities.**

Local schools rooted in Indigenous communities have the potential, and arguably an obligation, to create critical space for Indigenous youth to explore their histories, languages, and geographically located epistemologies and ontologies, alongside western

approaches to education. Unfortunately, schools historically have operated from an either/or binary that excludes students and families of color from the White imperial project of schooling (Alim & Paris, 2017). To explain the achievement patterns of minoritized youth, resistance theorists emphasize either/or identity binaries that perpetuate a narrative of youth resistance to participation in school-sanctioned behavior expectations (Dehyle, 1992: 1995; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Willis, 1977).

Within this space of resistance, there is potential to strengthen Indigenous student identity and foster greater respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and accountability to Indigenous communities through public schools. The idea of a *Both/And* approach to Indigenous education is a way to build academic pluralism within a pluralistic society. In the work of Paris & Alim (2014), culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate cultural pluralism as part of schooling to achieve positive social transformation. This approach counters the unidirectional, assimilative institution of U.S. systems of schooling. *Both/And* empowers the use of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies in public schools, honoring tribal sovereignty and strengthening the democratic project of schooling while also teaching all students mainstream educational content (Anthony-Stevens, 2013).

Wyman (2012) writes about the binary perspectives of Indigenous youth in her work on linguistic survivance in Alaska:

Indigenous peoples are often portrayed as *either* heroic *or* tragic, as traditional, *or* modern, as maintaining cultural continuity *or* resisting pressure from outside forces, as noble *and* original ecologists, *or* as tainted modern peoples with no

respect for land. Such binary analysis fails to recognize the complexities and contradictions that arise from histories of domination, adaptation, and Indigenous peoples' ongoing struggles for self-determination. (p. 14)

Brayboy and Castagno (2009) specifically challenge this binary thinking about Indigenous identities through culturally responsive school (CRS) movements in Native education. CRS gives examples of community-based and culturally based educational practices that demonstrate the complexity of Native students who can become “knowledgeable about and comfortable within *both* the mainstream culture *and* their home culture” (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009, p. 37). Fundamental to this *both/and* approach is that it builds a two-way bridge toward accessing other kinds of knowledge that are outside of or unknown to students (Anthony-Stevens, 2013).

Culturally relevant pedagogy understands that students must learn to navigate between home *and* school, and teachers must find ways to equip students with *both* the knowledge needed to succeed in a school system that oppresses them *and* recognize and honor their own cultural competencies (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Culturally relevant education rooted in social justice helps educators to meet state standards and foster student identity. *Both/And* illuminates how educators can teach Indigenous students effectively by *both* preparing students for standardized tests *and* seeking change in the everyday life of the classroom (Aronson & Laughter, 2015).

Deloria and Wildcat (2001) emphasize the importance of active engagement in identity within tribal cultures as opposed to existence within a culture of indoctrination facilitated most effectively through U.S. government education programs (p. 9). Their



hope for American Indian education and education for all depicts a *Both/And* approach explicitly naming features of Western knowledge systems that produce many of the problems we are immersed in today; *and* reconstructing Indigenous metaphysical systems, which result in experiential systems of learning (p. 10). Lastly, the development of a coherent worldview would provide students with an adequate understanding of how to think critically *and* curiously, *and* how to live responsibly in the world.

### **Promising Practices in Preparing Teachers for CSRP.**

Turtle Mountain Community College's (TMCC) 'grow our own' model prepares Indigenous elementary science teachers (Lamb, 2014). The 'grow our own' model increases the odds that qualified Indigenous teachers will stay in the area to teach in local schools. These teachers want to serve their communities and many of them don't want to, or can't, leave home to do it. That is one of the major benefits of TMCC: growing up high quality teachers who want to live and work in their community. TMCC shares a lot of success, but a common thread across research is the importance of strongly committed faculty, supportive staff, and a cohort model learning community. TMCC students compare their teaching model to "a family which is unified in purpose and spirit" (Lamb, 2014, p. 2).

In another example of teacher preparation in a Navajo community, student teachers worked in classrooms at a Navajo school throughout their entire teacher preparation program (Castagno et al., 2015). This experience gave preservice teachers much needed experience specifically in a rural school setting where they had the opportunity to "experience" the unique challenges specific to rural schools and were able to see how involved community members were in the schooling of their children

(Castagno, 2012). This model in which preservice teachers were able to be in classrooms throughout their teacher preparation program proved to be invaluable in preparing teachers for the ‘real world’ of teaching in their communities.

The list is growing of examples of quality pedagogy and practice that centers Native student funds of knowledge and the positive impacts on Native student identity and achievement. Phillips’ (1992) work with the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon demonstrated Warm Springs students’ ongoing use of unique communication modes. Cleary and Peacock (1998) highlight lifelong learning techniques to be used by teachers of Indigenous students. Yazzie-Mintz (2007) brilliantly demonstrates the personal perspectives of Navajo teachers’ experiences that can strengthen professional development and teacher training programs.

In Flagstaff, Arizona, school founder of Puente de Hozho (PdH) Michael Fillerup (2005) posited that “local educators were searching for innovative ways to bridge the seemingly unbridgeable” equity gap experienced by poor children and children of color (p. 15, as cited in McCarty & Lee, 2014). This public magnet elementary school is an example of a both/and approach in its multilingual, multicultural focus serving an elementary school made up of 26% Native American and 21% Latino/a. One PdH educator explains both/and approach best when they state:

We merge multiple worlds in our school. You have Navajo kids going to a [school] meeting and introducing themselves [in Navajo], but we also prepare them for the larger culture. Since we have native Spanish-and-English speaking students, they are all being prepared for a further world, the global world. We are preparing them for this. Many people live in the world and view it differently.

They have many languages, and students don't feel threatened. [about their own] (McCarty & Lee, 2014, p. 113)

The goal of PdH has been to grow an instructional program that “harmonizes without homogenizing”—a school “where each child’s language and culture are not a problem to be solved but an indispensable resource; the very heart and soul of the school itself (Fillerup, 2008, as cited in McCarty & Lee, 2014). Though PdH is not an explicit example of a teacher preparation program, it demonstrates the value and impacts of the ways in which culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy can improve the education of Indigenous students. The approaches used by PdH are a model for developing specialized professional development for educators of Indigenous youth, and the transformation that can occur when community needs, and priorities are centered.

### **Towards Decolonial and Settler-Colonial Consciousness.**

In *Red Pedagogy*, Sandy Grande (2004) asserts that Indigenous scholars engage in far-reaching methods of decolonization, what she terms Red Pedagogy (p. 6). Though this research project is small in scope, it demonstrates emancipatory movement towards decolonization. Projects like this one create relationships with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators to provide Indigenous students with both mainstream and Indigenous ways of knowing (p. 165). The lack of equitable education for both Indigenous educators and non-Indigenous educators as allies who are willing to disrupt settler colonial ideology, epistemology and sociohistorical resistance is a major factor in the lack of movement in Indigenous education (Pewewardy et. al., 2018).

When looking at teacher education programs that are also preparing non-Indigenous teachers who will be serving Indigenous students, Cannon (2012) considers

how we might engage privileged learners who are non-Indigenous peoples to think about colonial dominance and racism (p. 21). A challenge in this call comes with asking White settler and diasporic peoples to consider and transform their own investment in and relationship with colonialism. Colonialism is most often viewed as exclusively an Indigenous struggle, but Cannon demonstrates how to open a more explicit dialogue with anti-oppressive educational theory and praxis. Cannon's work emphasizes just how important it is to combat settler colonialism by challenging "what we think we know about Indigenous peoples" (p. 33). Change only takes place when we seek these kinds of reflective interrogations. This idea of engaging privileged learners in the ownership of settler colonialism and its legacies is much like San Pedro's (2018) culturally disruptive pedagogy in the way that they are both disrupting the norm and decentering dominant knowledge systems through both critical Indigenous consciousness and critical settler colonial consciousness. If settler colonialism has unconsciously, been one's 'way of being' with no counter narrative, one must be made aware of their settler colonial consciousness in all its forms in order to center Indigenous knowledge systems. All students having access to Indigenous education faculty is another way to help shift student attitudes, perceptions, and dispositions towards "Others" - "Other" being minoritized persons outside of the dominant group that has more power and privilege. Indigenous education content and pedagogical courses, especially when taught by Indigenous faculty, build allies in helping Indigenous educators and communities develop culturally relevant education systems (McInnes, 2016).

## **Unpacking Critical Consciousness**

In our current public school system, which includes charter schools, some of which are tribally operated, schools “operate in a colonial consciousness, which underlies and informs the public-school culture, curricula and pedagogies” (Hopkins, 2020, p. 10). Critical Indigenous consciousness centers communities and teaches scholars how to critically engage in counter narratives (Kulago, 2019, p. 252). Critical settler colonial consciousness is a counterpart intended to promote listening, learning and self-reflection. Kulago’s approach is descriptive of a both/and pedagogy for educators in the need to critically develop both an Indigenous consciousness and a settler colonial consciousness simultaneously to disrupt and create change.

Ladson-Billings’ (1995) conception of culturally relevant pedagogy is action-oriented. It goes beyond educator teaching strategies and looks at educators’ philosophical and ideological underpinning of why they are educators. There is an awareness and attention to critical consciousness that demonstrates a development of skills to critically critique the systems, values, cultural norms, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities (p. 162). The roots of critical consciousness are grounded in the theory and pedagogy of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. Freire (2018) posits that oppressed people, when thinking about social structures, become more nuanced and complex, and will become less constrained by their social conditions, in turn, developing the agency and capacity to change these conditions, resolve challenges, and determine their own paths.

Dine’/Lakota scholar Tiffany Lee (2006) articulates critical Indigenous consciousness as a way for Indigenous students to develop a sense of self.

Critical theory and pedagogy include notions of what Giroux (2001) calls the “self-conscious critique” (p.8), or critical consciousness, which can be defined as a critical awareness and knowledge of oneself and nature and causes of one’s social and political conditions. Freire (1993) clarifies critical consciousness as essential factor in gaining self-control and direction in one’s education and to empower and activate an individual’s sense of learning... However, critical consciousness for Indigenous people includes the goal of serving one’s community. (p.8)

It is critical for teacher education programs to actively nurture, promote, and understand the kinds of alliances that exist between Indigenous peoples and institutions and reflect on what is possible to develop both critical consciousness for Indigenous people and critical settler colonial consciousness in educators serving Indigenous populations.

The professional development opportunities that are a focus of this study plant the seeds towards this sort of conversation and collaboration. However, critical consciousness needs to be fostered and perpetuated beyond teaching and instructional practices towards sustainable change in higher education institutions’ pre-service teacher programs, school systems and tribal rights to educational sovereignty. In this study, there was one participant who had the opportunity to participate in a pre-service program designed to train Indigenous scholars to teach in schools with high populations of Indigenous students. The opportunities afforded to this participant to learn alongside other Indigenous scholars as well as Indigenous teacher-mentors was invaluable. Not only did the program train Indigenous teachers in culturally and linguistically responsive

education, but it also specifically trained Indigenous teachers who are too few and far between in our schools. Therefore, pre-service programs for Indigenous scholars prepares them to teach in culturally responsive ways and increases the number of Indigenous educators in classrooms.

### **Theoretical Approach**

Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy offers a dynamic theoretical framework called Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit), which includes nine tenets designed to address the complicated relationship between tribal members and the federal government, trying to make sense of Indigenous tribes' liminality as both racial and legal/political groups and individuals (Brayboy, 2005). TribalCrit is an extension of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which evolved out of critical legal studies in the 1980's, seeking to understand the role of race and the persistence of racism in American society (Yosso et al., 2009). In the mid 1990's, CRT was expanded to education to understand the difficulties facing people of color in educational institutions (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, as cited in Brayboy, 2005). CRT in education works toward eliminating the influence that racism, sexism, and poverty have in the lives of students and faculty (Brayboy, 2005; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Parker, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001b). Critical Race Theory embodies six tenets: 1) racism is endemic to society, 2) because racism benefits White Americans, a large segment of the population has little incentive to eradicate it, 3) race and races are products of social thought, and have no biological basis, 4) each race has its own origins and shifting experiences, 5) every person has overlapping and sometimes conflicting identities, and 6) minority status brings a presumed competence to speak about race and racism, and counter storytelling can push back against dominant narratives

(Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). These tenets clearly outline how deeply racism is rooted in the fabric of American life so that it has become unrecognizably the normal order of business (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Duncan, 2020).

Figure 3. *Critical Race Theory v. Tribal Critical Race Theory*

<b>Critical Race Theory (Delgado &amp; Stefancic, 2017)</b>	<b>Tribal Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005, pp. 429-430)</b>
Racism is endemic to U.S. society.	Colonization is endemic to society.
Because racism benefits white Americans, a large segment of the population has little incentive to eradicate it ( <i>interest convergence</i> ).	U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, white supremacy, and a desire for material gain.
Race and races are products of social thought and have no biological basis.	Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of their identities.
Each race has its own origins and shifting experiences ( <i>differential racialization</i> ).	Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification.
Every person has overlapping, and sometimes conflicting, identities ( <i>intersectionality</i> ).	The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens.
Minority status brings a presumed competence to speak about race and racism, and <i>counter-storytelling</i> can push back against dominant narratives.	Governmental policies and educational policies towards Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation.
	Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups.
	Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real, and legitimate sources of data and ways of being.
	Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change.



TribalCrit provides a theoretical lens for addressing many issues faced by Indigenous nations today, including the lack of students graduating, the overrepresentation of Indigenous students in special education, and the power struggles between federal, state, and tribal governments. In my research, I utilize TribalCrit as an overarching umbrella that frames and situates the study in a way that centers the need to disrupt the institution of schooling's goal of assimilation and integration of Indigenous students, and instead work to cultivate and maintain cultural integrity. Rather than replacing Indigenous students' cultural knowledge, TribalCrit calls for schools to combine both Indigenous culture, knowledge, and power with Western conceptions to engage survivance, self-determination and tribal autonomy (Brayboy, 2005, p. 437). With attention to Tenet Eight of TribalCrit, my research acknowledges that stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real, and legitimate sources of data and ways of being (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429). TribalCrit values narrative and stories as important sources of data. I think of story as a paradigm in my own research because of its interrelated and interconnected relationship with all aspects of the work; because of my personal relationship with and within the community and my continued relationships as we move through the research, as well as my responsibility to the community to tell the story of this research with collective voices. Kovach (2010) makes it explicitly clear that stories are imbued with energy of the dynamic relationship between teller and listener. Therefore, story can only exist within an interdependent relationship of the narrator and audience (p. 101).

This research study also emphasizes the last component of TribalCrit, Tenet Nine, which aims for theory and practice to be connected in deep and explicit ways such that

scholars must work towards social change (Brayboy, 2005, p. 440). Pre-service and in-service teachers and their access to Indigenous-centered professional development as both pedagogy and praxis provide opportunities to actively change the situation of assimilative practices in schools. Teachers who can expose structural inequalities and assimilatory processes and work toward debunking and deconstructing them can create real changes that address the needs of tribal peoples and communities (Burkhart, 2004, as cited in Brayboy, 2005). Furthermore, in this research setting, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe with whom this research is rooted, has been at the table to drive these professional development opportunities, which is relevant to the community and moves the tribe towards a more real self-determination of educational and tribal sovereignty.

