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Monica Etsitty-Dorame
Candidate

Organization Information and Learning Sciences
Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Charlotte N. Gunawardena, Chairperson

Dr. Amir Hedayati-Mehdiabadi

Dr. Tiffany Lee

Dr. Evangela Oates

NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

MONICA ETSITTY-DORAME

B.A., American Studies, The University of New Mexico, 1992
M.A., Public Administration, The University of New Mexico, 1997

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
Organization, Information and Learning Sciences

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May 2024

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the matriarchs of my family: my mother Rose Ann Cook, my late maternal great grandmother Emma George, my late maternal grandmother Alice Gatewood David, and my late paternal grandmother Rose Clara Etsitty. Their profound influence has shaped my journey and inspired every page of this work.

I also dedicate this dissertation to our ancestors, whose legacies have molded us all. Their enduring spirit and wisdom continue to guide our paths and enrich our lives.

Also included in this dedication are my amazing family members: Doug Dorame, Dinee Dorame, Nena Dorame, and Reed Bobroff. Their unwavering support and love have been my pillars of strength throughout this PhD journey.

This work is also dedicated to the Native women who graciously participated in this study. Their invaluable participation, stories, and voices were crucial to this research.

Furthermore, I extend this dedication to all Native and Indigenous women in the community, whose advocacy and support continue to uplift the common good.

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I sincerely thank Dr. Charlotte (Lani) Gunawardena for serving as my dissertation chair. She has been a true inspiration and provided unwavering support throughout my academic and dissertation journey. Her guidance has been invaluable. I am forever grateful for her mentorship and leadership and the considerable time and effort she invested in my success. I also extend my deepest gratitude to Amir Hedayati-Mehdiabadi, Tiffany Lee, and Evangela Oates for their roles on my committee. Thank you for your steadfast support, insightful guidance, encouraging words, and unwavering belief in my capabilities, as well as the significant time and effort you dedicated to the success of this dissertation.

I extend my deepest gratitude to my family who have been at my side helping me with ideas, giving me feedback, checking my grammar, giving me encouragement, providing hugs, ensuring peace and quiet, cleaning the house, bringing me food, celebrating milestones. This dissertation thrived on the foundation of their love and dedication.

My heart and gratitude go out to my mother who has been my leader, who has been my constant, who has been my Changing Woman. She always believed in me and gave me her never ending support. I am forever grateful. I love you to infinity. Thank you to my siblings for their support in this journey.

My heartfelt thanks go to my colleagues and friends, whose support has been indispensable throughout this academic journey. I could not have embarked on this path without your collective support and encouragement. I especially would like to thank Teresa Neely whose guidance was pivotal in my decision to apply to the OILS PhD program. Your

belief in my potential to become Dr. Dorame inspired me. I am immensely grateful for your leadership and guidance that helped pave the way for this accomplishment.

NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Monica J. Etsitty-Dorame

B.A., American Studies, The University of New Mexico, 1992
M.A., Public Administration, The University of New Mexico, 1997
Ph.D., Organization Information and Learning Sciences, 2024

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored leadership in higher education through the perspectives of six Native American women faculty at a southwest university. The study utilized a Diné informed conceptual framework incorporating the Diné Philosophy of education, the Diné philosophy of life (Są'áh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón - SNBH), and the Diné ceremonial basket. The research examined how Native women faculty perceived leadership, their identity as leaders in higher education, their leadership in the community, and how their background and context influenced their perception of leadership. Further, it explored their roles within academic and community settings. The study employed narrative inquiry and thematic analysis to interpret the experiences and insights. Four themes developed—Self-discovery and Transition to Leadership, Leading in Academia, Collaborative Leaders, and From Adversity to Assurance to Advocacy—each aligning with the four pillars of the Diné Philosophy of Learning and SNBH: Thinking (Nitsáhákees), Planning (Nahat'á), Living (Iiná), and Assurance (Sihasin). The findings suggest that Native American women's leadership is characterized by a holistic, non-linear approach that emphasizes community, collaboration, and cultural values. Leadership is portrayed as a journey of continuous learning and giving back, reflecting traditional teachings of balance

and resilience. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the unique leadership styles of Native American women in higher education and underscores the importance of incorporating Indigenous philosophies into leadership discourse. The study is significant as it provides insight and understanding into Native women's leadership through their lens and their lived experiences. Implications for higher education are discussed with insights on how to create a conducive higher education environment to retain Native faculty.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION ..... **iii**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... **iv**

LIST OF FIGURES ..... **xii**

Chapter 1 – Introduction – Thinking (Nitsáhákees) – East **1**

Need for the Study 12

Purpose of the Study 14

Conceptual Framework 14

Theoretical Lens 22

Research Questions 22

Significance of the Study 25

Researcher Lens/Positionality 25

Limitations and Delimitations 29

Definition of Terms 30

Chapter 2 – Literature Review – Planning (Nahat'á) – South **34**

Definitions of Leadership 34

Types of Leadership 37

Native American Women Leadership 43

Methodologies Used for Native American Women Leadership 47

Narrative Inquiry as a Qualitative Research Method 49

Są’áh Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón (SNBH) 50

Native American Women Roles in Society 52

Chapter 3 – Methods – Living (Iiná) – West 56

Research Design 56

Research Questions 57

Participants 58

Procedure 59

Interview Guide 60

Interview Questions 60

Data Collection 64

Data Analysis 67

Validity 70

Chapter 4 – Findings – Assurance (Sihasin) – North 73

Participant profile 74

Emma 76

Alice 77

Rose 79

Nancy 81

Veronica 84

Dineena 86

Perspectives on Leadership 89

Native Women's Perspectives on Leadership 98

Developing Themes of Leadership 103

Self-discovery and Transitioning to Leadership 103

Native Women's Perspectives on Being a Leader 104
Figuring It All Out 107
Constantly Adjusting and Adapting 108
Pushing Ahead 110
Building Confidence and Taking Action 112
Leading in Academia 117

Role as Faculty 118
Mentoring 123
Collaborative Leaders 129

From Adversity to Assurance to Advocacy 138

Failures 139
Stereotypes and Racism 140
Microaggression 143
Inequity 144
Toxicity 144
Adversities in Life 145
Isolation 147
Research Questions Discussion 152

Chapter 5 - Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion - Hózhǫ́ 159

Discussion 164

Findings and Themes 170

Findings 171

Theme 1 175

Theme 2 177

Mentorship 179
Theme 3 181

Theme Four 183

Summary of Themes 185

Implications for Higher Education 186

Future Research 190

Concluding Thoughts 194

APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW 198

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT FOR PARTICIPATION 199

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS 200

REFERENCES 202

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. *Annie Dodge Wauneka - Diné leader* 9

Figure 2. *Illustration of the Conceptual Framework – Diné Ceremonial Basket and Diné Philosophy of Learning* 18

Figure 3. *Diné Philosophy of Learning a component of Są'áh Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón* 20

Figure 4. *Navajo Foundation of Education Four Concepts (Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná, and Sihasin)* 21

Figure 5. *Research Questions in relation to Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná, and Sihasin* 24

Figure 6. *Five Generations* 29

Figure 7. *Six Strengths of Resilient Leaders* 37

Figure 8. *Interview Questions in relation to Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná, and Sihasin* 62

Figure 9. *Connecting Interview Questions with Research Questions in relation to Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná, and Sihasin* 63

Figure 10. *Thematic Analysis in relation to Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná, and Sihasin* 70

Figure 11. *Higher Education Journey to Leadership A Holistic Approach* 162

Figure 12. *Themes and Research Questions in relation to Thinking (Nitsáhákees), Planning (Nahat'á), Living (Iiná), and Assurance (Sihasin)* 164

Chapter 1 – Introduction – Thinking (Nitsáhákees) – East

Yá'át'ééh¸ shí éí Monica Etsitty Dorame yinishyé. Shi dóone'e éí Tábąąhá nishłį́ dóó Tótsohnii báshíshchíín. Honágháahnii dashícheii dóó Táchii'nii dashinálí**.** Ashdladiin dóó ba'aan náhást'éí shinaahai. Bee'eldíil Dah Sinil kééhasht'į́ ndi Tséhootsooídéé' naashá. Ákót'éego Diné asdzáán nishłį́.

Hello, my name is Monica Etsitty Dorame. I am Edge of Water clan and born for the Big Water clan. The One Walks Around clan is my maternal grandfather's clan and the Red Running Into the Water People is my paternal grandfather's clan. I am 59 years old. I reside in Albuquerque, NM and I am originally from Fort Defiance, Arizona. In this way, I am a Diné woman.

As a Diné woman, I have been surrounded by my matriarchs my whole life. They have been my inspiration, my motivation, my strength, and my identity. With their gifts I carry on their legacy as leaders. They have always expressed the importance of education and to help people in every way that we can. Their knowledge, ambition, resilience, and wisdom as Diné women leaders will most certainly be reflective in Native American women leaders today as they develop, progress, and succeed in their own leadership, forging ahead, pushing the envelope, and making changes for the betterment of life – hózhǫ́.