### ***Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model (TIPM)***

According to Cornel Pewewardy et. al. (2018) there are four stages for developing critical consciousness in Indigenous education: Stage 1) Contributions approach, Stage 2) Additive approach, Stage 3) Transformational approach, and Stage 4) Cultural and social justice action. The Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model (TIPM) is a model designed in response to profound inequities that are detrimental to the well-being of Indigenous children and communities. The inequities of continued systemic racism through the privileging of dominant, Whiteman society disadvantages Indigenous communities and other communities of color (p. 38). I utilize this model in my research to gauge perceived growth in knowledge, skills, and dispositions towards Indian education because the framework is designed specifically for educators to transform their practices. This model expands upon the work of James Banks' (2004) and Michael Yellow Bird's (1998) models and is in the form of a pyramid metaphor that identifies,

maps, and develops students' critical consciousness by scaffolding tribal critical thinking. A transformational ideal of this model is for decolonization to be actualized through collective commitment and individual commitment to make changes in ways of knowing and being and sustained practices (Pewewardy, 2018).

The four stages of TIPM described by Pewewardy move along a spectrum of consciousness, and as educators become more conscious, they begin to support the development of students' consciousness as well (p. 54). Therefore, the first two stages focus solely on educators while the latter two stages include both educator and student examples centered around transformational practices. TribalCrit illuminates the broader context of Indigenous education, offering critical tenets to move education towards integration rather than assimilation of Indigenous students. TIPM provides a map for gauging educators' shifts in critical settler colonial and critical Indigenous consciousness towards decolonizing education. TIPM provides a way to measure growth towards TribalCrit goal to utilize Indigenous students' cultural knowledge with Western conceptions to engage survivance, self-determination and tribal autonomy (Brayboy, 2005).

### Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative research is to build on and enhance culturally responsive professional development programs geared toward Indigenous education by exploring the benefits of such programs to educators' identity, to their students, and to their profession, while also identifying the challenges of such programs. In this research, I explore the philosophical underpinnings of an Indigenous research paradigm, which situates my work in relationship, respect, reciprocity, and responsibility to all my relations, my community, my participants, and the land this research is located within (Wilson, 2001). Furthermore, an Indigenous research paradigm utilizes Indigenous worldviews, and expects relational accountability. Employing an Indigenous research paradigm is an act of resistance to dominant Western research paradigms, which have negatively impacted Indigenous people, and works to decolonize research by honoring and re-centering Indigenous paradigms and the people who work within Indigenous worldviews (Walker, 2015).

I have a relationship with each participant in this study, to varying degrees, that either developed through the enactment of doing professional development together, facilitating professional development that they were involved in, partnering through local-tribal initiatives, grant opportunities and support, involvement in pre-service programming and mentor/mentee relationships. These emerging and sustained relationships contributed to the level of trust, camaraderie, and transparency that unfolded during the interview process, which speaks to Kovach's (2010) point that story can only exist within interdependent relationships. Through a broader Indigenous research

paradigm, it is my hope to uphold those critical values that outline Indigenous research through relationships rooted in respect, reciprocity, and responsibility (Wilson, 2008).

### **Critical Narrative Inquiry**

Critical Narrative Inquiry (Lyons & Labosky, 2002) provides a methodological tool that has anchored the interpersonal and institutional nature of this study by providing a framework for deconstructing the stories and exploring assumptions about knowledge, power, and reflexivity (Hickson, 2015). As a researcher and community member, I also have kinship ties with the community, and my work within that community and the participants are inseparable, as well as our interconnected stories through a journey of professional development, serving the same families and communities, and growing together in the process. In this space of researcher, and participant in some ways, it is my responsibility to the community to tell the story of this research with collective voices. Kovach (2010) makes it explicitly clear that stories are imbued with energy of the dynamic relationship between teller and listener. Therefore, story can only exist within an interdependent relationship of the narrator and audience (p. 101).

I used critical narrative inquiry through an Indigenous research lens in an emancipatory effort to center the self-determination and inherent sovereignty of indigenous peoples, rooted in relationships, and driven by community interests (Brayboy, 2005). By employing critical narrative inquiry through an Indigenous research lens, I am making a concerted effort to uphold a research agenda that disrupts colonial underpinnings of mainstream research methodologies and counteracting them with Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies. Furthermore, this methodology supports TribalCrit as part of my theoretical framework as I try to honor participant

stories as real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being. The unpacking of stories through narrative inquiry helped me see the ways TribalCrit was being enacted as participants described their experiences in both theory and practice; the way professional development planted a seed, but relationships and community connections strengthened their understandings of Indigenous peoples and helped them to enact change in their schools. Narrative inquiry helped me to better understand what *is* happening and what *could* be happening in the experiences of participants, and the social, cultural, and individual forces that may influence their agency and outcomes. Clandinin and Connely (2000), write that narrative inquiry, “is a collaboration between researcher and participants” where an “inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry, still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up peoples’ lives; both individual and social” (p. 20).

As the researcher, I was a conduit in telling participants’ stories by editing, picking and choosing, key elements and information that informs readers of their stories and how their stories are significant to the futurity of professional development that matters to Indigenous children and their communities in their continued journey of survivance (Vizenor, 2008). Because the story, or lived experience, is what the researcher is trying to describe, their attention to the text becomes critical (Begay, 2012). Critical narrative inquiry supports situating the educators and the schools in a relational context, a context of individual and institutional power. These relationships are examined based on participants’ production of culturally relevant knowledge, skills, and dispositions—in perceptions and praxis.

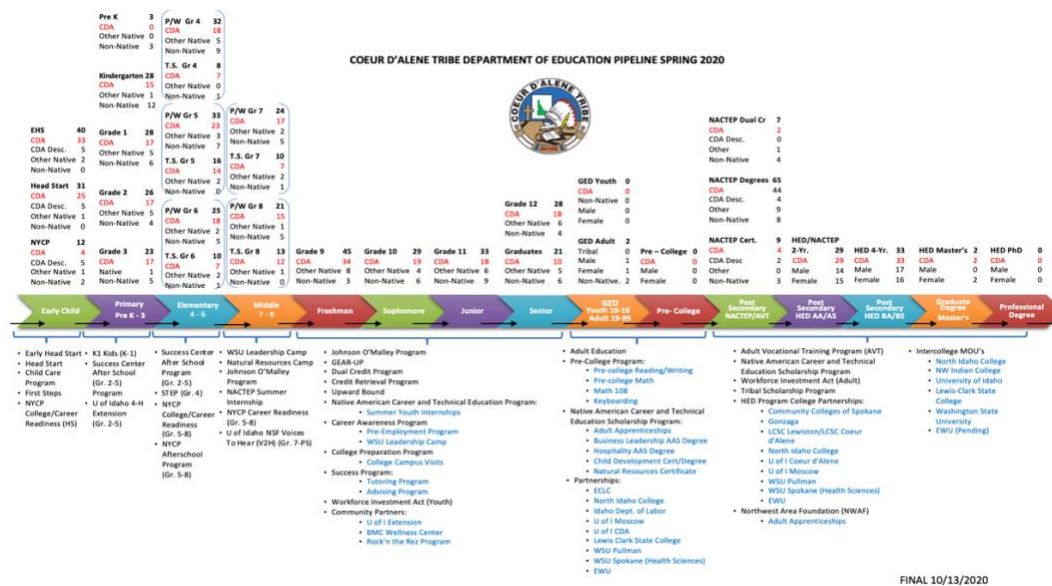
To analyze data, I utilized a collaborative approach by asking the participants to review the data analysis outcomes that produced a set of themes or critical elements of professional development that had emerged based upon common experiences, phrases, and key words identified in the interview transcriptions. The Director of Education for the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, who is also a member of the tribal nation, was a key collaborator in reviewing and articulating key points within the transcripts that resulted in larger theme identification. The Director of Education contributed valuable connection between narrative story and making sense of participant experiences because she was also part of creating and participating in many of the professional development opportunities afforded to the participants. This collaborative approach enabled me to engage with participants in collaborative conversation, which seemed to reduce any tension or apprehension. This method supported the inclusion of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe's Director of Education to ensure a process of fostering relationships between researcher, community, and the topic of inquiry.

### **A Story of Tribal Nation-Building Through Education**

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe's Department of Education, the place where this research is situated, unknowingly began a process of tribal nation-building in 2016 with the development of the Tribe's Education Pipeline. What began as a means for the new Director of Education, (Dr. M) to articulate the enormity of her task to take the role of education for the Tribe "up a notch" as directed by Tribal Council, expanded as she began to envision a birth-through-career pipeline that captured the Tribe's current education system, practices and supports to improve outcomes for tribal membership through the span of their careers. The pipeline ultimately provided a map for identifying

who makes up the pipeline and their progress - or lack of - along the path, and for identifying gaps in services to members. She then began prioritizing resources, programs, and services to strengthen and support each segment of the pipeline. Funding sources were identified to fill gaps, and partnerships with local schools and higher education institutions became a critical element in achieving a vision of education that successfully serves the Tribe's membership.

Figure 4. Education Pipeline



From its inception, the establishment of the education pipeline required community collaborators to gather baseline data of students, a group of community and school partners literally gathered several years' worth of yearbooks that were sifted through to identify who was in each cohort and identified the retention rate from freshman to senior year by looking at classes from successive yearbooks. Though it wasn't understood in so many words at the time, this was the first step towards the Tribe's journey in governing education. It was made clear that local Indigenous students



would never receive the education they deserve if the Tribe did not insist on having a seat at the table (Dr. M., 2021 personal communication, July 2021).

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe's STEP grant was a funding source that supported one significant element of the pipeline that has contributed to the Tribe's engagement, resolve, and practice of educational self-determination through strong local, state, and tribal partnerships, teacher and administrator professional development opportunities, and the development of curriculum rooted in tribal history, language, and culture. Perhaps most significant in the process of designing curriculum was the articulation of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe's five core values, which provided the framework for the curriculum, and had far-reaching impacts. The Tribe's core values grew to becoming officially adopted by the Tribal Council through resolution and are used as core teachings in the local schools, summer youth interns, and the Tribe's government employees.

It is also through mechanisms of the STEP grant that the Tribe assumed certain administrative functions of federal program requirements that enabled professional development opportunities with staff that grew beyond the scope of STEP to include partnerships with University of Washington's Indigenous Education certification and the local community college's American Indian Studies certification and more. This work done in partnership with local, state and tribal representatives began a process of Indigenizing and decolonizing education; through truthful, accurate, and inclusive accounts of tribal history, correcting misunderstandings about Indigenous peoples and their histories, cultures and worldviews while also beginning a process of disrupting the colonial consciousness of non-Indigenous teachers (Hopkins, 2020).

This story of tribal nation-building is included in the methodology section because the act of nation-building was not the original intent of the work that the Coeur d'Alene Tribe was doing, but it became illuminated in the enactment and outcomes of the work. Therefore, understanding this structure of tribal nation-building through education and how it unfolded informs the importance of this study to the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and illuminates the connections between specialized educator professional development and how it fosters tribal nation-building.

### **Study Context**

This study is situated on the Coeur d'Alene Reservation in Idaho, which is a rural area approximately 345,000 acres, situated within two counties with approximately 6,760 people now living on the Tribe's reservation. Today, the Tribe exists for the purpose of continuing to protect, preserve, and promote the sovereignty and cultural legacy of the Tribe and its membership. There are six participants in this study, including one Indigenous educator who had minimal exposure to their Indigenous roots having grown up in an urban setting away from their tribal nation. The remaining five are all non-Indigenous teachers and administrators, one of whom currently lives within the local community, and the rest having anywhere from a twenty to sixty-minute commute one-way to work each day. None of the participants grew up in the community.

As an act of disrupting deficit theorizing about Indigenous students, I call attention to local school data that signifies ruptures in school systems, structures, and the overall nature of rural school inequities. Some examples are rates of teacher turnover, lack of retention, demographic location of staff in relation to the community they serve, and the lack of Indigenous teachers serving Indigenous students. The State of Idaho data

for this study's location depicts a predominately rural population and ranking near last in per capita spending per student (Dearian, 2016). The schools and districts serving the highest populations of Indigenous youth rank among the lowest in standardized tests, graduation rates, and go-on rates (Dearian, 2016).

*Figure 5. School Demographics*

Place	Participants
▶ Two Schools (1 public, 1 BIE)	▶ 6 participants (1 Native, 5 White)
▶ Public serves roughly 79% Native students out of 343 students (K-12)	▶ 1 completed Indigenous pre-service program
▶ Tribal school serves 98% Native students out of 126 students (K-8)	▶ 5 participated in 3 or more specialized PD opportunities geared toward Indigenous education
▶ Certified teaching staff non-Native	
▶ Majority live outside reservation community, commute	

At the local level, employee demographics for the local public school district in 2019 revealed 86% of employees lived off-reservation. 74% of those employees were teachers. The average employee retention rate was 6.72 years. However, 78% of the group with 10+ years served in High School. There were no 10+ teachers in the elementary school, and only one elementary teacher in the 6-9-year category. There were no Tribal members or members of other tribes teaching in the public school district as of March 2019. During the same timeframe, the Tribal School had a 78% rate of off-reservation employees consisting of teachers and one superintendent/principal. 22% were student direct service providers. On-reservation employees included 30% teachers, 10% business manager, and 60% student direct service providers, meaning non-degree, non-certified. The average employee retention at the Tribal School was 6.74 years. The school has five Tribal member employees, one Tribal member administrator, no Tribal member teachers, and one teacher who is a Tribal descendent.

The Tribal school had more Indigenous employees than the public school; however, none of them were certified teachers at the time. At the time of this study, the Tribal school had hired Nathan, who is now a certified Indigenous teacher who completed his student teaching at the Tribal school, then transitioned into a full-time teaching position. This data demonstrates the lack of adult representation with a shared social identity to that of their students. This increases the challenge of ensuring Indigenous students feel that their social identity is an asset rather than a barrier to success in the classroom. Another challenge presented here is the lack of community-based teachers who have an investment and knowledge about student/community culture and language, and the rich connections to their backgrounds needed to support and sustain cultural pluralism.

These challenges are further reinforced in the public-school district's School Improvement Plan that spans across the district. The public school has been in school improvement status for over ten years. In Idaho, school improvement status is determined by the lowest five percent of schools in a group of ranked academic and school quality indicators. The public school's average scores compared to all Idaho schools have consistently fell below that five percent for the past ten years. Throughout the improvement plan, staff turnover is mentioned multiple times and is attributed with impacting teaching and learning continuity, and thus student learning, necessitating repetition in professional development, negatively impacting reliable, consistent communication between the school and federal programs staff, and interrupting any forward momentum of curriculum development. Additional staff-related challenges

mentioned are low, non-competitive wages, chronic substitute shortage, and staff overloaded with multiple roles and responsibilities due to small workforce.

According to surveys conducted with staff, over 60% indicated a need/interest for more training about the Tribal nation and the population served. The survey results from the 2017-2018 Idaho Indian Education/STEP Summit demonstrated a positive impact amongst all school districts staff, listing the most valuable parts of the summit being,

- “The application of cultural responsiveness to actual lesson plans,”
- “Hearing from tribal members, the historical background of the Tribe, and an understanding of tribal sovereignty as well as the mental health resources,”
- “Tribal, history, perspective and how to bring it to the classroom,”
- “Opportunity at the end of the Summit for all staff to reflect as a team on how to move forward with the information presented.”

The most powerful feedback from the summit was in-person feedback from participants that informed us later in the year that, “if it weren’t for the Indian Education/STEP Summit, I would have come into the school district and drowned. I wouldn’t have known anything about the community, the students, or their background. Having that background information was the key to my success as a new teacher coming into this district.”

The Indian Education movement in the State of Idaho contributes to this research, highlighting the educational inequities of Indigenous students in Idaho and creating space for curricular and pedagogical reform in rural Idaho schools and reimagining teacher pre-service and in-service preparation for Indigenous communities. Due to the work of the Coeur d’Alene Tribe’s STEP grant and the University of Idaho’s IKEEP program in and

for the two schools that are the focus of my research, I have seen capacity built to create a sustainable approach to cultural reform. There has been a transition, albeit slow and not schoolwide yet, from a willingness to collaborate to a need to collaborate, and a climate change around a cohort of educators that is making progress to include the assets and expertise of the community.

### ***Participant Selection***

There were seven educator participants invited to participate in this study who were selected through convenience sampling, and six agreed to participate. Four were from the state-funded public school; two teachers and two administrators, and two from the BIE-funded Tribal school; one teacher and one administrator. Each participant was selected because they participated in three or more culturally relevant professional development opportunities geared towards Indigenous youth (see Figure 5 below). This indicated that each of these educators experienced an above-average level of engagement/exposure to specialized professional development for Indigenous youth than other educators in their district. Participants were formally invited to participate by letter, delivered electronically, and a follow-up phone call to discuss details, answer questions, relay expectations, and set up interview one. The letter detailed the nature of the study, rationale for participant selection, and addressed confidentiality, expected time commitments, and what is hoped to be learned from this study and for whom. These participants who are all former colleagues and collaborators of mine, so there is a level of relationship and trust already established with this group.

I have worked with both schools through my previous role as the STEP Manager, overseeing a project funded with a grant secured through the Coeur d'Alene Tribe's

Department of Education, and therefore, I was involved directly and indirectly in many of the professional development offerings. The participants in this study were selected in consultation with teachers, administrators, and the Tribe's Department of Education. One participant, Nathan, was selected not only because he is a teacher at the tribal school, but because of his participation in the University of Idaho's Indigenous Knowledge for Effective Education program, which trains Indigenous scholars in culturally responsive pedagogies and prepares them to be certified teachers in schools serving high populations of Indigenous youth. The focus of the other five participants is on their in-service professional development experiences. I conducted two interviews with each participant that focused on assessing educator perceptions of their gained knowledge, skills, and dispositions towards Indian education. Between interview one and two I conducted a document review to look for evidence of the enactment of culturally relevant/responsive curriculum, lessons, projects in the classroom.

In addition to a document review I also conducted an environmental observation of classrooms for the participants who were teachers and school-wide environmental observations for administrators. Environmental observations showed varying degrees of evidence of culturally relevant and responsive representation. The intention of the document review and environmental observations was to collect data that would give me insight whether the perceptions of educators on the benefits of this type of professional development opportunity transfer into their professional practices to benefit students. By examining the sociological characteristics that influence change in educator praxis, this research study is intended to contribute to the knowledge base and progress of Indigenous

education and inform tribal nations, schools and states about policy enactments that better serve Indigenous students.

*Figure 6. Participant Professional Development Completion*

<b>Name</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Inservice CR Professional Development</b>	<b>Relevant Background</b>
Melissa	Elementary Teacher	STEP Team Idaho Indian Ed Summit STEP Indian Ed Summit NIC In-Service STEP In-Service Tribal Sovereignty & Federal Indian Policy (3 credit) Indigenous Ed Summit Native Knowledge 360	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4-year project with STEP CSRP curriculum design</li> <li>• Curriculum pilot</li> <li>• Community mentorship</li> </ul>
Hanna	Elementary Teacher	STEP Team Idaho Indian Ed Summit STEP Summit NIC In-Service STEP In-Service Tribal Sovereignty & Federal Indian Policy (3 credit) Indigenous Ed Summit Native Knowledge 360	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4-year project with STEP CSRP curriculum design</li> <li>• Curriculum pilot</li> <li>• Community mentorship</li> </ul>
Gwen	MS/HS Instructional Coach  First 3-years for Tribe Department of Education	UW Native Ed Cert Idaho Indian Ed Summit x2 STEP Indian Ed Summit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous teacher at Tribal Education Department teaching college and career workshops.</li> <li>• Co-Constructor of Rites of Passage Curriculum, (a Tribe-driven youth development project)</li> <li>• Received long-term mentorship</li> </ul>



			from STEP Manager & other community members
Jolene	MS/HS Principal	STEP Administrators PD STEP Indian Ed Summit NIC In-Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key collaborator and decision maker regarding PD opportunities and subsequent praxis</li> </ul>
Nathan	Tribal School: MS Teacher	Pre-service program geared towards preparing Indigenous scholars to work in communities with high populations of Indigenous youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specially designed Indigenous pre-service teacher program in Idaho</li> <li>• Subsequent induction services</li> <li>• Indigenous mentorship</li> </ul>
Tyanne	K-8 Superintendent/ Principal	Involved in IKEEP Induction services UW Native Ed Certificate Idaho Indian Ed Summit STEP Indian Ed Summit STEP Administrators PD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key collaborator and decision maker regarding PD opportunities and subsequent praxis.</li> <li>• Participation in many key PD offerings.</li> <li>• Sits on Idaho Indian Education Committee</li> </ul>

### ***Interviews***

Utilizing narrative inquiry methods adapted, and applied through a Critical Indigenous research lens, I interviewed each educator for two, one-to-two-hour interviews per participant. The intent of the first interview was to set the stage by getting an understanding of each participant's background, demographics, and an understanding of how they ended up in their school district. The first interview gave a sense of the professional development opportunities they have had and an identification of what

elements of those professional development experiences impacted them and why. A second interview was conducted to expand upon reflections from the first interview and dive deeper into understanding changes to participant teaching and/or administrative practices through their perceptions of personal growth in knowledge, skills and dispositions towards American Indian education following their engagement in these opportunities. Interview Two was in part, informed by the first interview that provided a strong backdrop of participant backgrounds and what led them to education (Benner, 1994). The interviews were semi-structured, open-ended, and audio taped for transcripts. I transcribed all interviews and coded them for themes. I looked for key words, similar context, similarities in stories, common assumptions and understandings, and connections made to aspects of professional development that were particularly impactful to each of them. Every participant was notified that they may request a copy of their interview.

### **Interview Sequence.**

To craft the interview questions for this study to effectively capture educator knowledge, skills, and dispositions, I studied the structure of McInnes' (2016) survey in *Preparing teachers as allies in Indigenous education: benefits of an American Indian content and pedagogy course*. McInnes' survey sought to understand participant knowledge about Indigenous peoples, such as histories, cultural values, stories, language, and practices, as well as participants' perceived skills about their ability to find authentic, bias-free resources, and have capacity to identify and proactively address stereotypes about Indigenous people in the classroom. The survey also looked at dispositional changes in participants' self-assessed growth in confidence, attainment of applied skills such as teaching tribal histories, skill in designing curriculum and teaching lessons, and

perceived ability to build relationships with Indigenous students, families, and communities. The pre- and post- survey method McInnes (2016) used to determine growth in these areas helped me to formulate research questions seeking similar perceptions in educators.

Interview One focused on the background of the participants, including life history/positionality, teaching history, and thinking about why they became a teacher/educator and how they were prepared to work with Native students. Participants also gave a description of professional development experiences related to culturally responsive teaching/schooling, then identified aspects or processes involved in said professional development experiences that led to a deeper understanding of effective education for Indigenous students. Interview Two sought to understand changes to teaching/administrative practices, changes to the perceived value of culturally responsive teaching and schooling, and changes to dispositional orientation towards Indigenous education.

### ***Environmental Observations***

An environment observation was conducted for each educator utilizing an environmental observation protocol I designed to look at the classroom and/or school environment to make inferences on whether there was indication of participant growth in culturally relevant and responsive practices that were tangibly observed on the classroom and school walls. I looked for images and artifacts on the walls or around the classroom/school representing students' culture, language, families, and community, and student work displayed that demonstrated culturally relevant curriculum implementation, and any additional visual representations of cultural assets. These examples could be in

the form of a poster, image, agenda, or product. These examples shared have been documented through photographs and field notes taken at the time of Interview Two. Examples of environmental observation (See Appendix D) artifacts included the following:

- 1) Images & artifacts on the walls representing students' culture, language, families, community (classroom or schoolwide),
- 2) Student work displayed that demonstrates culturally relevant curriculum implementation,
- 3) Other: any additional visual representations of cultural assets (e.g., poster, image, agenda, product).

A document review was conducted demonstrating culturally responsive artifacts. (See Appendix E).

In each classroom I observed, the local Indigenous language was displayed in some fashion. One classroom had a welcome sign on the door, posters of the Tribe's core values written in English and the Indigenous language, and a map of the Tribe's aboriginal territory with place names identified in Indigenous language and English. This classroom also had some great examples of culturally relevant and responsive practices such as a clear, visual schedule of the day that identified what to expect next as well as a schedule posted at the end of the day for students to know what was happening the next day. Plenty of prompts and cues to support student preparedness and engagement. The library included a selection of around eight to ten books written by Indigenous authors, students' work was displayed on the classroom walls, and the classroom included some relevant cultural artifacts such as canoe journey images and a local coyote story. The

Tribal school displayed a lot more Indigenous language within classrooms and throughout the school, and they do have a Tribal Language and History teacher who also offers support to staff to learn with the students. The public high school had Indigenous language placards identifying various rooms such as bathrooms, library, and classroom, and displayed the Tribe's core values and student art in the hallways.

### ***Document Reviews***

To further support the evidence from environmental observations, I conducted a document review with each participant who shared evidence of what they considered enactment of cultural responsiveness in their classroom or school. The document review protocol I designed asked that participants share a minimum of two documents or artifacts. For teachers, the protocol included: 1) curriculum, 2) lesson plans, and 3) three to five student work samples. For the three administrators, documents could be: 1) evidence of culturally relevant changes to policy or procedure, 2) schoolwide professional development or in-service plans, 3) community partnership building practices and procedures, 4) recruitment and retention practices and procedures. These artifacts were reviewed and assessed for examples of culturally relevant teaching practices in action and connected to interview transcripts to identify themes.

Administrative participants shared revisions that have been made or are in the planning phases to policy or procedures, action plans or activities that include culturally relevant schooling action. Narrative inquiry is present through each data collection method by editing, picking and choosing, key elements and information that helped inform the outcomes and implications. The narrative and lived experiences of the participants was the driving force of this research and critical attention to their stories, their professional

spaces where they serve Indigenous students, and evidence of their work was fundamental to identifying growth in perceptions and praxis.

### **Data Analysis**

The use of critical qualitative methodologies guided an interconnected analysis of participant interviews, along with document reviews, environmental observations, and an understanding of the content and context of participants' professional development experiences. Critical qualitative methodologies require substantive data collection and dialogical approach to data analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Through inductive and comparative analytical methods, I actively listened through a critical Indigenous research lens to transcribe each interview with respect, reciprocity, and responsibility to the relationships I have with the community, and with the participants.

During the interviews and after when transcribing them, I could see how the participants would process through answering the questions, and at first it appeared some of them were just trying to figure out how to answer the question the "right way", then would ask "is that what you were looking for?" "Did I answer the question?" Some participants developed new realizations as they were processing their own thoughts about what and how much they have learned, and grown, and the need for continued growth. I could see in this process how meaning is continually constructed and reconstructed. As participants began a reflective process of crafting their responses to questions, they began to relive, reconstruct, and reinterpret their experiences. The participants were actively reconstructing and reinterpreting their experiences in some cases (McCormack, 2000). Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995) helped me to analyze teachers verbal processing of their experiences and guided my understandings of their perceptions and

practices in the context of change in attitudes, perceptions, and dispositional orientations. Critical discourse analysis holds that communication is a “form of social practice” that is dialogically related to the social context in which it takes place (Barker & Galasinski, 2001). Discourse cannot be separated from ideologies that inform social understanding or behavior and can thus be analyzed “to uncover relationships between aspects of social life—such as power, ideology, gender, class, and race—that language encodes (Chase, 1996; Quinn, 2005)” (Watson, 2012, p. 989).

Through an inductive analysis of data, I found it important to systematically code, sort, categorize, and build some organizational structure by visualizing the data and constructing themes in a way that captured the complex sociohistorical context of education (Bhattacharya, 2016). The themes identified in the data analysis process grew out of relevant Indigenous-centered research that was applied to supporting evidence from the interview data, key points were drawn from interviewee transcriptions, then connected to relevant literature.

### **Validity and Reliability**

To strengthen study reliability, I have used elements of triangulation (Hammond & Wiriyapinit, 2005; Yin, 2006) which enables multiple forms of data to be cross-referenced multiple ways to ensure greater dependability. Converging lines of evidence makes findings as robust as possible (Yin, 2006, p. 115). Triangulation was possible through the analysis of multiple interviews, categorized into overarching themes and substantiated with document reviews and environmental observations as evidence of practice. The themes were shared with participants in the form of a table that provided direct interview quotes that substantiate each theme.

### **Partner Institution and Participant Confidentiality and Consent**

Pseudonyms have been used for each participant and partner schools throughout this project in large part because the importance of this research topic lies in the aggregate of the information that participants provide to formulate a collective set of outcomes, findings, and implications for future research. I secured an approved IRB from the University of Idaho prior to initiating this study and seeking participation from schools and participants. There are two school districts who agreed to participate in this study, both of whom reviewed the IRB's, consent forms, and followed their internal processes to approve this research study. The Coeur d'Alene Tribe has their own IRB process that I followed according to their guidelines and received approval. This step was very important to me as an act of respectful, reciprocal, responsible relationship with the Tribal nation, and I have a personal commitment to conduct research that is community-centered and deemed necessary. Each participant received a consent form to be read and signed prior to participating in the study. Some consents were given verbally during the interview recordings. The consent form addresses any potential risks to participation, the anticipated outcomes of the research, the security and confidentiality of their participation and their rights to transcriptions, recordings, and shared preliminary findings. In communication with participants, I communicated that the intended benefits of the study will provide information on potential implications for future teachers/educators' professional development opportunities that support sustainable best practices for successfully serving Indigenous students.