I preface this story of Diné history and teachings, notably of Asdzą́ą́ Nádleehé (Changing Woman), holy creator, to depict the importance of the female figure as a leader to the Diné people. This is the root of who we are, our identity, and the importance of leadership as a Diné woman. "[Diné] women who are honored and revered share Changing Woman's attributes" (Denetdale, 2007, p. 179). In Diné culture and history of emergence, "Changing Women [also known as White Shell Woman or Asdzą́ą́ Nádleehé] is one of the

central figures, [as creation spirit and holy deity] ... her gift of mother's instinct and affection are the basis for the matrilineal clan system" (Iverson & Roessel, 2002, p. 12). Asdzą́ą́ Nádleehé created the Diné matrilineal clan system. This is the identity of the Diné people. To have this identity, "to be Diné [is] to respect the old ways and to find the means to continue in a new day. The people looked to Asdzą́ą́ Nádleehé for inspiration and reaffirmation" (Iverson & Roessel, 2002, p. 3).

As a Diné woman I am grounded by my identity, heritage, and family. I was taught and guided by Diné philosophy and traditional ways of knowing. With my knowledge and understanding of Diné philosophy of life, I explored Native American women leadership through a Diné woman's lens.

Asdzą́ą́ Nádleehé embodies us, Diné women, from the time of birth to the holy spirit world. Through these phases of life, as a Diné woman, we go through various stages of ceremonies (baby's first laugh, Kinaaldá, wedding, Blessingway, and healing ceremonies) that help us lead and be leaders like Asdzą́ą́ Nádleehé. These ceremonies "establish positive growth and role development for the future … ensure good health practices for a long and productive life … define what an ideal woman will be like [and] prepare for the many challenges and responsibilities of adulthood" (Iverson & Roessel, 2002, p. 35). In each of these phases of Diné life, as a baby, a teenager, a woman who gives birth and an aged woman readying for the holy world, the Diné follow in the footsteps of Asdzą́ą́ Nádleehé to continue the cycle of life from "baby [entering this world as] a holy one … [as a teenager receiving Kinaaldá blessings of Asdzą́ą́ Nádleehé] to bless--physically and spiritually the people around her … when [she] gives birth to a new life, she becomes the holy one and may have a Blessingway ceremony … when [her] hair turns white and she shrinks in size as if returning

to being a baby, she dies, and in that holy moment, she again becomes White Shell Woman … entering that holy state" (McPherson & Robinson, 2020, p. 95).

As children of Asdzą́ą́ Nádleehé, the Diné people carried on the traditional ways and women were regarded highly with respect as leaders and important contributors to the community. As children of Asdzą́ą́ Nádleehé, "it's going to be up to us [or yourself] to make changes – [T'áá hó' ajít'éego]" (McPherson & Robinson, 2020, p. 39). We, as women, have to make changes in our life for ourselves, to contribute to society, and impact the world, even if it means leaving one footprint in this world. "From the time of Changing Woman to the twenty-first century, there is an appreciation for heritage and an understanding that present actions affect future generations" (Iverson & Roessel, 2002, p. 321).

Before colonization, Native American women had important and equal leadership roles in their relationships and in their community as a primary leader of the tribe, making important decisions, providing sustenance, providing healing, care, and well-being as a medicine woman, and fighting as a warrior. "Cherokee women regularly advised … council on matters of war and peace, had autonomy and sexual freedom, could obtain divorce easily, rarely experienced rape or domestic violence, worked as producers/farmers, owned their own homes and fields, possessed a cosmology that contains female supernatural figures, and had significant political and economic power" (Johnston, 2003, p. 3). According to Jennifer Denetdale's (2007) account of her three-times great grandmother, Juanita (Asdzáá Tł'ógi - wife to Chief Manuelito of the Diné people) "assumed a vital place in Navajo society, that of mother [and] … role as a member of the delegation" (p. 149). "Navajo women played a role in the political arena [and Juanita] … exercised her privilege as a headman's wife to speak in public spaces" (Denetdale, 2007, p. 149). Juanita's relationship with Chief Manuelito

"reflects the ideal egalitarian nature of male-female relationships … establishing a home where children will benefit from both parents" (Denetdale, 2007, p. 150). Denetdale (2007) speaks further of Juanita's oratory skills and the reverence she received from the Diné people because "in the Navajo society to speak well and persuasively is a highly lauded skill and a sign of exceptional intelligence" (p. 150). Juanita and Chief Manuelito's eldest daughter, Dághá Chíí be Asdzáá, "was also known for her oratory skills and regarded highly as a community leader" (Denetdale, 2007, p. 150). This generational matriarchal leadership continues today as Jennifer is a well-known and inspirational leader of the Diné Nation. She was the "first Navajo to hold a Ph.D. in history" (Iverson & Roessel, 2002, p. 302).

As colonization spread throughout the United States (US) to "civilize the Indians", Reyna Green (1992) describes in her book, *Women in American Indian Society*, Native American people's devastation and demise as Europeans invaded at the hand of sufferings from disease, poverty, wars, enslavement, religious proselytizers. Subsequently, other forms of "civilizing the Indian" meant the enactment of several laws like Indian Removal Act, the Dawes Act, Relocation era, corralling Indians to designated reservations, and forced attendance in boarding schools that suppressed, oppressed, subjugated, and obliterated Native American people. "Civilizing the Indians" meant to take away their land, their cultivation, their sustenance, their identity, and their soul. "After the invasion … Indian women's lives … changed immediately … differently than it did men … [their] economic, political, and social status suffered immeasurably" (Green, 1992, p. 33).

Despite the devastation, some women kept their traditional roles and status. According to Demos (1995), in New Mexico, Puebloan women and women from neighboring tribes were able to continue their role as builders, plasterers of their homes,

where non-Natives viewed theses jobs as appropriate for males. Women building and plastering "remained an important role for Indian women of the Southwest right up to the present day" (Demos, 1995, p. 36). Puebloan women's work included "earthenware … jars of extraordinary labor and workmanship … [impressive] textiles with delicate embroidery and painted design … [and work] tending their large flocks of turkeys [they owned]" (Demos, 1995, p. 36). These were means of economy accepted by colonists.

Despite what Native American women were able to contribute to their family, community, and tribe, during and in the after math of colonization, Native American women leaders were deprived and diminished of their leadership roles in their family, community, and tribe. With colonialism, came patriarchy, imposing on matrilineal societies and wiping out the concept that women can be leaders. One account mentions such dismissiveness even at the highest level of the US government. "American presidents, like most non-Natives, were typically unaware of the status of women in Native communities and often failed to extend diplomatic protocols to women … for example, President Abraham Lincoln entertained delegations from Indian Territory … Although Lincoln's assistants introduced each of the male leaders to the president, they failed to introduce two Kiowa women who accompanied the delegation. When Lincoln finally noticed them, he shook their hands and said a few words, but made no effort to use an interpreter to engage them in conversation" (Trafzer, 2009, p. 7).

Many tribes during this time period experienced removal from their lands, relocated hundreds of miles away, and then were imprisoned in designated reservations. In 1863, during President Lincoln's presidency, the Diné endured the Long Walk, three hundred miles, across Arizona to Fort Sumner, New Mexico (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). They were

imprisoned in a concentration camp and given rations for food. They were confined to land that was not apt for growing food. There was no shelter, and they were exposed to the elements, to wild animals, and to attacks by other tribes and enemies (Iverson & Roessel, 2002; Morris, 1997). They were ravaged by starvation and disease ultimately leading some to their demise. Leadership may not be displayed in its common and familiar traits, but it can be seen in different ways and forms. For example, according to an interview of Pete Price, a Diné medicine man, Mr. Price states, "the wisemen of the tribe [met] with the white man … their talk and pleadings were useless … the men failed, the women went to the white man, cried and pleaded [they] were successful and the people returned to their country" (Kimball et al., 1902, p. 1). Like the Diné people who looked to "Asdzą́ą́ Nádleehé for inspiration and reaffirmation" (Iverson & Roessel, 2002, p. 3) in the Diné emergence story, the women, with the spirit of Asdzą́ą́ Nádleehé, acted with their cries, with their pleadings, and with their strength. No matter the ways the women were able to persuade the white man, they succeeded in their people's return to Diné Bikéyah, (the people's sacred land).

Upon their return to Diné Bikéyah and the continued effects of "civilizing the Indians," Shepardson, states, "the Indian government was a simplified version of a federal organization [and] Navajo governmental activity was considered a masculine prerogative" (Shepardson, 1982, p. 160). With this mindset, "Navajo women were denied to vote. The BIA emphasized male orientation in its civilizing efforts" (Shepardson, 1982, p. 160). Additional colonizing efforts brought further disregard, disrespect, sexism and detriment to the women. "The census ignored matrilineal clan designations; assigned the patronym of the father to the child; and grouped household members under a male head in its registration procedures. Sheep permits were issued to a male household head, regardless of who owned

the individual sheep. Important BIA jobs went to men, preferably Anglo men" (Shepardson, 1982, p. 160). These events stripped away the identity and soul of the Diné women as well as other Native American women.

Today, we continue to see such dismissiveness, exclusion, and invisibility of Native American women. The minimization of Diné women leadership still persists today, according to Iverson and Roessel (2002), who cites historian AnCita Benally, "the modern Navajo government … is patriarchal in practice because it reflects Euro-American ideas and leadership" (p. 303). Patriarchal colonialism impacted "Native American peoples, especially women, to accomplish a further erosion of their Indigenous rights … [and] for Native American women, this has meant a double burden because they must deal with both racist and sexist attitudes, and with the discrimination that results from such prejudices" (Guerrero, 2003, p. 65).