## Chapter 4: Findings

Data analysis of participant interviews, document reviews, environmental observations, and the content and context of their professional development experiences revealed three main themes about the process of learning needed to *desettle and transform* educators serving Indigenous youth, a process I call *transformational desettling*. Current research inquiries in Indigenous education pedagogy and praxis, largely informed by the work of John Hopkins (2020) and his notion of *desettling learning*, led to Theme One, the *necessary establishment of community connections*, Theme Two, *essential understandings of place*, and Theme Three, *holistic and ongoing professional development opportunities*.

Participants went through a process of generative learning that has created space where these educators, who were exposed to Indigenous centered professional development opportunities, underwent disruptions to their preconceptions, stereotypes, prejudices, and assumptions about Indigenous peoples and experiences. By undergoing a multistage process that required a variety of levels of new awareness, participants moved towards more positive perceptions of Indigenous communities, students, and gained critical understanding of the need for culturally relevant and responsive practices. This is the process of *transformational desettling*. John Hopkins describes *desettling* as a learning process that mostly White teachers undergo to undo the damage that settler colonialism has imposed on schools, curriculum, pedagogy, policy, and practice. *Transformational* is growth that awakens educators towards new knowledge, skills, and dispositions supportive of educating Indigenous learners. Transformation occurs as educators become more conscious through a scaffolded approach to critical thinking with

the goal of actualizing decolonial education through individual educator commitment and a collective commitment towards sustained practices.

Figure 7. Overview of themes

<b>OVERVIEW OF THREE THEMES LEADING TO TRANSFORMATIONAL DESETTLING</b>
<b>Theme 1: Necessary Establishment of Community Connections</b>
Relationship building - having a relationship with person(s) from the community may help educators feel more comfortable to engage in the community because they have someone to invite them and introduce them
Engagement in community - Participation in the community builds trust w/ students & families and gives educators opportunity to see from a new lens. It also increases the chance that community will call you back and respond to your invites
Place & culture-based professional development - place & culture-based PD is sometimes an educators first introduction and experience to the community. Therefore, it is in this space that relationships are established, trust built, mentorship grows
<b>Theme 2: Essential Understandings of Place (Place Consciousness)</b>
Perspective shifts in family structure & dynamics -from a unidimensional to a multidimensional understand of family; beyond secular to communal.
Community funds of knowledge are an asset -establishing community connections as described in Theme 1 helped build understanding of place and created space for experiencing community funds of knowledge.
Emergence of critical settler colonial consciousness -understanding of place in addition to relationships promoted listening, learning, and reflection; a pathway towards critical settler colonial consciousness because honor and respect of differences is being fostered.
<b>Theme 3: Holistic and ongoing professional development</b>
Inseparability of professional development, mentorship, and land -there is such a strong interconnectedness between land-based professional development, community mentorship, and the act of <i>doing</i> , that they are inseparable.
Tools for the classroom and hands-on application -part of a holistic professional development environment is space for educators to practice the knowledge, skills, and abilities they are gaining and have the tools needed to use resources with fidelity.
Transformative nature of place, space, and application -Educators who have experienced this specialized PD rooted in place, given the space to learn, apply, and reflect, understand the valuable and transformative nature of decolonizing education.
<b>Transformational desettling</b>
Expose and disturb assumptions about Indigenous peoples
Awareness of insufficient pre-service programs lacking multicultural education -educators critically pointed out the lack of multicultural education in their pre-service programs, therefore lack of preparedness to work with Indigenous communities
New learning that shifts consciousness towards new self-understanding -reflections on upbringing, education experiences, and external social interactions indicate positive shifts in self-understanding toward liberatory practices

The three themes help identify the type of and ways in which specialized professional development moves educators towards a more critical consciousness of themselves and Indigenous education. I used Cornel Pewewardy's (2018) Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model (TIPM) to analyze participant growth towards transforming their practices in support of Indigenous youth. TIPM is not a tool to diagnose individuals; rather, it supports educators by providing terminologies to help transform their practices as they articulate their experiences. This support is weaved through a four-stage model that educators can aspire to embody (p. 39).

To understand the findings more deeply, I will first highlight how educator backgrounds, which are bound within a settler colonial context, influence how they came to the process of settling and transforming their understandings Native people and culturally responsive pedagogy. I will connect the stages of Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model (TIPM) to highlight the cycle of change participants have undergone through their specialized professional development experiences.

### **Role of Educator Background in CR Understandings**

When I began to design the sequence of the two interview protocols for this study, I envisioned Interview One as a "setting the stage" protocol that would help me to understand who the participants are, their demographics, and their backgrounds, including what motivated them to become educators. Furthermore, I wanted an understanding of their pre-service program experiences to get a sense of their baseline understandings and education opportunities in terms of diversity, multiculturalism, and cultural resource pedagogies to help gauge their level of growth in knowledge, skills, and dispositional orientations. These introductory questions in interview one also required

them to consider their own perspectives on their in-service professional development experiences. Though I have crafted my own list of professional development opportunities relevant to this work, their recollections give me a sense of which ones stand out to them. Initially, I perceived the first two questions of interview one as “warm-up” questions so-to-speak; a way to orient the participant to the interview process and slowly move into more pointed questions. What I quickly learned is how important the educators’ backgrounds and pre-service experiences are to understanding their past and present dispositional orientations and the epistemologies and ideologies they bring to the classroom that influence their everyday interactions (Archibeque, 2016).

The experiences of all six participants were quite similar, resulting in themes that reinforce what multicultural education has long pointed out, that education center’s White identity, values, ideologies, and experiences. DiAngelo (2012) points out that White educators lack a ‘structural understanding of racial inequality’ and minimize racism to individual acts. They tend to operate from a deficit framework that sees communities of color as lacking the norms and values that will enable their children to succeed in school. I have seen this ideological perspective play out in so many ways throughout my student and career experiences in these very schools. I have seen how multicultural education is reduced to once-a-month activities outside the normal class schedule that are coined, “culture days” when community members are asked to come in and do arts and crafts with children, share stories, and *perform* (Deyhle, 2008). I have seen how racism is reduced to individuals acts, and many teachers experiencing what they feel is reverse racism, not understanding that reverse racism does not exist because the occasional mistreatment of a White person by a person(s) of color does not have the same result of

systemic and institutionalized mistreatment experienced by people of color (Sherover-Marcuse, 1988).

To paint a picture of how the background information of participants became so central to the findings, I will share three of the interview questions that provided a backdrop of participant positionality centered around their education journey. The first question of Interview One asked participants to give a little background about themselves and talk about what led them to becoming an educator. The second question describes what their teaching/educator background and experience has been like so far and what led them to this community that they are currently serving. Then I have them describe their pre-service program experience and the ways in which it prepared them, or not, for working in culturally diverse settings.

These opening questions illuminate how these educators, some in more tangible ways than others, begin to transform in personal, experiential ways, which is evident in their initial preconceptions, prejudices, and assumptions about Indigeneity, Whiteness, and tribal experiences (Hopkins, 2020). For interview one, Gwen was asked if her pre-service program prepared her for working in diverse settings and in what ways, and she was quick to say no. “From what I recall, there were no courses on diversity and definitely nothing specific to Native students. But you know, Idaho as we know, does not have a lot of diversity as far as ethnicity goes, and I just don’t think they thought about it. It was more on reading and math and literacy, and those sort of topics; classroom management” (Gwen, personal interview with author, May 6, 2021).

Figure 8. Summary of Educator Backgrounds

<b>Background</b>	K-12 experience had some exposure to diverse student populations	Long line of teachers in family	Drawn to kids and to teaching at a young age
<b>Education Experiences</b>	4 out of 6 were non-traditional students	Great student teaching experience	One out of 6 completed a pre-service program designed to prepare Indigenous scholars to teach through Indigenous pedagogies lens
<b>Pre-Service Perceptions</b>	Did not prepare for working in diverse, multicultural settings	One or no courses on diversity. 5 out of 6 participants experienced no courses specific to Indigenous populations	Core of program was academic subjects & classroom management/learning styles
<b>Entry Into Community</b>	Recruited through a pre-existing relationship with a community member Visited community during pre-service teacher program & student teaching	Moved from another state, hired to teach 4 <sup>th</sup> grade, began participation on STEP curriculum team	Moved to community via marriage, found two strong mentors from community

### **Key Commonalities**

Many participants came from a family lineage of educators, had an affinity for working with children at a young age, or simply loved being a student themselves. One participant had negative education experiences due to feeling invisible, misunderstood, and marginalized, and therefore sought to ensure that no children would ever feel that way. “Rather than reaching out and trying to get to know who I was as a person or how I grew up, it was just you know, grade marks. And so just kind of all of those experiences

kind of caused me to like kind of crawl into myself and be less you know, wanting to talk, or speak up, and it wasn't until like, so, then I married at a young age, had four kids, stay at home mom for many years, but I always knew I wanted to go to school and become a teacher that's still sat in the core of who I was because I always said, I never want a child to feel that way, to ever feel invisible or they don't have a voice, and I want every child be seen (Tyanne, personal interview with author, April 7, 2021). Exposure to a particular set of experiences led them all to teaching. It becomes evident in the epistemological and ideological underpinnings of why these participants became educators is rooted in a very Western education paradigm with little opportunity or exposure to multicultural education, Indigenous education, or other ways of being and knowing that counter the hegemonic system that they are accustomed to. Hanna always loved kids, however in her school growing up only the popular girls were elementary education teachers, so she rejected that idea and became a Medical Assistant instead. Hanna describes two different high schools she went to growing up, one all white school with one black male who was very popular and the other high school near a military base and extremely diverse, with several languages spoken. This is when she really discovered her parents, coming from the depression era, did not relate well with diversity. They had a mindset of "those who are not white are not bright". Hanna recalls standing up to her mother multiple times, and then acknowledging that her mom was ignorant. She tried really hard to "not be racist" but she was. She didn't know she was, "she just had pre-formed ideas from her generation" (Hanna, personal interview with author, March 25, 2021). They all grew up in settings that fostered a love for working with youth, and a love for teaching, yet none of them grew up in a setting that included multicultural

perspectives in pedagogy or praxis (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Howard, 2020).

### **Pre-Service Perceptions.**

Four out of six participants were non-traditional students, having families while going to school and some having worked in previous careers. For this study, Nathan was the only participant selected because his pre-service program, which focused on serving Indigenous scholars to become teachers utilizing a culturally sustaining and revitalizing approach. The remaining five were exposed to culturally responsive in-service professional development opportunities geared towards Indigenous education once they were hired in their current schools. These five participants felt that their pre-service program did not prepare them to work in diverse, multicultural settings, or with Indigenous populations. Furthermore, there was a consensus among all participants that pre-service programs alone do not prepare teachers for the realities of the work. Nathan, the one Indigenous pre-service participant, explained that his general teacher education program was very philosophical and ideological while the Indigenous scholars program provided him with more practical knowledge and connections to Indigenous communities and students (Nathan, personal interview with author, May 10, 2021). Tyanne describes her pre-service program as unrealistic and focuses only on middle-class, White Americans. “The expectations put on a new teacher doesn’t give you enough time to build a relationship with students, so I don’t give much substance to those experiences because most of your learning as a teacher comes from on-the-job experiences (Tyanne, personal interview with author, April 7, 2021).



Pre-service programs are perpetuating educators' dysconsciousness that maintains assimilationist behaviors through the firmly established Eurocentric pedagogies, practices, curriculum, and structures that are innately inequitable. Innovative programs rooted in Indigenous pedagogies have begun to emerge, such as the one referenced in this study, that are reinforcing ways that educators can begin to develop critical consciousness that moves toward understanding of pedagogy and practices that embody Indigenous ways of knowing. Current pre-service programs do not attend to critical elements of professional development identified in this study that leads to decolonizing education. Educators enter school settings strongly situated as contributions approach practitioners; content with the colonial structure of schooling (Pewewardy, 2018).

### **Journey That Led to This Community.**

Particularly interesting to the identification of findings in this study were the ways in which participants were led to serve in this small, rural, Indigenous community, and how each journey led to a deeper understanding of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, the community, family structures and funds of knowledge, because of the participants' relationships with tribal community members, or through participation on teams that were rooted in and driven by the tribe, or had previously-established relationships with a community member. In each of these instances, a form of mentorship was developed, and each participant emphasizes the value of their mentor relationships, the impact it had on their community understandings, the love they have developed for the community and the students and their reasons for staying in this place. In interview one, Jolene describes when she first started in the district and the impacts of forming relationships with two tribal members who worked at the school with her. "When I first started in the district, I

had two mentors who were both tribal members. They drove me all over the community and told me stories of each place, such as the historic boarding school buildings, tribal department tours; all over the place, and the culture and history behind these places. We picked up a porcupine one time and used the quills to do projects with the kids. We picked up a deer one time and had the kids skin the hide. We threw it up on the roof of the school to dry out and boy did it smell bad! Not sure that was such a good idea. We ended up making a drum out of the hide that I believe they still use today. These two mentors meant everything. I wouldn't have made it here if it wasn't for them. I fell in love with this place, with the kids and the community. I can't imagine being anywhere else" (Jolene, personal interview with author, June 9, 2021).

Participants' pathway to this community, and the value they have articulated in terms of the importance of community relationships and its impact on their success as an educator in the school district(s) demonstrates a process of coming to see that one is missing something. Through the relationships the participants built with people, place, and community, they established the desire to change. It is here where I see the beginning stages of the Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model (TIPM) Stage Two, the additive approach. There are beginning developments of consciousness demonstrated by recognizing the value and contributions of tribal communities to education, but this consciousness is still fragile and inconsistent, resulting in little change in pedagogy or practice. Too much direct conversation about decolonization that leads to changes in colonial structures is uncomfortable and may be acknowledged without changing any existing content.

## Unpacking Themes

John Hopkins (2020) introduces the idea of *desettling learning* as a transformative learning process that White teachers undergo to undo what settler colonialism has taught them about themselves and about Indigenous peoples (p. 144). *Desettling* facilitates a learning process that guides teachers to become allies of decolonizing education. The idea of *desettling learning* is confirmed in this study through the personal, transformative process participants go through when exposed to counternarratives that disturb their preconceptions, prejudices, and assumptions instilled in them by the same systems that oppress Indigenous peoples. *Desettling learning* reminds me of Jack Forbes' (1998) writing about intellectual self-determination and sovereignty, when he says, "The mind cannot function effectively if it is imprisoned. An intelligentsia cannot exist if the minds of the people are programmed to accept whatever colonialism decrees" (p. 14). The mere absence of diversity, multiculturalism, or culturally responsive pedagogy in pre-service programs as mentioned by participants in this study, demonstrates the way people are "programmed to accept whatever colonialism decrees". Students are not given the opportunity to expand their consciousness beyond the Western binary that is our education system in America. As participants undergo a process of *desettling learning*, the stages of Pewewardy's (2018) Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model (TIPM) are further embodied in the perceptions of the participants. The four TIPM stages illuminate a scaffolding process showing a rise in self-awareness and critical consciousness leading to varying degrees of change in pedagogical growth and educator praxis based on experience and action (Pewewardy, 2018 p. 53). By desettling, I am referring to how Indigenous-centered professional development opportunities for educators, both pre-

service and in-service, lead to disruptions in their preconceptions, stereotypes, prejudices, and assumptions about Indigenous peoples and experiences. *Transformational* is referring to the growth that occurs along a spectrum from shallow to deep consciousness that awakens educators towards new knowledge, skills, and dispositions supportive of educating Indigenous learners.

The first theme is the *necessary establishment of community connections*, which encompasses participants' stories of relationship building as acts of mentorship, engagement in the community, and place and culture-based professional development that created space for community connections to occur. Theme Two is *essential understandings of place*, because participants start becoming conscious of the power and importance of place for Indigenous peoples, their experiences, and ways of knowing. Educators gain place consciousness by experiencing place-based education and activities themselves. This essential understanding of place is reflected in participant shifts in perspective about family and community structures, and their diverse, complex, and multifaceted layers. Community funds of knowledge are being identified and better understood leading to an emergency of critical settler colonial consciousness and critical Indigenous consciousness.

Theme Three is *holistic and ongoing professional development*. Centering the first theme, *community connections*, the third theme acknowledges the inseparability of professional development, community-based mentorship, and land, and must include tools for the classroom and hands-on, experiential learning. As participants describe their professional development experiences in relation to their understandings of Indigenous students, you begin to see the transformative nature of place, space, and application.

Professional development that is rooted in place gives space for mentorship to develop organically, and when application opportunities are given, transformational shifts in consciousness begin to emerge.

The educators in this study are experiencing a *transformational desettling*, that demonstrates the extent that educators who engage in culturally responsive professional development move along a spectrum from shallow unconsciousness or dysconsciousness, to a deeper consciousness that, if fostered and supported, can lead to sustained change in pedagogy and practice. Prior to having exposure to these professional development opportunities and the parallel community mentorship, educators in this study had a dysconsciousness of the impacts of settler colonialism on their practices and perceptions. Dysconsciousness is an impaired or distorted way of thinking that tacitly accepts dominant White norms and privileges, which includes one's perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs. So, when educators move through the process of *transformational desettling* and begin to develop critical consciousness, that leads to personal paradigm shifts that move educators beyond just Indigenizing education to decolonizing education.

The pages that follow delve deeper into each theme with examples of participant experiences, understandings, and shifts in dispositional orientation. The TIPM stages of transformation are illuminated, and through participant narrative, one can see how participants move along a spectrum and do not fit in a particular stage. The spectrum is demonstrated in the ways participants tend to ebb and flow between Stages Two and Three, the additive and transformation approaches.

The additive approach reflects educators who are at an emerging thinking level in their understandings of decolonizing education. They demonstrate bursts of critical awareness and show some change in pedagogy, but not regular practice. There is an awareness of the harmful impacts of colonization, but educators in this stage can easily become overwhelmed by the thought of making social change (Pewewardy, 2018, p.55). Basically, there is an illusion of commitment to change, but it is not yet carried out in practice for any productive amount of time. Pewewardy (2018) describes the transformation approach (Stage 3) as educators who are moving toward liberatory pedagogy, meaning they understand why decolonization is important and the need for all educators need to understand it. In the transformation stage, educators begin engaging with tribal communities and seek community as holders of information that they can learn from. At this stage, educators are practicing decolonial work by enacting curriculum and pedagogical changes that include multiple ways of knowing (p. 56).

### ***Necessary Establishment of Community Connections***

The first theme identified was the *necessary establishment of community connections*. The three main findings supporting this theme are 1) Relationship building: relationships with a single tribal member fosters mentorship and community connections, 2) engagement in community: engagement in community builds relationship, respect, trust, and reciprocity, and 3) place and culture-based professional development fosters trusting relationships and provides access to meaningful community connections. Every single participant in this study could clearly articulate a single or multiple community mentors who have heavily influenced and prepared them to work in local tribal community schools.

I knew one participant in this study, Gwen, prior to her having any knowledge of or experience with tribal communities. I reached out to her personally to apply for a college and career teaching position with the tribe's education department. This was a position completely out of her comfort zone, and she had no idea what to expect. Due to our established relationship and being a community member and Tribal member myself, I was able to introduce Gwen to the dynamics of the community, family relations and connections, history of the Tribe and the schools from my personal lived experiences and introduce her to key partners within the tribe. When she didn't know who to ask or which way to go to set up curriculum and programming, I was able to send her to the right people, give her contact information and explain to her their role in the community.

Soon Gwen was developing her own relationships within the community, and with students, and participating in community activities. Gwen and I would have check-in conversations where she felt comfortable asking me tough questions that she felt embarrassed to ask anyone else, and she began participating in professional development opportunities geared towards Indigenous students to further her knowledge and understanding of tribal communities, histories, and best practices as an Indigenous ally. In our first interview, Gwen shared how conversations were critical for relationship building:

It is those conversations that you and I have had, as well as conversations I've had at DOE, or with community members or our partners. I think that's another key component is that it takes a special person to be able to have those conversations, because I think it's a real vulnerable place for us to be in, because once I knew that you were a safe place and I don't need to be ashamed about it, that it is what it

is, and you understand that the education system and all of these other pieces have not set me up to um; it's not a shaming thing. And, and that's huge. That is huge. So, um, yeah, I think those things have been invaluable. Conversations, open conversations in a safe space. (Gwen, personal interview with author, May 6, 2021).

The relationships established between educator's and tribal community members fostered a space for mentorship that supported educators to learn, grow, and build critical understandings of students, families, and community in a safe space. An interesting observation in the *necessary establishment of community connections* is that participant entry points were different, but each led to the same path of how important community connections and mentorship are to working in Indigenous communities. Each interview illuminated the inseparability of building community connections, relationships within the community that lead to mentorship, and professional development that fosters and sustains those relationships. For the participants in this study, it is the establishment of community relationships that prompted engagement in activities that moved them towards pedagogical changes (Alim & Paris, 2017; Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Hammond, 2015; Moll et. al., 1992).

Jolene recalls starting in the school district and developing a mentor relationship with two community members who worked at the school. They provided invaluable opportunities to explore the community, learn the history of places, and experience traditional practices with them and students. Jolene stated that these two mentors meant everything to her. "I wouldn't have made it here if it wasn't for them. I fell in love with



this place, with the kids and the community. I can't imagine being anywhere else” (Jolene, interview with the author, April 7, 2021).

One participant, Nathan, had the unique opportunity to participate in a pre-service teacher education program designed to prepare and certify culturally and linguistically responsive Indigenous educators to serve in schools with high populations of Indigenous youth. A cohort of Indigenous scholars and Indigenous teacher mentors became a community of their own and were given opportunities to be in surrounding Indigenous communities, experiencing land and culture-based curriculum, and getting opportunities to work with Indigenous students in these communities. That experience is what led Nathan to work on the Coeur d'Alene Reservation; he had the opportunity to build relationships with the students and their families prior to his full-time position.

Nathan now lives in this community during the school year, which has increased his connections to community and strengthened relationships with students and families. “Understanding of community is number one. We have a lot of community members working in the school who are always there, understanding that strong connection with families and the way students interact with each other and has helped me engage with Native students more. Also, living in the community I get to see kids after school, the kids will knock on my door, they all want me to go sledding with them right behind the house. Connecting with them on a level outside of just school; playing basketball with them, seeing them places” (Nathan, personal interview with author, May 10, 2021).

Multiple participants acknowledged that it is a very vulnerable place to be in when you are new to an Indigenous community and unfamiliar with the history, culture, traditions, and day-to-day customs. In most cases these participants had no exposure to or accurate

education about Indigenous communities and needed safe spaces to learn and ask questions (Irvine, 2004).

Highlighting the need for *engaging in the community* or establishing necessary community connections, Gwen's professional development opportunities included the Idaho Indian Education annual summit that introduced her to concepts such as cultural appropriation, as well as land- and place-based pedagogies through the University of Washington's Native Education certificate program. These experiences helped Gwen to understand and acknowledge that, "engaging in community gives me that connection, that understanding. I think without that it would be very hard to connect with our kids. However, without my professional development experiences, it would not have given me a lens or any sort of context to connect with community. Then the community helps me connect to students. So, I think they all go together because the kids help me too, and they helped me to understand" (Gwen interview with the author, May 6, 2021).

Participants were either led to the community through their previously established relationship with a community member, or they participated in professional development that subsequently led to a strong relationship with community members, yet they all emphasize the importance of relationships and mentorship with community members as a key factor to their relationships and practices with students. Paris and Winn (2014) conceptualize relationships as humanizing approaches that involve the building of relationships of care and dignity and dialogic consciousness raising for both participants. The mentorship experiences the participants describe in this study demonstrate that professional development opportunities geared towards Indigenous youth must be rooted

in relationship to build the foundations of a dialogic consciousness raising that is needed to further the work of awareness and cultural consciousness among educators.

Every professional development opportunity participants engaged in connected them to culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogies, which inherently acknowledge community at the center of teaching. This professional development approach is evident in participants' acknowledgement of the importance of *engaging in the community*, which was a strong thread across all interviews. Each spoke to the importance of community connections and how those connections build relationships rooted in respect, trust, and responsibility. One way that I have observed a sense of responsibility among participants that is in opposition to the norm is in their continued employment at these two rural reservation school districts. Most schools serving high populations of Indigenous youth are in rural and remote areas (NCES, 2015). Teachers at these schools often have limited access to resources and professional development that address cultural resource pedagogies, especially language, sovereignty, and geography. Further research on rural education emphasizes teacher shortages in rural settings, which is often related to geographic isolation, inadequate professional development, lower salaries, and difficulty managing multiple roles expected in smaller schools with little resources (Monk, 2007; Oyen & Schweine, 2020). All these factors exist at these two schools, and yet these six educators now feel a stronger sense of responsibility to these Indigenous students, families, and communities.

Nathan states that understanding community is number one, along with understanding the strong family connections and the way students interact with each other (Nathan, personal interview with author, May 10, 2021). Hanna highlights her

experience working with the community summer youth program prior to being hired at the school and how helpful it was to make connections and learn about the community. Once Hanna started at the school district, students remembered her from the summer program, and it really helped build connections, relationships, and trust (Hanna, personal interview with author, March 25, 2021). Gwen highlights her engagement in conversations with community that gave her connection and understanding about the community. Without that experience she states that it would have been much harder to connect with the kids (Gwen, personal interview with author, May 6, 2021). In varying degrees, these educators practice what Wyman and Kashtok (2008) describe as triangulating teachers who physically venture out into the communities they serve and get to know a broad range of community members. The educators in this study have demonstrated this in a variety of ways: through membership at the local wellness center, establishing care at the health clinic, living in the community during the school year, attending sports activities, and partnering with tribal departments to further curriculum in their classrooms.

*Place and culture-based professional development* leads to trusting relationships and provides access to community connections. Through a place and culture-based approach to professional development, educators are exposed to concepts of land that are beyond Western notions of land as property, capital, wealth, and power towards land as sacred, connecting peoples to family, tribe, and ancestors; a more spiritual and practical connection to sacred sites, burial grounds and medicinal plants, and traditional practices (Grande, 2015). The land is a relative and a teacher, signifying the importance of land-based teaching (Grande, 2015; Kimmerer, 2013; Tuck, 2013). Melissa was first

introduced to the community through her participation in the STEP curriculum team, in which she was invited to participate as a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, the grade on which the curriculum was focused. Eventually, the larger curriculum team broke out into smaller sub-group teams and Melissa was on the curriculum unit development team. She speaks highly about the value brought to her classroom, her understandings, and her confidence in teaching the curriculum because she spent so much time with the Tribe's cultural resource specialist who provided a wide range of resources, and visited the classroom and modeled the stories, content, visuals, and Tribal language, and made many student-family connections. Melissa said that this was extremely valuable and wished that every teacher had that resource, exposure, and experience (Melissa, personal interview with author, May 25, 2021).

The *necessary establishment of community connection's* theme encompasses the critical need for relationship building with tribal members to foster mentorship and community connections, engagement in community that builds relationship, respect, trust, and reciprocity, and place and culture-based professional development which fosters trusting relationships and provides access to community connections. A good example of fostering such connections is classrooms who are utilizing the tribe's five core values in building a classroom community. Figure 8 demonstrates Hanna's classroom working on the Coeur d'Alene tribe's five core values, and what it means to them to demonstrate 'ats'qhnt'wesh, stewardship and t'u'lschint, membership. This student's work represents stewardship of land and water.

*Figure 9. Document Review Demonstrating Tribal Values*



### ***Essential Understandings of Place (Place Consciousness)***

Three key points leading to an *essential understanding of place*, or what I see as an emergence of *place consciousness*, are the ways participants described their perspective shifts in family structure and dynamics from a unidimensional to a multidimensional understanding of family beyond secular to communal. Seeing community funds of knowledge as an asset, emerged from Theme One, establishing community connections, and helping build an understanding of place and creating space for experiencing community funds of knowledge. This has led to an emergence of critical settler colonial consciousness. Understanding of place in addition to relationships, promoted listening, learning, and reflection; a pathway that fostered critical respect and honor for differences.

During the interview process, when asked what types of experiences or relationships have helped educator readiness and ability to successfully engage with and educate Indigenous students, Hanna describes how immersion in the community has helped her to understand family connections and the more fluid, dynamic nature of who is family and their levels of involvement in a child and family's life. She states that, "everybody's uncle, everybody's cousin, they're just family" (Hanna, interview by

author, March 24, 2021). Gwen also spoke of family and how her view has shifted beyond her Western conception of family such as mom, dad, brother, sister towards the importance and value of extended family, even some who aren't related by blood. "It helped me re-think my view of family from a Western view. Here it means so much more. I was having a conversation with a student who was having a really hard time and she was talking about her family, her grandmother had passed away, and so I started asking questions about how she was related, like, is that your dad's sister? And she's like, 'no, we're not blood related but she's still my auntie.' And so, there's a lot of family that is not blood relation like I would think of family" (Gwen, interview with author, May 6, 2021).

Tyanne acknowledged that the Tribe itself is very close-knit and when there is a fracture between a family it can impact the school system.

The Tribe is a very close-knit community, but even with that you know, there can be some fractures you know, because families are close knit, but that means if families aren't getting along, like if one family isn't getting along with another family, then that trickles into the school system you know (Tyanne, interview with author, May 25, 2021).

These educators are actively working to become part of the community and bring that knowledge and understanding to their classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The way participants reflectively spoke about families and community demonstrated their ability to see themselves as learners, begin to consider differences between their own culture and the culture of the communities they work with, and their willingness to adapt their teaching to better serve Indigenous students (Cleary & Peacock, 1998). The Tribal core

values poster in Figure 9 demonstrates *snmiypngwiln*, or scholarship, and shows an image of a Coeur d'Alene Tribal elder, Felix Aripa receiving a doctoral degree from Gonzaga University. Coeur d'Alene tribe posters in the hallways of the school, with representations of what it looks like to enact the tribe's five core values indicates a place consciousness. Educators are centering community values, people, and places within the environment, providing students a sense of belonging and community identity.