There have been several Native American women leaders throughout time but for the Diné people Dr. Annie Wauneka was one of the first recognized Diné women leaders. Dr. Wauneka was and still is revered as a crusader and warrior for the Diné people. She was born April 11, 1910 and died November 10, 1997 of Alzheimer's at age 87. She was born on the Navajo reservation in Sawmill, Arizona. Her parents were Henry Chee Dodge and K'eehanabah (Mary Shirley Begaye). Her father was the first and fifth Navajo Nation tribal council chairman. She soon followed his footsteps. "For many years, Annie Wauneka was the only woman serving on the Navajo Tribal Council" (Shepardson, 1982, p. 160). Because of her voice, visibility, and passion serving on Council, she created paths and opportunities for Diné women in Health and Education. She was a public health activist and fought many issues for the Diné Nation in Washington, DC. Dr. Wauneka was an influential Diné woman.

According to Niethammer (2001) and Niethammer & Ruffenach (2006), Annie Wauneka had several accolades and accomplishments:

- 1958 Josephine Hughes Award and the Arizona Press Women's Association Woman of Achievement Award
- 1959 Arizona State Public Health Association's Outstanding Worker in Public Health
- 1959 Indian Achievement Award of the Indian Council Fire of Chicago
- 1960 Hosted her own radio show in Navajo, KGAK, Gallup, NM
- 1963 Presidential Medal of Freedom
- 1973 Honorary doctorate in Humanities from University of New Mexico (UNM)
- 1976 Second honorary doctorate in Public Health from the University of Arizona
- 1976 Ladies' Home Journal Woman of the Year 1976 in New York City
- 1984 Navajo Council designated her Legendary Mother of the Navajo Nation
- 1996 Third honorary doctorate, Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws from U of A
- 2000 she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame

Of her awards, the 1963 Presidential Medal of Freedom was the highest of all accolades. She received this award for her contributions to health care services on the Navajo Nation. She is the first Native American to win this honor. Figure 1 shows President Lyndon B. Johnson introducing Annie as the "first woman elected to the Navajo Tribal Council, by her long crusade for improved health programs she has helped dramatically to lessen the menace of disease among her people and to improve their way of life" (Office of Federal Register, 1963, p. 902). See Figure 1. This award was established by President John F. Kennedy in 1963 two weeks before his assassination. It is the nation's highest civilian honor. "The [award is] given for 'exceptionally' meritorious contributions to the security or national

interests of the United States, to world peace, or to cultural or other significant public or private endeavors” (Office of Federal Register, 1963, p. 210).

Figure 1

Annie Dodge Wauneka - Diné leader

Note. President Lyndon Johnson awards Annie Dodge Wauneka the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1963. Courtesy of the Lyndon B. Johnson Library. Retrieved from https://www.utahwomenshistory.org/bios/annie-dodge-wauneka/

According to Niethammer (2001), in 1918, when Annie was eight years old while at the Fort Defiance boarding school, she contracted the Spanish flu and survived. Many of her classmates died as she helped the school nurse with sick students. Annie recounts, “They’d just wrap them up in a sheet and pile them on top of each other, just pile them … five or ten died each night. And corpses were sitting in the hall. There were horse-driven wagons and they used to just pile them up like a bunch of wood and haul them away” (Niethammer, 2001, p. 29). Annie was in a place where she had no choice but to help her classmates and

other Diné people who contracted the deadly flu, and even in the most horrific circumstances, with resilience and strength, she was able to cope with such tragedies at such a young age.

Moreover, during Annie's lifetime, the diseases, trachoma and tuberculosis, were rampant on the reservation that affected many Diné people. Consequently, her life changed when "doctors reported that the tuberculosis was killing Navajos like flies ... [Annie recounts,] this man, a council delegate, he got up and looked around and said, Where's the lady? You women can take care of the sick far better than we men can. So, let's appoint her and get her to work" (Niethammer& Ruffenach, 2006, p. 47). Although Annie was already displaying her leadership at eight years old, when helping the school nurse and her classmates, she definitely established her leadership, a powerful leadership, when she became "in charge of leading the Tribal Council work on the tuberculosis issue" (Niethammer& Ruffenach, 2006, p. 47). She became "chairperson of the new Health and Welfare Committee … [Although she was not able to save the lives of her classmates,] maybe now she could do more to help save the lives of Navajos who had contracted tuberculosis" (Niethammer& Ruffenach, 2006, p. 47). From her experiences, she was able to be flexible in both philosophies, traditional and modern Navajo. Annie Wauneka exuded wisdom.

Wangari Maathai, a wise African woman, spoke of wisdom and said, "wisdom is the people's experiences in life and through these experiences life was made easier, more productive or profitable and these successes were passed on to the next generation and eventually was coded in the culture and became tradition" (Bleyl, n.d.). I resonated with Wangari on her thoughts of wisdom and I think it is fitting here in reflecting on Annie Wauneka's life experiences, resilience, and accomplishments. Through Dr. Wauneka's experience, resilience, and wisdom, significant changes in the Navajo community were made

and she made life easier for many Diné people. We now have women in the medical field, women in education, women in government leadership and people teaching their families to have better health, better sanitation conditions and better understanding of traditional and modern medicine. Lastly, a quote of wisdom I thought depicted Dr. Wauneka perfectly as a passionate, tenacious, and fearless Diné woman, who goes about her Asdzą́ą́ ways, manifesting Asdzą́ą́ Nádleehé, is "when a congressman once told her to 'quit playing Indian,' Annie calmly replied, Congressman … I didn't come here to talk about your clothes, so you ignore mine and let's talk legislation" (Cleere, 2016). Truer words were never spoken. Dr. Annie Wauneka was truly in her own category of wisdom and leadership. Annie's legacy is prevalent today in the lives of Diné women leaders.

With resilience and fortitude, Dr. Wauneka and my grandmothers, survived the Spanish flu, trachoma, and tuberculosis. They endured and overcame terrible hardships. Annie Wauneka set the path for my mother who became a physician assistant and worked on the Pine Ridge and Diné reservations helping Diné people and Native American communities through the Indian Health Service; Dr. Wauneka set the path for myself to be confident as a leader and continue my education which I'm about to complete as a PhD student; She set the path for my daughters to continue this pathway of education and breaking barriers in places that we thought were not possible. All the while, keeping our traditional Diné ways and Asdzą́ą́ ways, keeping hózhǫ́ (health, beauty, and wellness, spiritually and physically) as Asdzą́ą́ Nádleehé was for our people.

Native American women today are coming full circle exceeding expectations, pushing the envelope, and succeeding by running for seats in tribal council, running for tribal presidency, running for congressional office, stepping into a new world, taking back what

they initially had, embodying their version of Changing Woman, reincarnating as the modern metamorphosis of Changing Woman.

Even today, thinking about myself as a leader, it took me many years to convince myself that I am a leader in my community. I have always admired Dr. Wauneka, and the women in my life, my matriarchs, for their resilience, strength, and leadership. They believed in Są'áh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón (a Diné worldview of life) combined with western education and the values of hózhǫ́ and t'áá hó' ajít'éego (it's up to you to make changes). With this ideal, I know who I am, I am Tábąąhá, Tótsohnii, Honágháahnii, and Táchii'nii**.** I continue to think, to learn, to move forward, to figure things out, to push the envelope, to create paths of opportunities for others and myself, to work with people, and to have well-being and balance. Through my experiences and my lens, I redefine my own perspective of leadership. With that in mind, I am looking forward to exploring Native American women's perspectives on leadership and how they perceive themselves as emerging leaders in higher education, in the community and at home.

Need for the Study

There is much needed research on Native American women leadership in politics, tribal affairs, health services, military, and higher education. Coates et al. (2021), "[recognize] the need to further examine Indigenous leadership in the higher education governance structure" (p. 1). Examining Native American women leadership, Tippeconnic-Fox et al. (2015), state, "it is clear more research needs to be conducted in this area as more American Indian women assume leadership positions in mainstream and Indian communities [and] what motivates the women to lead [is one question that needs answering]" (p. 97). Further, Lajimodiere (2011) confirms the need for research on Native American women's

voices in many areas including leadership, "we need their contributions; we need to hear the voices of Native American women telling us their perspectives on history, culture, politics, feminism, and leadership (p. 77). Tippeconnic-Fox, et al. (2015) recognize the importance of Native American women in their communities but often voices are not heard and some made invisible. For this reason, Tippeconnic-Fox, et al. (2015) stress the need for research and stress that "it is time to acknowledge and understand American Indian women as leaders, and to recognize their contributions to the survival of their communities" (p. 97).

Conducting a study exploring Native American women's perspectives on leadership will provide us their voice, experience, and lens of what leadership means. It was also important to explore how they see themselves as leaders in the community, their visions for leadership, to give us a better understanding of their role and what it takes to be a leader in education, a leader as a professor in higher education and a community leader.

Working at the University of New Mexico's main campus system for the past thirty years, I have seen a very slow growth of Native American women faculty. Likewise, going through the university system as an undergraduate and graduate student there wasn't much representation of Native American women instructors or faculty. The University of New Mexico's Office of Institutional Analytics (2020) produces a report called, *Official Faculty Counts*. In the latest 2021 report, there are twenty-five of 1,012 (.02%), regular (not temporary), full-time, tenure-track, Native American women faculty who are professors (6 in total), associate professors (6), assistant professors (6), lecturers (6), and instructors (1) across all colleges. The report includes Native American women faculty at main campus and health sciences (excluding Gallup, Los Alamos, Taos, and Valencia branches). Note that this is a very small percentage of the total faculty in a state that has a significant number of

Native communities in the U.S. Therefore, it is important to study the perspectives and voices of these minority women leaders. This study will include Native American women faculty who are lecturers, research professors, tenure-track, and clinical faculty.

I have always had an interest in finding out how Native American women scholars were able to persevere to faculty status. Did they always consider themselves as leaders? Did they consider themselves as leaders in their community and in higher education? How did their background and context influence their perception of leadership? How did they perceive leadership? Overall, this study will shed light on Native American women leadership in higher education and ultimately provides a pathway to my own advanced degree as a Diné woman.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore leadership in higher education from Native American women faculty perspectives. Native American women who have achieved faculty status in higher education are leaders in so many ways. They are leaders amongst their peers, in their discipline, in their organization, in the university community, and in the general community, as well as in their families and tribal communities. The study will examine their perspective of leadership, their identity as a leader in higher education, as a leader in their own community, and how their background and context influence their perception of leadership.

Conceptual Framework

There are many Indigenous philosophies, knowledge and perspectives that are being developed, applied, adapted, or practiced as a conceptual framework, as a theoretical lens, as a theory, as a methodological approach in Indigenous research. Indigenous worldviews are

"changing in the realm of research" (Hart, 2010, p. 1). For example, Hart (2010) makes an important note, "while at one time, we, as Indigenous peoples, were faced with leaving our indigeneity at the door when we entered the academic world, several of us are now actively working to ensure our research is not only respectful, or 'culturally sensitive,' but is also based in approaches and processes that are parts of our cultures" (p. 1). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021) discusses an Indigenous research agenda, and she writes, "while most projects fall well within what will be recognized as empirical research, not all do. Some important work is related to theorizing Indigenous issues at the level of ideas, policy analysis and critical debate, and to setting out in writing Indigenous spiritual beliefs and world views" (p. 163). Secatero (2009) points out, "American Indian groups are incorporating holistic education, such as storytelling, language preservation, and epistemology, to meet the needs of their respective [I]ndigenous communities and to build a foundation for future generations to carry on" (p. 54).

As a Diné researcher, I saw the importance of applying my own cultural and Indigenous lens and knowledge in my research. The conceptual framework for this study introduced Diné Philosophy of Education (philosophy of learning) a component of the Diné worldview, Są'áh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón (SNBH), the Diné philosophy of life. Also, included in the conceptual framework is the Diné ceremonial basket to show the maturation of a person's life. The basket works interconnectedly with SNBH and the four pillars. The Diné ceremonial basket and the Diné philosophy of life guided my study using Diné beliefs, values, history, and traditions that encompass four pillars – Thinking (Nitsáhákees), Planning (Nahat'á), Living (Iiná), and Assurance (Sihasin). SNBH, the four pillars and the ceremonial basket work together telling the history of the Diné people and the universal elements that

include the animals, the environment, the celestial bodies, the universe, and the spiritual world.

The Diné Philosophy of Learning and the Diné ceremonial basket (footprint of one's life or life map) were holistic approaches for leadership and using these approaches created interpretations of and understanding of Native American women faculty experiences and perspectives of leadership in higher education. This framework guided this study to examine Native American women faculty perspectives in that it will relate to the leader herself. She begins her life journey, in the very middle of the basket and emerging through the opening at the top of the basket and continuing in a circular motion clockwise. In her journey she begins the four pillars of the Diné philosophy of learning. First, the thinking pillar where she will learn and observe, acquiring knowledge and skills of a leader. Second, she'll mature into the planning pillar, developing and planning for self-sufficiency, analyzing one's direction in life, and recognizing role and responsibilities as a leader. Thirdly, she'll succeed into the living pillar where she begins adult life, knows purpose in life, is visionary, knows her roles and responsibilities, and is matured and considered wise. Fourth, she'll journey into the assuring wisdom pillar. She is wise, confident, and stable. She understands lifetime learning and living and she contributes to the community.

My late stepfather, Tom Cook, who was a medicine man apprentice spoke often to me, at length, with stories and songs regarding ceremonies, teachings, traditional life, taboos, and history. I was the oldest and should carry on this knowledge. These stories and songs encompass SNBH. I am not an expert in the intricacies and complexities of SNBH. My stepfather said that is only gifted to healers, medicine people, singers, chanters (hataałii), their assistants, and spiritual leaders. SNBH is a complex concept that has intricacies that

hataałii and spiritual leaders understand and carry through all ceremonies with specific connections to the Blessing Way and Protection Way ceremonies. Dr. Lloyd Lee (2004) indicates from his interviewee, Raymond Jim Redhouse, a Diné College instructor and chanter, “in order to comprehend SNBH, one must participate in a Diné ceremony” (p. 96). Although I did not participate in a ceremony and was not privy to these sacred intricacies, I did learn, as most Diné people have learned, the everyday life principles of Hózhǫ́ and SNBH. I humbly integrate components of SNBH in my conceptual framework for this study.

What I was taught of the Diné philosophy of life was developed into a framework by Diné College and the Navajo Foundation of Education which is used by them, and seen in the graphic representations in Figures 3 and 4. According to Garrison (2009), the Diné College’s Diné Educational Philosophy principles encompass four words:

> nitsáhákees – thinking, assessing (associated with the East)
>
> nahat'á – planning (associated with the South)
>
> iiná – living, implementation (associated with the West)
>
> sii hasin – fulfillment, evaluation (associated with the North) (p. 65).

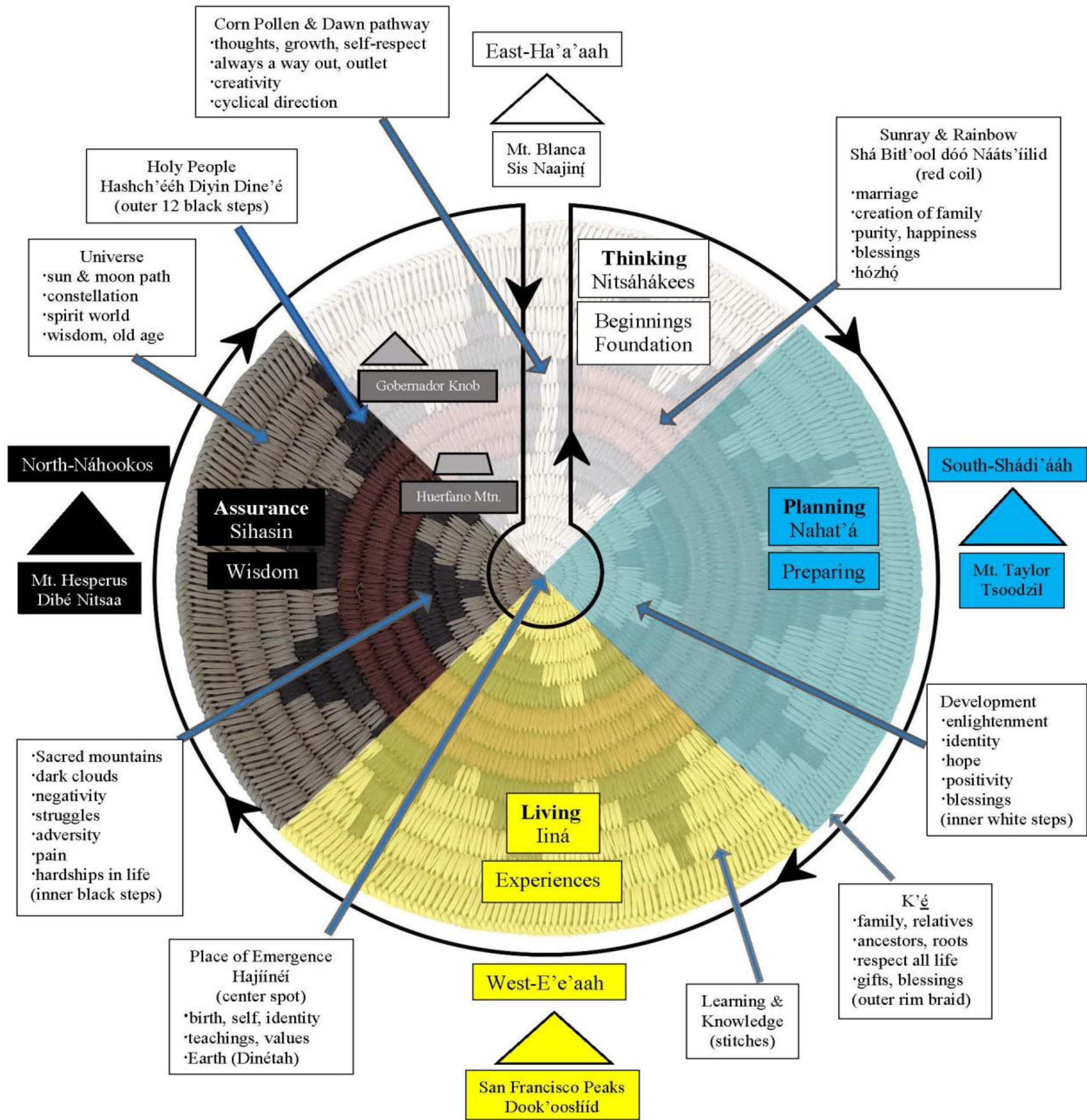
These four words and the graphic representation in Figure 4 are components of the Diné’s conception of the universe and its interconnection with SNBH. It encompasses the learning process in everyday life. The “[SNBH] philosophy is a system from which the Diné people gain teachings and learn how to achieve a healthy well-being throughout life” (Haskie 2002, 32). The “SNBH framework is a flexible interpretative framework not a definitive model” (Lee, 2004, p. 95). With this in mind, these four principles can be as complex as the SNBH, but it also has its flexibility, simplicities, and common knowledge and understanding for use

in everyday life. Thus, this study will use the flexibility in the SNBH framework to interpret the voice and perspectives of the Native American women participating in this study.