*Figure 10. Environmental Observation of Hallways: Tribal Core Values Poster*



Moll et al. (1992) describes culturally relevant teachers as utilizing student and community funds of knowledge to teach their students critical consciousness and develop fluid and equitable relationships with their students and the communities they serve. Community funds of knowledge as an asset was not in educators' repertoires of practice prior to these professional development experiences. Hanna explains how STEP provided knowledge in Tribal history that gave her the connection with community and a framework to ally with kids and families. She explains that "as opposed to teaching, I learn alongside my students, I learn from my students, and STEP gave me the tools for my classroom." (Hanna, interview by author, April 8, 2021) Participants gave examples of how learning community practices and funds of knowledge helped strengthen relationships and trust with their students. Understandings ranged from funeral etiquette,



tribal history and values, government, and sovereignty, to basketball culture and learning styles.

Emergence of critical settler colonial consciousness is seen throughout the points of this theme in the ways educators unpack deeply held assumptions about people and privileging the individual over the community. Participants began to connect the difference between Western ideological perceptions of family compared to the expanded, communal, and dynamic family structures in Indigenous community (Grande, 2015).

Hopkins (2020) describes how these assumptions within a colonizing society inform Indigenous schooling, where independence, achievement, humanism, and detachment are valued ideals. Gwen recalls attending an Idaho Indian Education summit and the presenter was talking about cultural appropriation, and how it elicited some feelings of shame. After listening to the discussions about cultural appropriation she needed to unpack these concepts and feelings in a safe space with community mentors. She learned about *white fragility* and how education systems are built on all these underlying ideologies that prevent one from knowing these things, and so it is not a shaming thing to her anymore.

That summer we also went to another Indian Education Summit in Boise, and interestingly enough, the biggest thing I remember about that one is unpacking cultural appropriation. I remember one time you were saying that you know, and actually Megan Bang had said this too, we do not have a responsibility to stroke your shame or your vulnerability because you know, how does she say it? Do you know what I'm saying? The concept of White fragility, after we talked about that it made sense. I don't need to

be shameful about this. It is what it is because once I knew that you were that safe place and I don't need to be ashamed about it, that it is what it is, and you understand that education system and all these other pieces have not set me up to um, it's not a shaming thing, and that's huge, that is huge (Gwen, personal interview with author, May 6, 2021).

Instead, it is an understanding of misrepresentation, lack of Indigenous perspectives, and recognizing how education is set up in structures of settler colonialism that provides only a White perspective (Krueger, 2019; Hopkins, 2020). Professional development opportunities rooted in culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy draws participants towards new more conscious understanding of place. The Tribal village model in Figure 10 was created by students at the Tribal school and is a representation of Coeur d'Alene tribe traditional shelters, which utilized land and place-based architecture, a representation of place consciousness.

*Figure 11. Tribal Village Model*



### ***Holistic and Ongoing Professional Development***

*Holistic and ongoing professional development calls for an inseparability of professional development, mentorship, and land, tools for the classroom and hands-on application, and embodies the transformative nature of place, space, and application.*

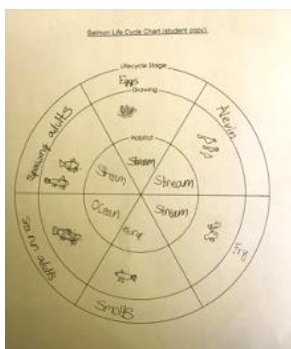
There is such a strong interconnectedness between land-based professional development, community mentorship, and the act of doing, that are inseparable. A common thread across each participant's professional development experiences was a holistic, land and place-based approach, driven by Indigenous communities, that created a safe space for relationships to be built, which led to mentorship between Indigenous community members and educators. The participants emphasized a high level of value in their ability to connect with Indigenous students and build trust with them in large part due to these experiences afforded them. Land and place-based pedagogies immerse students in communities, taking a hands-on approach to learning (Chambers, 2006; Scully, 2012). Spending time with Indigenous nations and in the community learning about the landscape helps educators build an understanding of their worldviews and social, political, cultural understandings, enabling them to see tribal sovereignty and nation-building efforts (Hopkins, 2020).

Just as students in the classroom benefit from land- and place-based pedagogy, professional development opportunities that are land- and place-based provide a unique opportunity for relational knowing rather than just memorizing facts and figures about tribes or developing cultural competence. Facts and figures are important as well, but it is the relational knowing that deepens the connections that draw educators to stay. The basis of this theme is the premise that professional development plants a seed, community mentorship waters the seed, application and the continuous cycle helps grow and sustain culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy. Referencing her professional development experiences, Tyanne asserts that these in-services open your eyes to the deeper parts of culture.

A lot of teachers come in and think that they just need to attend some cultural events to be culturally responsive, they think very surface level. I use the iceberg theory to describe how it's the stuff below the iceberg that we need to focus on and that's how you really begin to understand. For example, getting to know the elders, the tribal stories, and how they relate to each other. I think professional development helps teachers to go deeper, beyond surface level, and then moving from in-service to application (Tyanne, interview with author, May 25, 2021).

Application can be seen in the example of Figure 11 below of a student's drawing of a salmon cycle in preparation of their classroom's salmon release field trip where they will release the salmon that they have been raising in their classroom.

*Figure 12. Salmon in the Classroom Curriculum Example*



Gwen acknowledges that professional development is extremely important for preparing you, but it can't be the only thing. You need someone to have those hard conversations with, to be able to go deeper to unpack all this new information and experiences. The community partnerships and being a part of community-driven initiatives and projects then also deepen growth, understanding and relationships (Gwen, personal interview with author, May 20, 2021). Multiple participants mentioned the mentorship they received from community partners as sources of knowledge,

accessibility to resources, hands-on tangible support in the classroom that was a form of modeling instruction, and on the pre-service program side, Nathan describes a sense of mentorship from peers, Indigenous teacher-mentors and the IKEEP Project Director as keys to his growth (Nick, personal interview with author, May 19, 2021). Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) acknowledge that Indigenous teacher-mentors are centered in relationships that are rooted in place and community well-being, and cultural survival. Amplified in their sentiments is that this type of mentorship should not be characterized as informal or be oversimplified. This mentorship model is full of complexity that is inclusive of Indigenous knowledge.

The inseparability of relationships, community, and professional development are evident in the ways participants connect their success with students being integrally connected to their engagement in community-based professional development. Gwen describes her professional development experiences along with relationships, community connections and mentorship have given her a lens to connect with students and reframed her thinking towards broader, more dynamic conceptions of family and community (Gwen, personal interview with author, May 20, 2021).

A holistic aspect of this theme for professional development is that it is not enough to give teachers tools for the classroom. They must be shown how to apply this new knowledge. Therefore, *professional development must include tools/resources for the classroom and hands-on opportunities for application*, much like situational learning, which theorizes that there is a socially negotiated character of learning made through the actions of persons-in-activity (Lave & Wenger, 1991). When one is embedded in participatory activities, it produces transformation and change as learning occurs.

Hanna states that “knowing the Tribal history, not just small pieces but in deep detail along with community mentorship and [the Tribal cultural resource specialist’s] ability to come to the classroom and connect students’ families to the historical events of the lesson was invaluable” (Hanna, interview with author, March 25, 2021). This support builds confidence in educators to do the lessons because they have learned about the content, then they see it demonstrated, hear the language pronunciation, or have participated in a field experience that has brought the content to life as well. Tyanne points out that “educators are just like their students, it’s important to learn about something then have opportunity to see it, then an opportunity to practice application” (Tyanne, personal interview with author, April 7, 2021). This approach, as in land education, is an important strategy for learning that builds on place-based scholarship that immerses students in communities, taking a hands-on approach (Calderon, 2016; McCoy et al., 2016).

Participants especially spoke to the *transformative nature of place, space, and application*. Ladson-Billings (1990, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, 1994, 1995) asserts that teachers who demonstrate culturally relevant teaching practices situate themselves in relationship with students, families, and their communities. The classroom and the community are interconnected and inseparable. Hanna felt like she received more education through STEP than in college because it was “absolutely applicable” information. Nathan speaks highly of his Indigenous-centered pre-service program, having the opportunity to be in a cohort of Indigenous peers and learn from other Indigenous educators. He notes that the Indigenous-centered program afforded him more practical knowledge and real-life experience about how to be an effective teacher as

opposed to the general pre-service program where it focused on the philosophy and history of education (Nathan, personal interview with author, May 19, 2021). He specifically acknowledges the importance of getting to connect with experienced Indigenous educators and being able to tour schools with high populations of Indigenous students and having focused summer institutes rooted in Indigenous pedagogies. The *transformative nature of professional development rooted in place*, creating a safe space for reflection, and opportunities for application accomplishes both theory and praxis in ways that challenge pre-service and in-service educators' understandings about themselves and the land they are on (Calderon, 2016; Wenger, 1999). Hanna expresses the feeling of “getting more out of STEP professional development than in any other place, or even in college because it was absolutely application information” (Hanna, personal interview with author, June 15, 2021).

When participants were asked to describe the ways their professional development experiences had contributed to their general sense of readiness to engage in the professional practice of Indigenous education, Gwen explained, “They absolutely have [professional development experiences]. Because I am engaging in it, and I would not have felt comfortable to engage had I not had all those experiences. I just wouldn't. And I see that with a lot of our teachers, they just don't engage in it. Because they just don't have the experiences that I have had, and the countless hours of unpacking those things and I, I feel bad for them honestly, there are many times that I get irritated at some of the views and some of the narratives that our teachers have, but then I then I go back to okay, come on, don't forget where you came from, and that I knew little at that time and

it's no wonder that they don't engage in the practice of American Indian education, and they just don't know” (Gwen, personal interview with author, May 6, 2021).

Educators gave several examples of stereotypical assumptions they had when they first entered the Coeur d'Alene Reservation community and school districts, and how their perspectives have shifted because they were provided knowledge, experiences, and relationships that helped them see that their assumptions were rooted in their education experiences that left out any other worldviews and placed Indigenous peoples statically in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As I outline the multistage process of change called *transformational desettling*, participants in many ways have reached Stage Two, the additive approach of TIPM, and have emergent elements of Stage Three, transformation approach. As *transformational desettling* unfolds, challenges, regression and resistance occurs, sometimes from educators and most often with administration. This resistance that is camouflaged in state and federal standards, high stakes testing, and regulations. Examples highlighted from participant data that supports the *holistic and ongoing professional development* theme shows how practitioners are moving toward liberatory pedagogy as mentioned in stage three of TIPM. In the transformation approach stage, educators begin to recognize how to integrate Indigenous perspectives into curriculum using land-based pedagogies. They engage with tribes and communities, which shifts the power structures of education and places community leaders as holders of knowledge. Teachers are in a space where they are more comfortable with learning and taking on a facilitator role (Pewewardy, 2018).



### ***Transformational Desettling***

The idea of Hopkins' (2020) theory of *desettling learning* moves in-service and pre-service professional development beyond *Indigenizing education* towards *decolonizing education*. Indigenizing education is a critical and important element of the process towards critical consciousness, though it is not enough to create lasting systemic change. *Indigenizing education* focuses on teachers receiving facts, figures, and data related to Indigenous peoples. It aims to be truthful, accurate, and inclusive, correcting misunderstandings about Indigenous peoples and their histories, cultures, and worldviews. *Decolonizing education* is a more personal and transformative process that illuminates and disturbs preconceptions, stereotypes, prejudices, and assumptions about Indigenous peoples' experiences (p. 144). The goal is to move teachers from Indigenizing education towards decolonizing education through the process of developing critical consciousness that enables teachers to acknowledge their own positionalities and benefits within a settler colonial system.

The main points of *transformational desettling* derived from participant interviews are 1) *expose and disturb assumptions about Indigenous peoples*, 2) *awareness of insufficient pre-service programs that lack multicultural education*, and 3) *new learning that shifts consciousness toward better self-understanding*. Many of the assumptions about Indigenous peoples comes from curricular limitations in the classroom. Subjects such as social studies that suppress multiple perspectives and ways of knowing. Krueger (2019) posits that social studies should be a subject that consciously explores the politics of knowledge construction and creates space to examine the past through a pluralist lens (p. 295).

Participants provided many examples of how professional development, mentorship, and community relationships exposed and disturbed their preconceptions, stereotypes, prejudices, and assumptions about Indigenous peoples and experiences. Melissa gave an example of students in her classroom who have names in traditional language sometimes being made fun of by other students. When this happens, she elicits a discussion about names and where they come from, important family names and the meaning behind them. She talks about how a name might be different, but there is value in traditions and the meaning behind a name. Another example she shared was about some teacher's negative assumptions about Indigenous employees being absent for a prolonged amount of time until they learned about community funeral practices, and how some families are the designated cooks for funerals (Melissa, interview with author, May 25, 2021).

Once preconceptions are debunked, it opens more respectful dialogue and builds trust. Gwen expresses how professional development rooted in relationship and community opened her eyes to who she was teaching and where she stood.

When I got here, I asked a lot of crazy questions, and thankfully everybody was gracious. I learned that my preconceived ideas were not necessarily true and were biased and generalizations. I think there are a lot of stereotypes that lead [us] to feel sorry for our kids, and they don't need you to feel sorry for them. They're resilient, they're strong, they need you to be an adult and to have high expectations for them. This is one of the first things I learned (Gwen, interview by author, May 6, 2021).

Participants have developed a critical awareness of their insufficient pre-service programs that were lacking in any sort of multicultural education, cultural responsiveness, or diversity. Each participant could identify only one, and in some cases no courses on these topics. Jolene called attention to the fact that her one multicultural course was taught by a white man and included one textbook that was written by a white man (Jolene, interview with author, March 22, 2021). Two participants gave me a very quick “no” when I asked if their pre-service program prepared them to work in culturally diverse settings. Gwen clearly stated that she didn’t learn anything specific to Indigenous students (Gwen, interview with author, May 6, 2021).

Melissa mentioned that the closest her pre-service program got to diversity was teaching about learning styles. Nathan compared his general university pre-service program with his specialized program supporting Indigenous scholars to be trained in Indigenous pedagogies, as the former being very philosophical, whereas the latter gave him more practical, hands-on, real-life experience with opportunities to participate in Indigenous communities.

### ***Assessment of Observations and Artifacts***

Classroom teachers in varying degrees provided documentation of culturally relevant and responsive curriculum by providing many examples of lessons that had been completed by students. These included lessons about the Tribe’s five core values and how those values are seen in their communities, maps of aboriginal homelands, book reviews about Indigenous role models, history of tribal trading and impacts of Western expansion, raising salmon in the classroom, and working with the Tribe to restore salmon to its waters. The Tribal school shared traditional ribbon skirts completed by students and other

sewing projects, historical tribal village models designed by students, traditional instruments, puppets representing local animals such as rabbit, coyote, eagle and wolf, and several art projects displayed in the hallway's representative of local landscapes.