In Figure 2, I created a graphic of the four words or pillars – Thinking (Nitsáhákees), Planning (Nahat'á), Living (Iiná), and Assurance (Sihasin). Included in the image is the Diné ceremonial basket representing one's phases of life and universal elements that include animals, the environment, celestial bodies, the universe, and the spiritual world. Additionally, some elements were used depicted in Figure 4. Most Diné people know these elements and concepts of Diné Philosophy of Learning shown in Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 2

Illustration of the Conceptual Framework – The Diné Ceremonial Basket and Diné Philosophy of Learning

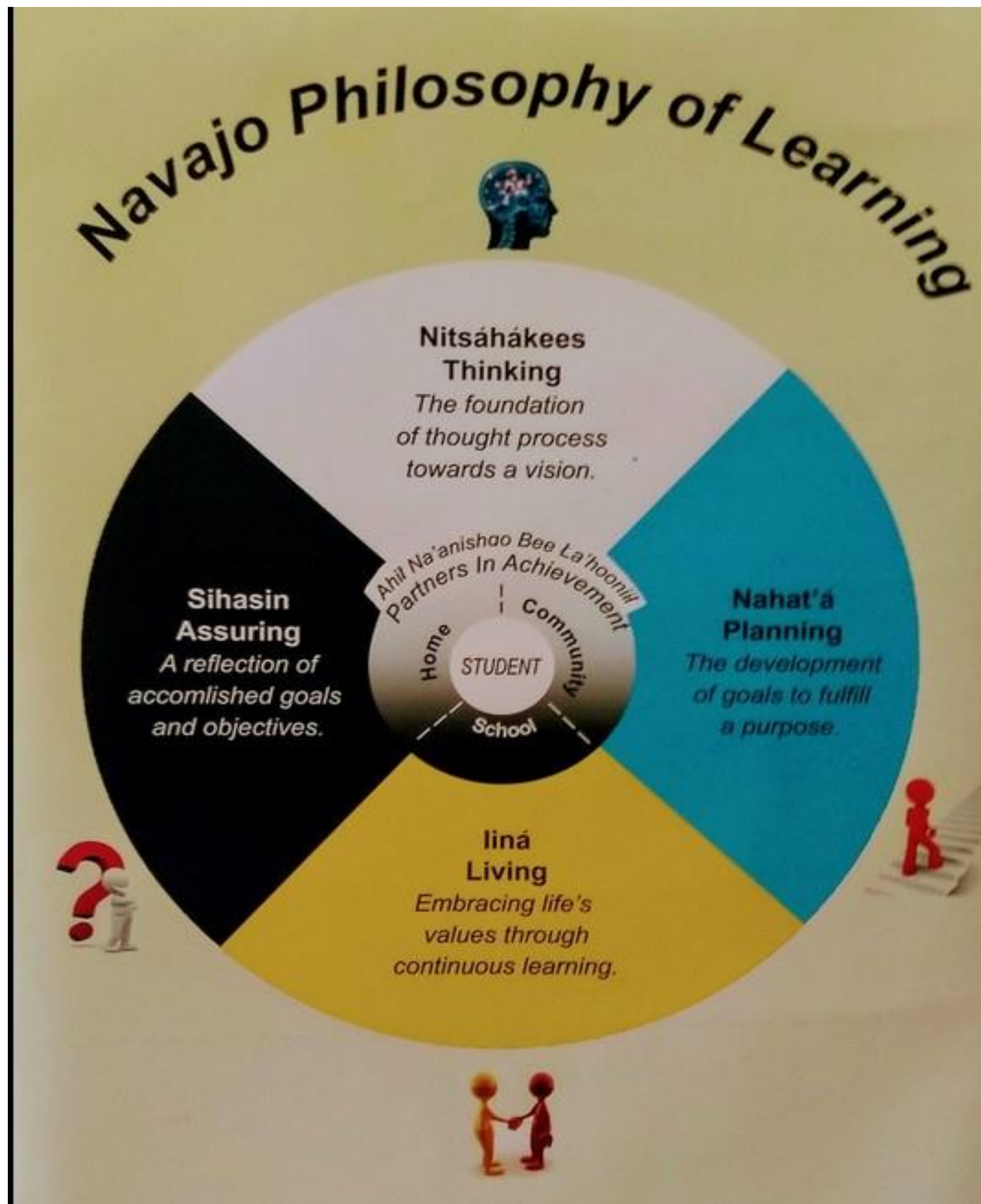


Note. This image was created by the researcher adapting the Diné philosophy of learning model by Chinle Public Schools as seen in Figure 3, incorporating an image of the researcher's Diné wedding basket to show the interconnectedness of Diné philosophy of

learning, knowledge and ways of knowing. With the help of colleague Megan Tucker and her skills in Adobe Photoshop she was able to help me reproduce this image in a graphic form.

Figure 3

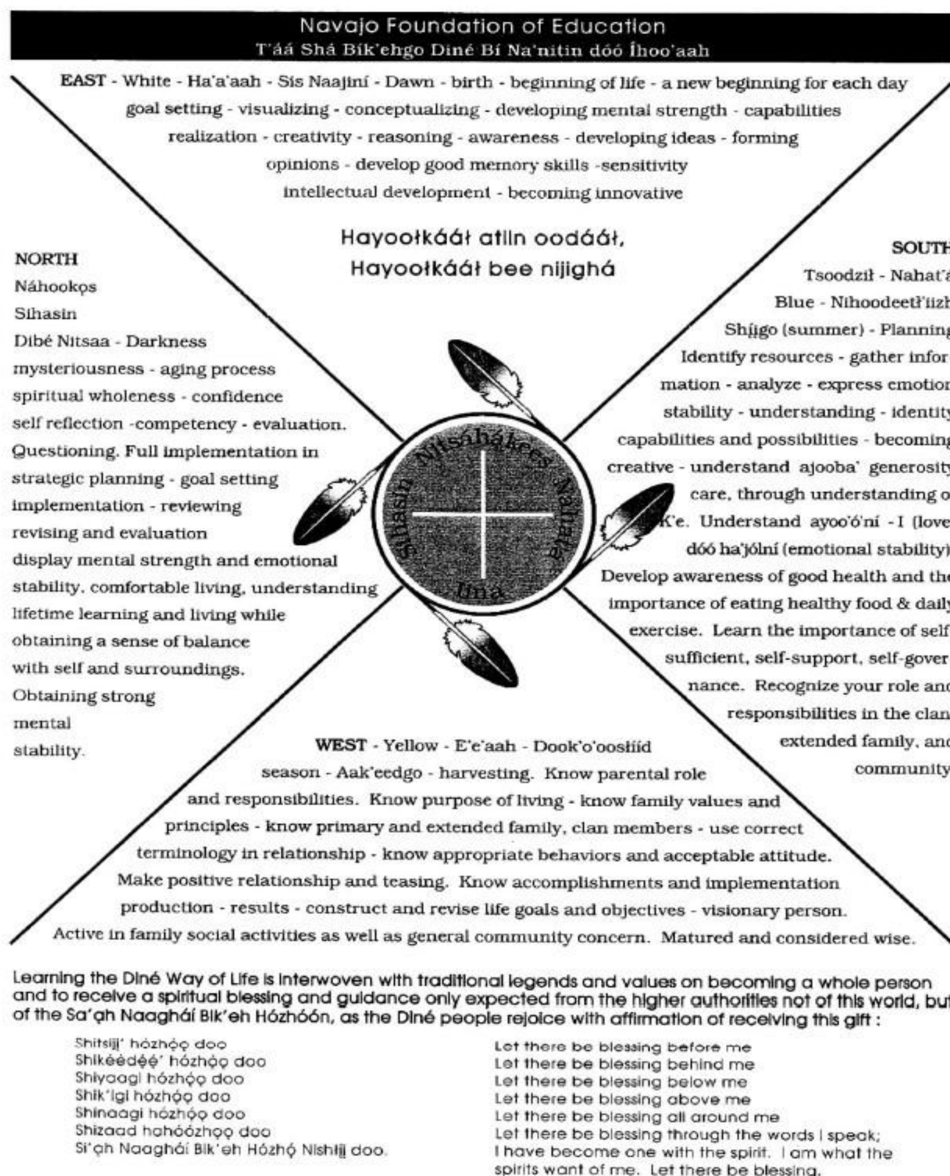
Diné Philosophy of Learning a component of Są'áh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón



Note. This image of the Navajo philosophy of learning was created by the Chinle Public Schools.

Figure 4

Navajo Foundation of Education Four Concepts (Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná, and Sihasin)



Note. Navajo Foundation of Education description of the four domains--Thinking (Nitsáhákees), Planning (Nahat'á), Living (Iiná), and Assurance (Sihasin). The four directions, mountains, colors, time of day, seasons, and stages of life are included as a

cyclical symbolism of life. (Reproduced with the permission of the Navajo Nation Department of Diné Education.)