Administrators shared planning documents for the upcoming school year that include the Tribe's core values in the implementation of education pathways that prepare and guide them towards a particular field such as agriculture, trades and industries, education, digital media technology, and health professions. The pathways include partnerships with various departments of the Tribe to support these courses and field experiences. The planning documents that were shared by the public school also included the designing of a portrait of a graduate that includes the importance of community connections, community support, and developing leadership skills that lead to community strengthening. One administrator from the public school highlighted the culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy committee that was established about four years ago, fizzled out for a while and is now starting back up with a new goal to improve the school's family and staff handbooks to reflect a CSRP approach in its communication and procedures.

The Tribal school shared a 2018 in-service for teachers on the tribal language, which appears to happen monthly, and the 2019-2020 in-service agenda that included training on trauma informed care, trauma resilience, and a deeper understanding of Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching. The 2020-2021 in-Service agenda continues with trauma informed care and incorporates six modules of culturally responsive instruction. The first two parts include, "the What and Why of Culturally Responsive Instruction," and "Understanding Culture and Native American Diversity."

The last two modules end with “Pedagogical Implications for ELA, Native Language and Problem-Solving, and Place-based Scenarios,” and “Developing a Culturally Responsive Practice.” The Tribal school administrator also shared blueprint plans for an outdoor classroom learning environment that includes elements of water, native plants, language placards, place names and elements of traditional architecture.

Figure 13. In-Service Agenda: Culturally Responsive Instruction

**In-services  
for  
Staff  
SY 2020-2021**



**Please Be Advised!**  
Although In-service days are scheduled from 9:00-3:00, staff is to follow regularly scheduled workdays with a start time of 7:30 and an end time of 3:30.

- September 3, 2020: 9:00-3:00**
  - > Rick Griffin: Trauma Informed
  - ◊ Training Course #3-Part 2
- September 4, 2020: 9:00-3:00**
  - > Rick Griffin: Trauma Informed
  - ◊ Training Course #4
- October 9, 2020: 9:00-3:00**
  - > Session 1: Culturally Responsive Instruction, 1-2
    - ◊ The What and Why of Culturally Responsive Instruction
    - ◊ Understanding Culture and Native American Diversity
  - > Session 2: Data Analysis/Application: Creating Individualized Student Learning Plans
- November 6, 2020: 9:00-3:00**
  - > Abe Wallen: Routines for Reasoning
  - ◊ Training in Mathematical Practices
- January 15, 2021: 9:00-3:00**
  - > Session 1: Culturally Responsive Instruction, 3-4
    - ◊ Foundations for Culturally Responsive Practice
    - ◊ Where to Start: Initial Guidelines for Instruction
  - > Session 2: Data Analysis/Application: Updating Individualized Student Learning Plans
- February 12, 2021: 9:00-3:00**
  - > Abe Wallen: Routines for Reasoning
  - ◊ Training in Mathematical Practices
- March 12, 2021: 9:00-3:00**
  - > Session 1: Culturally Responsive Instruction, 5, 6a, 6b
    - ◊ Going Further: More Guidelines
    - ◊ Pedagogical Implications for Math, Science, and Social Studies
  - > Session 2: Data Analysis/Application
- April 9, 2021: 9:00-3:00**
  - > Charlotte Danielson
  - ◊ Student Engagement
- May 28, 2021: 9:00-3:00**
  - > Session 1: Culturally Responsive Instruction, 6b, 7
    - ◊ Pedagogical Implications for ELA, Native Language & Problem/Place-based Scenarios
    - ◊ Developing a Culturally Responsive Practice
  - > Session 2: Data Analysis/Reflecting on Instructional Practices

Finally, the Tribal school shared their school improvement plan, and included goals to provide a supportive learning environment to be accomplished through professional development towards culturally responsive teachers and classrooms to be accomplished through thoughtful planning and cross-classroom sharing. The plan also expects teachers to increase their own awareness of how their background and beliefs influence their pedagogy and expects all teachers to encourage and value student voice in the process. This goal seeks to include students as active participants in the learning process and have opportunities to learn by doing, making, writing, designing, creating,

and solving. Lastly, teachers will seek to connect students with the community through field trips, current events, discussions, and guest speakers.

This research highlights the possibilities of professional development and provides symbols of cultural responsiveness enacted by these educators, but what is needed is a sustainable system of access, resources, and support to promote an enact a decolonization model of Indigenous education. Participants tend to ebb and flow between stages of the transformational Indigenous praxis model (TIPM), which is likely due to the lack of continued exposure to these specialized elements of professional development, and a sustained community mentorship model.

The interviews, document reviews and environmental observations reflect all six participants shifting towards a deeper, more critical consciousness that has reoriented them towards new self-understandings. Gwen credits the opportunities afforded to her to be honest, ask vulnerable questions, make mistakes, feel frustrated, while maintaining supportive community relationships. Melissa gives an example beyond her own critical consciousness that made her aware of her student's absence of critical consciousness. She describes a student new to her class who was making stereotypical, misinformed comments about Indigenous peoples and she recognized that this student had yet to develop a critical settler colonial consciousness. The student was not used to and had not been exposed to curriculum that centered Indigenous epistemologies, which are not often included in American school experiences.

The U.S. school system is centered in a Western Eurocentric approach to schooling centered on White identity, values, ideologies, and experiences in the learning process (DiAngelo, 2012). Unique to this situation is that most classrooms in this school

district situated on the reservation do not have much exposure to the level of community-designed and community-centered curriculum and instruction that this classroom had. It was the work of the Tribe in partnership and collaboration with the school district(s), the state and the universities that generated these opportunities for staff and students. This teacher had the unique opportunity to be engaged in curriculum development rooted in Tribal history for the duration of the multi-year STEP process.

Though there is no shortage of interest by teachers who want to learn more about the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and ways to better serve students, there has been little commitment to systemic change that is lasting and sustainable. Indigenous education continues to be supplemental when it needs to be transformative. The small numbers of educators who have access and opportunity to be a part of professional development geared towards Indigenous education have only begun to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to serve Indigenous students and become Indigenous allies working towards decolonizing education. Their current development is fragile and inconsistent and requires consistent support and nurturing to sustain over time (Pewewardy, 2018).

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

Overall, educators in this study who have been exposed to varied and deep levels of professional development geared toward Indigenous education demonstrate the benefits by how they articulate the shifts in their own identity as educators, the ways they understand, empathize, and relate to their students, and how they view their professional responsibilities and hopes for the future of their district(s). Each theme demonstrates critical elements that need to be included in a specialized professional development system that will produce educators that can both articulate the value of culturally responsive/relevant pedagogy and carry it out in their classrooms and their schools daily; as a way of being rather than supplemental.

The Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model provided a strong framework to identify educators' growth, which began at Stage One and concluded on a spectrum between Stage Two and Three. They are in the process of *transformational desettling* that troubles and interrogates the current colonial system of schooling towards decolonizing education. Based on interview data and analysis, five out of six participants began at TIPM's Stage One: contributions approach at the start of their employment in these two school districts serving Indigenous students. Pewewardy (2018) describes educators in this stage enacting unconscious thinking, demonstrated by assimilationist behaviors such as practitioners who perpetuate a *heroes and holidays* approach, including ethnic diversity in their teaching only as "interesting tidbits of information sprinkled on a firmly established Eurocentric, colonized curriculum" (p. 54). This could also be viewed as a colorblind approach where teachers dismiss the value of cultural diversity altogether for more of an "intent to ignore racial differences" approach (Lewis, 2003), perpetuating the



assimilative approach to schooling. In Stage One, the Eurocentric education can remain unquestioned and unchanged. The one participant who I would identify as beginning in Stage Two: additive approach is Nathan, the single participant whose pre-service program was rooted in Indigenous land and place-based pedagogies and practice. Nathan went into his first year of teaching knowing the critical nature of community relationships and had begun to establish them during his student teaching experience that ultimately led him to the Tribal school.

As described in the fourth tenet of TribalCrit, these educators have a new and emerging understanding of tribal sovereignty and the desire for tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification (Brayboy, 2005) Institutionalized Western schooling systems show persistently high rates of inappropriate tracking into special education, exhausting amounts of discipline referrals, low teacher expectations, and high push-out rates, (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; McCarty, 2009; Sabzalian, 2019) of Indigenous students. Participants in this study demonstrated the importance of relationship, respect, reciprocity, and responsibility by providing students with counter-narratives in their curriculum, images of themselves, land, and place-based opportunities for learning, and by engaging in and with the Tribal community to access cultural funds of knowledge.

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe spearheaded the design and implementation of professional development geared towards Indian education through critical partnerships with the two school districts, the higher education institution, and the Idaho State Department of Education. The value of these partnerships expanded professional development efforts beyond local professional development to statewide efforts that

expanded the professional development offerings and provided opportunities for more educators to attend.

It is through these extended partnerships that professional development for this group of educators was afforded and strengthened. Additional opportunities were offered such as the Tribal sovereignty and Federal Indian policy course offered through the higher education institution, and the cohort of educators who participated in another partner institution's Native Education certificate program or the local community college's American Indian Studies certificate. Having these professional development opportunities provided a broader Indigenous perspective that they could then connect to the local context and history. The one participant in this study, Nathan, who participated in the pre-service Indigenous education program supported the findings of this study by demonstrating an emergence of critical awareness and understandings of the decolonization awareness process (Pewewardy, 2018). Some educators at the Tribal school where this participant is located are either a part of this study as well or have participated in similar professional development offerings, so Nathan had a small group of colleagues that were at a similar stage as him in the Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model. This is particularly beneficial to a first-year teacher to have a cohort of educators to learn alongside and share common pedagogical frameworks for teaching.

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe's education department's development of an education pipeline provides a framework for the enactment of educational self-determination, strategically building an educational pathway in pursuit of successful growth along each segment of the pipeline. This study is affirmation that the framework and the subsequent measures designed to fill gaps in services to membership nurtured a process of critical

tribal nation-building. Tribal nation-building speaks of “the political, legal, spiritual, educational, and economic processes by which Indigenous peoples build, create, and strengthen local capacity to address their educational, health, legal, economic, nutritional, relational, and spatial needs” (Brayboy & Sumida Huaman, 2016, p. 141). Sovereignty and self-determination are the bedrock of formulating education in Indigenous communities, (Lomawaima, 2000) which indicates the necessity of tribes to be the central tenet of culturally responsive and relevant schooling for Indigenous youth. This research illuminates the impacts of pre-service and in-service professional development geared towards Indigenous education and identifies key elements to transform beyond Indigenizing education towards decolonizing education through liberation of consciousness.

Tribal education departments must be the catalyst creating these processes for decolonization and furthering this work beyond the Western systems of schooling and despite the everchanging state and federal ideologies that maintain systems of oppression and Indigenous invisibility. Tribal nations are resilient, innovative, and carry Indigenous ways of knowing and being that can be transferred to Native students in a variety of ways outside of the mainstream school system. It is tribal nations who have the Indigenous knowledge to bridge the gaps between theory and practice in deep and explicit ways towards social change.

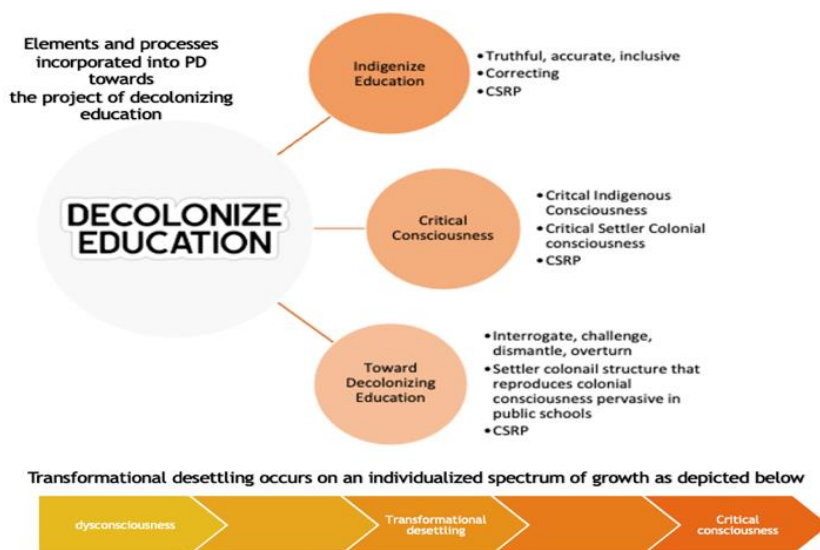
TribalCrit’s ninth tenet further describes the use of theory and praxis to “expose structural inequalities and assimilatory processes and work toward debunking and deconstructing them, then create structures to address the needs of tribal communities” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 440) These community-centered professional development spaces can

be utilized to develop Indigenous students' critical conscious and critical literacy, building personal agency to think critically, call out injustice, disrupt systems of oppression and be change agents that further their community's nation building efforts.

### **Theory of Change: A Local Perspective**

The three themes identified in this study articulate the elements of professional development geared towards Indigenous education that leads to a *transformational desettling* process towards decolonizing education. Building from the work of Cornel Pewewardy's Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model, (2018) and John Hopkins (2021) theory of Desettling Learning, I posit a theory of change to highlight the cyclical, interconnected processes that facilitate a *transformational desettling* towards culturally responsive/relevant pedagogy and praxis. As demonstrated in Figure 13 below, the theory of change acknowledges that there is a spectrum that educators move along depending on certain variables such as ongoing professional development opportunities that embody the themes identified in the findings. In addition, support networks, systems, policies, maintenance of community relationships, or resistance leading to educator regression or discouragement.

Figure 14. Theory of Change for Decolonizing Education



Indigenizing education is a baseline approach to introduce educators to fundamental truths about Indigenous peoples and Indigenous education, historical accuracy, correcting inaccuracies in content, and working towards inclusivity. This attends to the second tenet of McCarty and Lee's (2014) culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy, which emphasizes the need to reclaim and revitalize what has been disrupted and displaced by colonization. Indigenizing education sets the stage for educators to develop critical settler colonial consciousness and critical Indigenous consciousness. At this point, educators are engaged, have built relationships with community, are open to mentorship and begin a liberatory process of decolonizing their minds. They are beginning to see Indigenous epistemologies as a counter-narrative to the unidimensional colonial narrative of the U.S. school system and acknowledge that they are reproducers of the colonial consciousness pervasive in public schools. This is the place where decolonizing education takes root in educator consciousness. Hanna demonstrates this when asked what aspects or processes

involved in her professional development experiences led to a deeper understanding of effective education for Indigenous students. “It opened my eyes to who I was teaching, why I was teaching, where I stood. When I got here, I asked crazy questions, and thankfully everybody was gracious, and I learned that my pre-conceived ideas were not necessarily true. And that they were biased, and that they were generalizations” (Hanna, personal interview with author, March 25, 2021). The fifth tenet of TribalCrit problematizes the concepts of culture, knowledge, and power and provides an alternative way to understand them through an Indigenous lens (Brayboy, 2005, p. 434)

However, for change to occur and be sustained, it will take a collective effort and long-term commitment to make change in ways of knowing and being and transfer that into concrete practice. Educational leaders play a significant role in creating and sustaining pedagogical change towards culturally responsive schooling. It is critical for leaders to work with and share the vision of the tribal communities they are serving and be willing to engage in meaningful and appropriate practices (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2015). When administrators from both schools began to engage in professional development geared towards Indigenous education offered through the Coeur d’Alene tribe STEP grant, shifts begin to occur that were more supportive of Indigenous education initiatives, such as the public school district supporting all employees attending the Idaho Indian Education/STEP Summit, funding a cohort of teachers to enroll in the local community college’s American Indian Studies certificate, and engaging in more strategic implementation and training on the Tribe’s five core values that had been introduced and embedded into the Tribe’s 4<sup>th</sup> grade Idaho history curriculum.