Theoretical Lens

Creswell (2014) discusses the use of a theoretical lens in qualitative research. He points out that a theoretical lens can be used when research includes gender, class, race, and issues regarding marginalized groups. “This lens becomes a transformative perspective that shapes the types of questions asked, informs how data are collected and analyzed, and provides a call for action or change” (Creswell, 2014, p. 64). Utilizing this lens will “guide the researcher as to what issues are important to examine (e.g., marginalization, empowerment, oppression, power) the people who need to be studied (e.g., women, low economic, social status, ethnic and racial groups, sexual orientation, disability)” (Creswell, 2014, p. 64). As stated in the conceptual framework, the theoretical lens in this study is the Diné philosophy of learning, its four pillars, and the lens from a Diné woman’s perspective based on the Diné philosophy of learning. These cultural concepts can be seen in Figures 2, 3 and 4. Native American women perspectives will come from their voices, their opinions, their stories, their knowledge, and their wisdom. The theoretical lens will help to understand these perspectives. Additionally, using this theoretical lens will indicate my position, my personal and cultural viewpoint, and my perspective as a researcher and “how the final accounts need to be written … without further marginalizing individuals [and] giving recommendations for changes to improve lives and society” (Creswell, 2014, p. 64).

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Native American women faculty think about their path to leadership in higher education?
2. How did Native American women faculty prepare for a career in higher education?
3. What stories do Native American women faculty tell to describe their experiences in higher education?
4. Reflecting on their accomplished goals, what wisdom do Native American women faculty offer to those who aspire to become leaders?

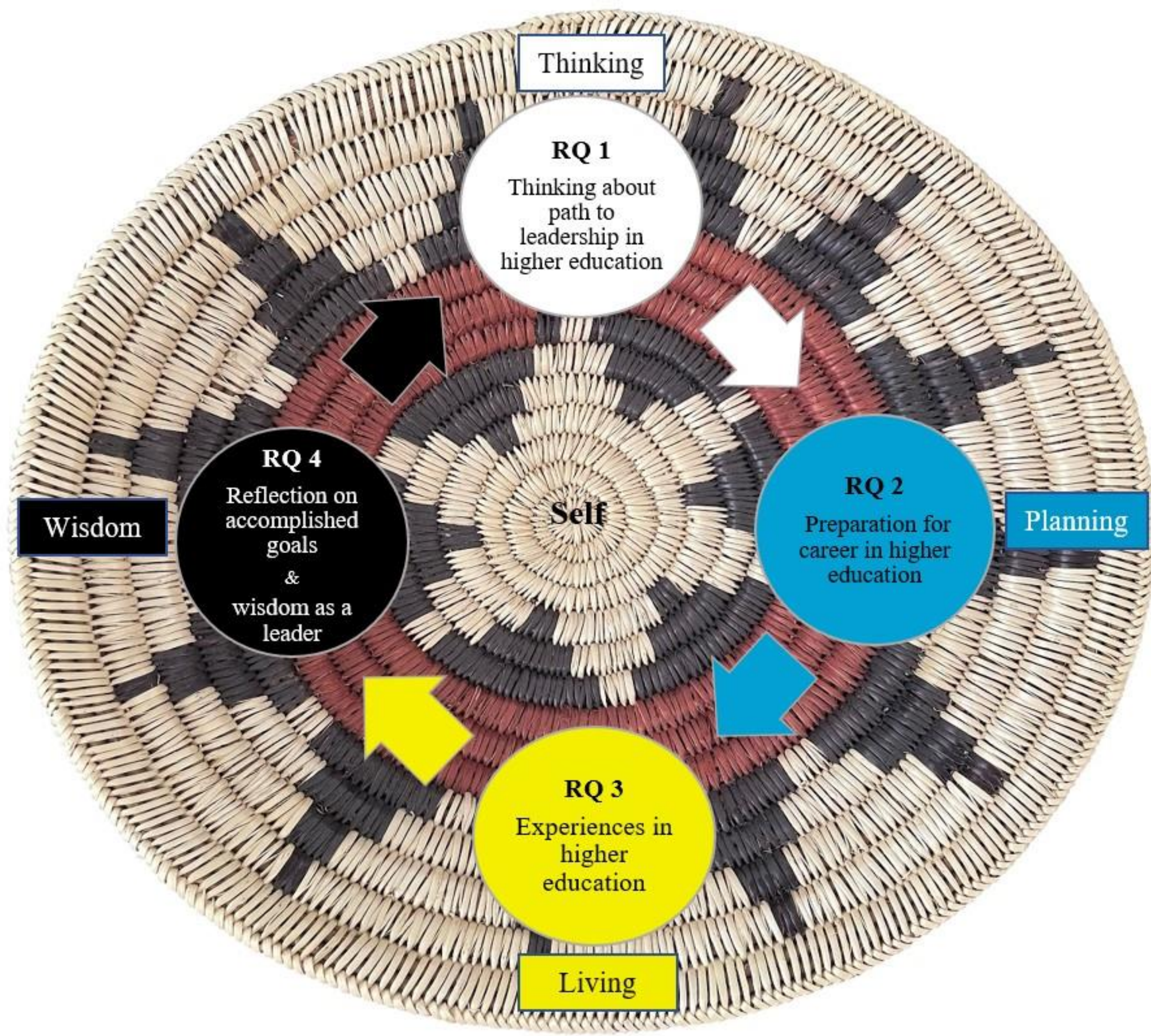
In keeping parallel to the conceptual framework, Figure 5 demonstrates how the research questions are related to the pillars of Diné philosophy of learning in the following ways. In Nitsáhákees, the thinking pillar, makes sense to include research question (RQ) 1 here because leadership begins by conceptualizing and developing knowledge and skills. In Nahat'á, the planning pillar, RQ 2 fits here where leadership preparations develop through one's creativity, understanding self-sufficiency, knowing one's identity, caring for family and community. In Iiná, the living pillar, RQ 3 connects where leadership progresses as lived and experienced. Through these experiences one can see themselves as a leader. In this pillar knowing one's purpose in life, knowing role and responsibilities, knowing accomplishments, having resilience, empowering others, being positive, and commitment to family and community are the harvestings of a leader. In Sihasin, the assurance pillar, RQ 4 corresponds to full leadership qualities and competencies, fulfilling role of a leader, having agency, having self-confidence, having strong mental stability, recognized as a leader amongst peers and community, understands lifetime learning and living while obtaining a sense of balance with self and surroundings, and spiritual wholeness. In this way the research questions relate

and connect to the Diné philosophy of learning and keeping with the clockwise cyclical direction, the cycle of life and Hózhǫ́, the balance of well-being.

The Diné ceremonial basket is included because it represents one's phases of life and universal elements that include animals, the environment, celestial bodies, the universe, and the spiritual world. These elements connect to one's self as a leader and their identity.

Figure 5

Research Questions in relation to Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná, and Sihasin



Significance of the Study

This study was significant as it provided insight into Native women leadership from their own perspective, through their lens, and their lived experiences. Additionally, the study also created a useful, real-time, resource for Native women who are just entering the field of education as a student or professional. As a Native woman, I am contributing to the academy by exploring leadership from a Native American perspective. I'm also contributing Native voices including my own to the broader scope of community and research in the field of leadership and Native American women. Also, the study provided oral history and a living document of Native voices of today, contributing to the historical archive.

Researcher Lens/Positionality

My positionality was grounded in my own experiences and through my own lens as a Native American woman and as a Diné woman. First and foremost, my motivation and inspiration for this study comes from the leadership of my family matriarchs. Five generations are shown in the photo in Figure 1. My great grandmother was a leader in her own right, born in ~1902. She lived in the Fort Defiance area on the Navajo reservation. She possessed great resiliency, literally trying to survive, in the time the Spanish flu which killed many Navajos (12% total deaths on the Navajo reservation) (Brady & Bahr, 2014, p. 484). It was during the Great Depression when there was extreme human suffering testing one's survival, especially on the reservation, in a place of desolation, with no running water, no food, no electricity, or good shelter (Committee on Indian Affairs, 1929). She saw family members and friends go off to fight in WWI and WWII and not come back. She was a mother who brought up several children, tended to her corn field, herded her sheep, and contributed her thoughts and opinions at chapter house meetings to better her community.

She was the elder in our family. In our culture, elders are the wise, the decision makers, the leaders. Family members sought her out for her wisdom, for her thoughts on family and community issues, for her opinions on land and property, and for cultural ways and knowledge. She was the leader who carved our pathway to continue our own leadership.

My grandmother, born ~1919 from Fort Defiance area on the Navajo reservation, also, was resilient and had to overcome hardships to survive. She survived as a young child during the outbreaks of the Spanish flu, tuberculosis and trachoma diseases. She experienced the Great Depression and talked of having no food, no water, and depressing times. She never went to school because she had to help with her siblings, herding sheep, and working the corn field. Later in life, she worked hard as a migrant worker for very low wages at times not making enough to provide for basic necessities, even food. She is resilient, a survivor, similar to my great grandmother. She is now the elder, at 102 years old, who we all look up to for leadership just like my great grandmother.

My mother, born in 1941, experienced her own tragedies and oppression that she had to overcome to become the person she is today, leading a pathway to possibilities for me, my siblings, and extended family. She experienced starvation, poverty, going to boarding school, loneliness, forced assimilation, domestic abuse, molestation, racism, and sexism. As a Diné woman, she had to create her own pathway as settler colonization progresses with the coming of modern infrastructure, development, policies, and laws. Somehow, she survived these atrocities and horrible sufferings and built her resiliency to becoming the person she is today. Through her resilience and determination, she became a physician assistant and worked in the Indian Health Service system to help the Diné people. She led with positivity, honesty, intelligence, and courage.

For me, being born in the 1960s had its own troubles. Racism was high and the fight for civil rights was won, but, yet it is still a crisis today. For me, it’s an everyday thought when I leave my house, “there are three strikes against me as soon as I walk outside, as I enter the classroom, as I apply for a job, or as I apply for a loan—I’m Native American; I’m brown-skinned; I’m a woman” (Dorame, 2018). Throughout my life, I have experienced violence, racism, prejudice, tokenism, structural racism, being stereotyped, sexually harassed, microaggressions by friends, family, colleagues, patrons, and strangers. These are common occurrences for me as a Diné woman. I never thought of myself, until recently, that I am a leader just like my matriarchs. I overcame those people who had doubt in me, who tried to break me and “I have made changes and will continue to do so by turning these negatives into positives, educating others about Diné life, teaching my daughters to be impactful and know who they are, and advising others to never give up” (Dorame, 2018, p. 200).

For my daughters, a pathway was established through four generations of women surviving, breaking barriers, making their mark and leading by showing that as a single mother raising a family can be done, by teaching that work isn’t always going to be easy but in turn skills are gained, by teaching that education is important to gain knowledge, and by never forgetting who you are as a Diné woman, embracing Są’áh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón, “the nature of Diné existence, an embodiment of Diné paradigm or ways of knowing” (Nez, 2018). With these values, beliefs, teachings, wisdom, and resilience passed down, one daughter graduated from Yale and is contributing to the Native student education community working with the College Horizons program and the youngest daughter currently attending Stanford University. Despite the many hardships, sufferings, and adversities, we all prevailed

in our own path and continue in the path of Hózhǫ́ and embrace Są’áh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón.

Second, my motivation for this study came from my colleagues. I have been working in the university library system for thirty plus years. In most of my years in the library system, there weren’t many Native American faculty librarians. Recently, with the university’s commitment to build a diverse workforce, there are Native American librarians who have made their way successfully through the tenure track process, as lecturers and instructors, as assistant professors, as associate professors, and professors. They are influential and emerging leaders who get involved, who speak out, who are informed, who listen, who collaborate, and generate ideas. They are my mentors and role models.

The third motivation for this study was from prominent Native women influencers, trailblazers and leaders who have opened doors, created paths, and built a presence for future generations that included Wilma Mankiller (first chief of Cherokee Nation), LaDonna Harris (Comanche politician and activist), and Annie Wauneka (Navajo healer, educator and tribal leader). From their resilience, their creation and their influence, Native American women leaders today are prevalent in our communities, like, Deb Haaland (United Sates Secretary of Interior) Laguna Pueblo, Sharice Davids (United States Representative) Ho-Chunk (Winnebago), Bethany Yellowtail (CEO, fashion designer) Northern Cheyenne and Crow, and Susan Harjo (activist, poet) Cheyenne and Muscogee. As Deb Haaland leads the Department of Interior, reversing the effects of the likes of Thomas Ewing (1st Secretary) (Dept. of Interior, 2021), she is making historical decisions regarding Native lands and is plowing a path for other Native women to lead in spaces they thought they couldn’t lead. This was my motivation for this study.

Lastly, as a researcher I'm given the opportunity to discuss the discrimination and barriers that I faced as a Native American woman in the educational space, and I'm using this study as a form of personal healing and unpacking my own experiences in the field.

Figure 6

Five Generations

Note. Photo by M. Dorame, (November 1992), five generations. Taken at Black Rock (Fort Defiance area), Arizona. Bottom row (Emma George), top row (left to right) Monica Etsitty Dorame, Dinée Dorame, Rose Cook, Alice David.

Limitations and Delimitations

There are a few limitations to consider in this study. For one, the study's sample was limited to location and the population size of Native American women faculty at a southwestern university. Six participants, Native American women faculty, were interviewed

for this qualitative study. Researcher relationships were taken into account as the researcher is Navajo and may know some of these participants.

The sample, geographic location, and theoretical framework were delimitations of this study. The participation in this study was delimited to Native American women faculty working at a southwestern university.

Definition of Terms

American Indian – "A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment" (Office of Management and Budget, 1997). In this study American Indian will be used when it is used within a quotation. In this study, American Indian, Native American, and Indigenous are used interchangeably.

Asdzą́ą́ Nádleehé – she is also known as Changing Woman and White Shell Woman. She is a female deity in Diné creation history.

Asdzą́ą́ way – Asdzą́ą́ means woman in Diné language. It's a phrase I use that means a woman's way.

Diné – means "The People" in Diné language. The Diné people live in the United States in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. I will use Diné and Navajo interchangeably in this study.

Hataałii – healer, medicine man, spiritual leader

Hózhǫ́ – "It expresses such concepts as the words beauty, perfection, harmony, goodness, normality, success, wellbeing, blessedness, order, and ideal ... everything that is positive, and it refers to an environment which is all inclusive … Hózhǫ́ reflects the

process, the path, or journey by which an individual strives toward and attains this state of wellness" (Kahn-John, M., & Koithan, M., 2015, p. 25).

Hweeldi – A place the Diné people refer to as "a place of great suffering" (Nez, 2018). They were forced to march three hundred plus miles, across Arizona to Fort Sumner, New Mexico (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014).

Iiná – In Diné language it means life/living. It is one of the four pillars/principles of the Diné philosophy of learning. The learning process that includes living. For my study, I will use each pillar in the realm of leadership. In the living pillar, leadership progresses as lived and experienced. In this phase knowing one's purpose in life, knowing role and responsibilities, knowing accomplishments, having resilience, empowering others, being positive, and commitment to family and community are the harvestings of a leader.

Kinaaldá – A four-day Diné ceremony for young girls who have their initial menses (Mcpherson, 2021, p. 35)

Leader – person who leads or commands a group, organization, or country

Leadership – a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2016, p. 6)

Nahat'á – In Diné language it means planning. It is one of the four pillars/principles of SNBH learning process that includes planning. For my study, I will use each pillar in the realm of leadership. In the planning pillar, leadership preparations develop through one's creativity, understanding self-sufficiency, knowing one's identity, caring for family and community.

Native American – means "of, or relating to, a tribe, people, or culture that is Indigenous to the United States" (The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 1990). In this study, Native American, American Indian, and Indigenous are used interchangeably.

Navajo – the largest group of native North American people, most of whom live in the US states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. I will use Diné and Navajo interchangeably in this study.

Nitsáhákees – In Diné language it means thinking. It is one of the four pillars/principles of Diné philosophy of learning. The process that includes thinking. For my study, I will use each principle in the realm of leadership. In the thinking phase, leadership begins by conceptualizing and developing knowledge and skills.

Są'áh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón (SNBH) – is a common term for philosophy of life. It is a worldview of Diné philosophy. It "represents the Diné traditional philosophical system of values and beliefs that provides teaching and learning of human existence in harmony with the natural world and universe from a world view" (Office of Diné Culture, Language, and Community Services, 2000, p. vi). Benally (1994) breaks down the sacred words into "Są'áh Naagháí is defined as indestructible and eternal being. It is male and exhibits male-like qualities … Bik'eh Hózhóón is defined as the director and cause of all that is good. It is female and exhibits female-like qualities. The two concepts do not operate apart" (p. 24).

Sihasin – In Diné language it means fulfillment and contentment. In this study I will use assurance in place of fulfillment. It is one of the four pillars/principles of Diné philosophy of learning. The learning process that includes assurance. For my study, I

will use each pillar in the realm of leadership. In the assurance phase, one has full leadership qualities and competencies, fulfills role of a leader, has agency, has self-confidence, has strong mental stability, is recognized as a leader amongst peers and community, understands lifetime learning and living while obtaining a sense of balance with self and surroundings, and someone who has spiritual wholeness.

T’áá hó’ ajít’éego – it’s up to you to create your own life path.

Transformational Leadership – the process that changes and transforms people. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals (Northouse, 2016, p. 161).

Chapter 2 – Literature Review – Planning (Nahat'á) – South

The literature review will begin by addressing definitions of leadership, from a mainstream literature perspective, then, take a look into mainstream models and approaches of leadership. Next, Native American women leadership, their voice, their lens, their identity, and how they perceive themselves as leaders will be discussed. Included in the literature review, are methodologies that were used in Native American women leadership research. Then, literature sources addressing Diné philosophy of life, Są'áh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón (SNBH) and the Diné philosophy of learning and their use in other fields of education and health. Lastly, a review on Native American women and their roles in society will be discussed.

This study used a social science systematic literature review. A comprehensive literature review was conducted using the university library's databases (EBSCO, Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, ERIC, Psych INFO, and Proquest Dissertation & Thesis) and the interlibrary loan service. The keywords searched include, "Native American women leadership," "American Indian women leadership," "Navajo women leaders," "Pueblo women leaders," "Apache women leaders," "Diné philosophy of life," "Są'áh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón," and "Diné philosophy of learning," There were no limitations set on type of works so data includes academic journals, books, book chapters, dissertations and ethnic newspapers. The literature review covered research published between 1990-2021, which was focused in English.

Definitions of Leadership

Finding a definition to leadership was not as simple as it seemed unless you refer to the online Merriam-Webster dictionary's simple definition of leadership as "the act or an

instance of leading" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). There was extensive literature regarding definition changes of leadership over time, leadership qualities, gender and leadership, global culture leadership, and types of leadership. Northouse (2016) adapted a succinct compilation of the evolution of leadership by Joseph Rost, a distinguished scholar in leadership studies. Northouse (2016) presents several definitions and the evolution of leadership from 1900s to 21st century:

- leadership emphasized with domination in the 1900s
- leadership as influence by 1930s
- leadership as behavior of an individual, persuasion or coercion in the 40s
- three themes including group theory, shared goals, effectiveness in the 50s
- behavior that influences toward a shared goal in the 60s
- an organizational behavior approach where leadership initiates and attains organizational goals in the 70s
- do as the leader wishes, noncoercive influence, traits, and transformation in the 80s
- authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, servant leadership, and adaptive leadership in the 21st century (p. 2).