## **Implications**

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe's birth-through-career education pipeline monitors its membership to support them along the pipeline towards successful outcomes. The Tribe's education department is constantly evaluating any gaps in the pipeline, and then seeking funding to fill gaps in services. The self-determination actions of the Tribe are "shifting power structures in local education by placing the tribe as holders of information and educators' as learners of such information" (Pewewardy, 2018, p. 56). The education pipeline put into motion a series of actions that is leading to a pedagogical structure that creates space for critical conversations and analysis that exposes the underlying colonial structures that oppress our children and our communities (Grande, 2015).

This research informs the Tribe, the schools, and the institutions who serve them, what ways professional development for Indigenous youth is helping, and promotes relational dialogue about how to work collaboratively to build capacity and sustainability that maintains and strengthens what is working in professional development efforts to better serve Indigenous youth. Educators who have participated in this study are in a process of developing critical consciousness in Indigenous education and demonstrate the critical shifts in perception that take place to move them from a damage- or deficit-centered, fixed-mindset towards viewing children and communities through an asset lens.

The theory of change towards decolonizing education outlines a path for establishing a specialized professional development system and structure that progressively moves educators from a dysconsciousness of Indigenous education and the impacts of Western schooling towards a critical settler colonial and Indigenous consciousness that supports the development of their students' critical consciousness and

supportive of their Indigenous identity as an outcome. When educators begin to engage with tribes in their communities, a shift in power structures begins to happen. Educators become the students and community the experts. This is where the practice of decolonizing education takes root.

Despite all the possibilities of the theory of change presented in this research, it still presents many challenges because of the previously unquestioned supremacy of Eurocentric knowledge systems. This poses challenges for educators who want to change structural colonial frameworks towards decolonizing education (Pewewardy, 2018; Simpson, 2014; Smith, 2003). I assert that the biggest challenge to furthering this work is the lack of a strong network for educators to continue their pathway to becoming strong allies and practitioners of decolonizing education. Educators, especially non-Native educators who have had little to no experience in and with Indigenous communities are fragile in their development of critical consciousness. Therefore, there is a substantial amount of support needed to strengthen the enactment of culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy and practice.

A strong network of support that gains educators access to continuous professional development geared towards Indian education is needed to sustain the engagement and progress that the participants in this study have demonstrated. Continuing to build and create safe spaces for educators to grow in their critical consciousness will help educators grow and development in service of emancipatory Indigenous education. Exposure, access, and community connectedness must be fostered and sustained.



## **Limitations**

The Indigenous pre-service program, (IKEEP) and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe STEP grant highlighted in this study are both federal, grant-funded programs that are competitive and temporary. Unlike formula grant funds that are awarded to school districts that operate on annual funding cycles, the tribes, as sovereign nations, and higher education institutions must compete, which leaves them vulnerable to defunding. This federal funding system is in direct opposition to the federal government's trust responsibilities to tribes and suppresses acts of self-determination and tribal sovereignty. This system contributes to the maintenance of Eurocentric power structures and counteracts the written intent of the federal grants that were designed to uplift tribal nations' abilities to self-determine education for their citizens.

Direct limitations of this study lie in the small number of participants, which limits its scalability. However, the research-based models and frameworks utilized to analyze data and design a theory of change indicate strong support for the benefits of a specialized professional development system for educators working with Indigenous youth. Given the current political climate in many states across the country, there are legislative actions being taken to undermine multicultural education in all forms, from attacks on Critical Race Theory to misinterpreted definitions of practices such as Social Emotional Learning (SEL). This current environment further contributes to the resistance of public schools to work with tribal nations to improve Indigenous education. The constantly shifting political and cultural environment exemplifies the need for tribal nations to lead the reclamation of Indigenous education through community resources that creates spaces for Indigenous students to develop critical Indigenous consciousness.

### **Future Research Opportunities**

The results of this research inform and support the Tribe, local schools, and the institutions who serve them, about what professional development for Indigenous youth is helping, compelling these entities to work collaboratively to build the capacity and sustainability to maintain and strengthen what is working in professional development efforts to better serve Indigenous youth.

This study utilized the Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model (TIPM) to gauge the level of transformational desettling that occurred amongst participants that led to positive changes in knowledge, skills, and dispositional orientation. It gave a small demonstration of how the TIPM can be applied in education institutions in partnership with Tribal nations. Further research with a larger population of educators utilizing the theory of change presented could strengthen the fidelity of this study to impact larger populations of Indigenous students.

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**APPENDIX A: TEACHER RECRUITMENT LETTER**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am seeking your commitment to participate in the below research study, which is the basis of my doctoral dissertation at the University of Idaho. You have been selected to participate in this study, because of your involvement in three or more culturally relevant/responsive professional development opportunities geared towards Native youth. Professional Development opportunities such as \_\_\_\_\_.

I hope to begin interviewing participants' early March 2021. This will consist of two interviews, which will last no more than one hour per interview. In addition, I am seeking to conduct a document review and one environmental observation. All three of these activities may take place at a place and time convenient for you, except for the environmental interview, which will need to be held at the school during non-student hours. Please see below for detailed information about the interviews, document review, environmental observation, and additional information on the study I am wishing to conduct.

I really appreciate your consideration to participate and hope to hear from you soon.

Upon your acceptance to participate, I will set up a date and time to meet with you for our first interview and document review and will also go over the consent form.

Best regards,

Shawna Campbell-Daniels

Doctoral Candidate, University of Idaho



## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Interview Questions

#### Interview 1: Setting the Stage

The purpose of this interview is to understand who you are; your demographic and background orientations, how you came to be where you are today, and to get an understanding of your professional development experiences related to culturally responsive teaching and schooling geared towards Native youth. As a result of such professional development opportunities, what elements of that professional development has led to a deeper understanding of effective education for Native students?

Q1: Please give a little background about yourself; who you are, where are you from, and what led you to becoming an educator.

Q2: Describe what your teaching/educator background and experience has been like so far and what has led you to this particular community?

Q3: What was your preservice program experience like? In what ways did it prepare you for working in culturally diverse settings?

Q4: Please give a description of each of your professional development experiences related to culturally responsive/relevant teaching/schooling.

Q5: Identify aspects or processes involved in your professional development experiences that led to a deeper understanding of effective education for American Indian students.

Q6: Can you think of any experiences beyond traditional professional development experiences that have prepared you to work in American Indian student contexts?

Q7: Describe the ways in which the experiences you have described has or has not contributed to your general sense of readiness to engage in the professional practice of American Indian education.

Q8: Beyond your professional development experiences, are there other types of experiences or relationships that have helped your readiness and ability to successfully engage with and educate Native American students? Please describe.

#### Interview 2: Growth & Development

The second interview seeks to understand changes to your teaching/administrative practices through your perceptions of personal growth in knowledge, skills and disposition towards American Indian education following your engagement in various professional development opportunities geared towards Native students.

Q1: As a result of participating in various professional development opportunities geared towards Native students, what have you learned about American Indian education that influenced your teaching practices?

Q2: Describe some key understandings of what you have learned about Native American peoples and communities.

Q3: Describe your awareness and understanding of common American Indian stereotypes held by yourself and/or others, and how these professional development opportunities have impacted the way you think about these stereotypes in your everyday practice.

Q4: What have you learned about American Indian education and culturally relevant/responsive teaching and schooling that you have

- brought to the classroom? (teacher)

-implemented in some way at your school? (administrator)

Q5: In terms of implementing culturally relevant/responsive teaching, what types of things do you feel capable of implementing into your classroom/school that you may not have felt comfortable with before?

- a. what types of things are you more confident in discussing/teaching/implementing than you were before?

Q6: How and in what ways has culturally relevant/responsive professional development helped you to provide a more appropriate educational experience for Native students?

Q7: What are the attitudes, values, and beliefs you have as a teacher, and which of these positively impact your students and school?

Q8: How and in what ways has culturally responsive professional development caused you to reflect on your own thoughts, beliefs, and values in your own life and professionally?

Q9: Have these professional development opportunities shifted the way you perceive your Native students, their families, their communities? How and in what ways?

- a. Are there other experiences or relationships that have impacted these shifts in perception?

Q10: As an educator of Native students, what do you personally feel a sense of responsibility to 1) teach, 2) advocate for, 3) understand.

Q11: As a participant in these specialized professional development initiatives to support Native learners, what have been the challenges for you personally, professionally, and institutionally?

- a. what do you see as the most important affordances to engaging in this type of professional development?

## APPENDIX C: ENVIRONMENTAL OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Culturally Responsive Professional Development: Impacts on Pre-service and In-service Teacher Practice and Perceptions

### Environmental Observation Protocol

Environmental observation is looking at the classroom and/or school environment to make inferences on whether or not there is perceived participant growth in cultural responsiveness is tangibly observed on the classroom/school walls. I will be looking for images and artifacts on the walls or around the classroom/school representing students' culture, language, families, and community. Student work displayed that demonstrates culturally relevant curriculum implementation, and any additional visual representations of cultural assets. These examples may be in the form of a poster, image, agenda, or product. Researchers will document this example in fieldnotes or through an image (using an external digital camera, not a personal cell phone).

- 1) Images & artifacts on the walls representing students' culture, language, families, community (classroom or schoolwide)
- 2) Student work displayed that demonstrates culturally relevant curriculum implementation
- 3) Other: any additional visual representations of cultural assets (e.g., poster, image, agenda, product)

## **APPENDIX D: DOCUMENT REVIEW PROTOCOL**

Culturally Responsive Professional Development: Impacts on Pre-service and In-service Teacher Practice and Perceptions

### **Document Review Protocol**

Each participant will be asked to share documents/artifacts that show evidence of cultural responsiveness in their classroom or school practices by sharing a minimum of two of the following:

#### **Administrators'**

- 1) Evidence of culturally relevant changes to policy or procedure
- 2) Schoolwide professional development or in-service plans
- 3) Community partnership building practices and procedures
- 4) Recruitment and retention practices and procedures

#### **Teachers'**

- 1) Curriculum
- 2) Unit/lesson
- 3) Three to five student work samples

## APPENDIX D: DATA TABLE OF THEMES

<b>THEMES OUTLINING CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>
<b>Theme 1: Necessary Establishment of Community Connections</b>
<p>Element: Relationship building</p> <p>- having a relationship with person(s) from the community may help educators feel more comfortable to engage in the community because they have someone to invite them and introduce them</p>
<p>Engagement in community</p> <p>- Participation in the community builds trust w/ students &amp; families and gives educators opportunity to see from a new lens. It also increases the chance that community will return calls and respond to invites</p>
<p>Place &amp; culture-based professional development</p> <p>- place &amp; culture-based PD is sometimes an educators first introduction and experience to the community. Therefore, it is in this space that relationships are established, trust built, mentorship grows</p>
<b>Theme 2: Essential Understandings of Place (Place Consciousness)</b>
<p>Perspective shifts in family structure &amp; dynamics</p> <p>-from a unidimensional to a multidimensional understand of family; beyond secular to communal.</p>
<p>Community funds of knowledge are an asset</p> <p>-theme 1 establishing community connections helped build understanding of place and created space for experiencing community funds of knowledge.</p>
<p>Emergence of critical settler colonial consciousness</p> <p>-understanding of place in addition to relationships promoted listening, learning, and reflection; a pathway towards critical settler colonial consciousness because honor and respect of differences is being fostered.</p>
<b>Theme 3: Holistic &amp; ongoing professional development</b>

<p>Inseparability of professional development, mentorship, and land</p> <p>-there is such a strong interconnectedness between land-based professional development, community mentorship, and the act of <i>doing</i>, that they are inseparable.</p>
<p>Tools for the classroom and hands-on application</p> <p>-part of a holistic professional development environment is space for educators to practice the knowledge, skills, and abilities they are gaining and have the tools needed to use resources with fidelity.</p>
<p>Transformative nature of place, space, and application</p> <p>-Educators who have experienced this specialized PD rooted in place, given the space to learn, apply, and reflect, understand the valuable and transformative nature of decolonizing education.</p>
<p><b>Theme 4: Transformational desettling</b></p>
<p>Expose and disturb assumptions about Indigenous peoples</p>
<p>Awareness of insufficient pre-service programs lacking multicultural education</p> <p>-educators critically pointed out the lack of multicultural education in their pre-service programs, therefore lack of preparedness to work with Indigenous communities</p>
<p>New learning that shifts consciousness towards new self-understanding</p> <p>-reflections on upbringing, education experiences, and external social interactions indicate positive shifts in self-understanding toward liberatory practices</p>

## APPENDIX E: IRB APPROVAL UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO



March 12, 2021

To: Vanessa E. Anthony-Stevens

Cc: Shawna Campbell-Daniels

From: University of Idaho Institutional Review Board

Approval Date: March 12, 2021

Title: Culturally Responsive Professional Development: Impacts on Pre-service and In-service Teacher Practice and Perceptions

Protocol: 20-200, Reference: 012454

Exempt under Category 1 at 45 CFR 46.104(d)(1).

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Idaho, I am pleased to inform you that the protocol for this research project has been certified as exempt under the category listed above.

This certification is valid only for the study protocol as it was submitted. Studies certified as Exempt are not subject to continuing review and this certification does not expire. However, if changes are made to the study protocol, you must submit the changes through [VERAS](#) for review before implementing the changes. Amendments may include but are not limited to, changes in study population, study personnel, study instruments, consent documents, recruitment materials, sites of research, etc.

As Principal Investigator, you are responsible for ensuring compliance with all applicable FERPA regulations, University of Idaho policies, state and federal regulations. Every effort should be made to ensure that the project is conducted in a manner consistent with the three fundamental principles identified in the Belmont Report: respect for persons; beneficence; and justice. The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring that all study personnel have completed the online human subjects training requirement. Please complete the *Continuing Review and Closure Form* in VERAS when the project is completed.

You are required to notify the IRB in a timely manner if any unanticipated or adverse events occur during the study, if you experience an increased risk to the participants, or if you have participants withdraw or register complaints about the study.

IRB Exempt Category (Categories) for this submission:

Category 1: Research, conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, that specifically involves normal educational practices that are not likely to adversely impact students' opportunity to learn required educational content or the assessment of educators who provide instruction.