As part of the definition of leadership, interestingly, in global culture and leadership, the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) project, studied several countries and leadership, and "identified a list of [22] universally desirable leadership attributes [which included] trustworthy, foresight, positive, confidence builder, intelligent, just, plans ahead, dynamic, motivational, decisive, communicative, honest, encouraging, dependable, informed, and team builder … [Further], a list of [8] universally undesirable

leadership attributes [included] loner, irritable, ruthless, asocial, nonexplicit, dictatorial, noncooperative, egocentric" (Northouse, 2016, p. 448).

The definitions of leadership changed over time from simple to very complex concepts. With "factors as growing global influences and generational differences, leadership will continue to have different meanings for different people … Leadership is a complex concept for which a determined definition may long be in flux" (Northouse, 2016, p. 5).

My definition of leadership includes the definition provided by Merriam-Webster dictionary online, the act or instance of leading. Additionally, including my lens as a Diné woman and the experiences and lens of my Diné matriarchs, my definition extends into three types of leadership: transformational leadership, authentic leadership and resilient leadership. Transformational leadership describes "those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity ... They help followers grow and empower them" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 3). Authentic leaders have "a real sense of purpose, are passionate, understand their own values and behave toward others based on these values, have strong relationships and connections with others, have self-discipline, and most importantly has compassion and heart" (Northouse, 2016, p. 197). Resilient leadership "identifies four phases in a resilient cycle that you move through when adversity enters your life: Deteriorating, adapting, recovering, and growing" (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005, p. 12). Figure 5 shows the six strengths of resilient leaders.

Figure 7

Six Strengths of Resilient Leaders

Six Strengths of Resilient Leaders

1. Resilient Leaders Accurately Assess Past and Current Reality. They . . .
   - Expect the world to be filled with disruptions
   - Develop a high tolerance for ambiguity, paradox, and complexity
   - Determine root causes and risks posed by adversity
   - Understand reality from multiple perspectives
2. Resilient Leaders Are Positive About Future Possibilities. They . . .
   - Focus on opportunities, not obstacles
   - Expect that good things can happen despite adversity
   - Exert positive influence to create positive outcomes
   - Maintain a positive perspective for the long-term outcome
3. Resilient Leaders Remain True to Personal Values. They . . .
   - Are clear about what matters most in the hierarchy of values
   - Stay focused on being value-driven, not event-driven
   - Solicit feedback to align values and actions
   - Model for others personal core values
4. Resilient Leaders Maintain a Strong Sense of Personal Efficacy. They . . .
   - Recover quickly from setbacks
   - Achieve and celebrate small wins
   - Maintain confidence in personal competence
   - Sustain a base of caring and support
5. Resilient Leaders Invest Personal Energy Wisely. They . . .
   - Renew physical energy through periodic recovery time
   - Develop emotional empathy and self-awareness
   - Maintain clear mental focus and steady concentration in the face of adversity
   - Invest in spiritual-driven purposes and causes beyond themselves
6. Resilient Leaders Act on the Courage of Personal Convictions. They . . .
   - Are clear about and act on what matters most even when risks are high
   - Act decisively when deepest values are at stake
   - Remain courageous in the face of strong opposition
   - Acknowledge and learn from mistakes by modifying actions to align with values

Note. The six strengths from a strong foundation for moving ahead in the face of adversity. From "*Resilient school leaders: Strategies for turning adversity into achievement*," by J. L. Patterson and P. Kelleher, 2005, p. 147. Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

Types of Leadership

There are several mainstream models and approaches of leadership according to Northouse (2016): trait approach, skills approach, behavioral approach, situational approach,

transformational leadership, authentic leadership, servant leadership, gender and leadership, and culture and leadership.

Trait: Leaders possess certain traits that make the “great man” theory. Through various research, major leadership traits were found in this type of leadership approach - intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability (Stogdill 1948; Mann 1959; Stogdill 1974; Lord, DeVader & Alliger 1986; Kirkpatrick & Locke 1991; Zaccaro, Kemp & Bader 2004). According to the “five-factor personality model, extraversion was the trait most strongly associated with leadership, followed by conscientiousness, openness, low neuroticism [low to none anxiety, depression, insecurity, vulnerability, hostility], and agreeableness” (Northouse, 2016, p. 40).

Skills: Emphasizes skills, expertise, and capabilities in leadership. Katz (1955) developed the three-skill approach that include *technical* (skills dealing with specific types of work, like computers and software--essential at the lower and middle levels of management), *human* (having people skills--essential at all levels of management), and *conceptual* (working with ideas—strategic plans for an organization or goals of the organization). “Skills are what leaders can accomplish and traits are who leaders are (i.e., their innate characteristics)” (Northouse, 2016, p. 44).

Behavioral: According to Northouse (2016), a leader’s behavior is focusing specifically on “task behaviors (i.e. organizing work, defining role responsibilities, and scheduling work activities) and relationship behaviors (i.e. building camaraderie, respect, trust, and liking between leaders and followers)” (p. 72). An approach emphasizing what leaders do.

Situational: Centers leadership in organizational situations and organizational goals. "An effective leader requires that a person adapt to the demands of different situations" (Northouse, 2016, p. 93). A leadership style grid, Situational Leadership II, was developed by Blanchard, Zigarmi and Zigarmi (2013) that is intended for leaders to identify followers and their goal achievement specified by a high directive to low directive and high supportive to low supportive approach.

Transformational leadership: Focuses on "those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity ... They help followers grow and empower them" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 3) Charisma is often associated with this model of leadership and is also another form of leadership, charismatic leadership. The types of leaders we see in this category are of the likes of: Gandhi, Martin Luther King, John F. Kennedy, Steve Jobs, Barack Obama.

Authentic leadership: According to Northouse (2016) authentic leadership is a fairly new theory developed by Bill George in 2003 that resulted from "leadership failures in the public and private sector [and] response to societal demands for genuine, trustworthy, and good leadership" (p. 220). Northouse (2016) also describes authentic leaders as having "a real sense of purpose, are passionate, understand their own values and behave toward others based on these values, have strong relationships and connections with others, have self-discipline, and most importantly has compassion and heart" (p. 197). In our current status across the world with this pandemic, we are looking for authentic leadership that is genuine, trustworthy, competent, and honest leadership.

Servant leadership: "focuses on leadership from the point of view of the leader and his or her behaviors. [These leaders] put followers *first*, empower them, and help them

develop their full personal capacities. [They are] ethical and lead in ways that serve the greater good of the organization, community, and society at large" (Northouse, 2016, p. 225). There are ten characteristics of servant leadership – listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. "Power has to be shared by empowering followers. Leaders should think of themselves as servants building relationships with their followers that help their followers to grow" (Bass & Bass, 2008, p. 51).

Gender and leadership: According to Northouse (2016), gender and leadership research surfaced around the 1970s because many women were taking leadership positions and they were also in academia forging through with leadership research. At the forefront of this research was the question, "Can women lead?" Which of, course, today, many women are leading corporations as COEs, leading countries as prime ministers or presidents, leading as military officers, leading as government officials, as scientists, as educators, as entrepreneurs, etc. but despite the upward movement, they have to contend with the glass ceiling. Thus, "women are significantly underrepresented in major leadership positions [in corporate and political establishments] … the leadership gender gap … focuses on women's lack of *human capital investment* in education, training, and work experience" (Northouse, 2016, p. 419). Domestic responsibilities generally fall on women (picking up kids from school, leaving work because kids are sick, maternity, new child, parental care) causing career interruptions and causing less work experiences. This also leads to "women receiving less formal training and have fewer development opportunities at work than men" (Northouse, 2016, p. 419). According to Northouse (2016), women lead effectively through democratic and transformational leadership styles.

Culture and leadership: With globalization and the world being interconnected, "globalization has created a need to understand how cultural differences affect leadership performance" (Northouse, 2016, p. 427). Thus, the need for global leaders. "Leaders themselves are more diverse because they come from diverse backgrounds. This suggests the need for leadership development that recognizes these different backgrounds. For instance, special programs and support may be needed for leaders (and leaders-to-be) who are women or people of color" (London, 2002, p. 2) "Cultural diversity within the organization helps generate a diversity of ideas and perspectives, keeping the organization fresh and responsive" (London, 2002, p. 203) GLOBE studies "analyzed the similarities and differences between regional clusters of cultural groups by grouping countries into 10 distinct clusters: Anglo [US included in this cluster], Latin Europe, Nordic Europe, Germanic Europe, Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia, and Confucian Asia" (Northouse, 2016, p. 464). In their analysis, GLOBE also "identified 6 global leadership behaviors that could be used to characterize how different cultural groups view leadership: charismatic/value-based, team oriented, participative, humane-oriented, autonomous, and self-protective leadership" (Northouse, 2016, p. 464).

To sum up leadership, according to Foster, the praxis of leadership, is transformative action: "the ability of all persons to engage in acts of leadership which help in the transformation to a way of life which incorporates participative principles (p. 18).

Of the leadership approaches mentioned, four leadership frameworks that resonant with my study regarding Native American women leadership are resilient leadership, authentic leadership, transformational leadership, and gender and leadership.

Resilient leadership resonates because of the resiliency that women leaders in my family had as part of their core values to overcome adversity. The women in my study will most likely display resiliency leadership as they had to overcome many adversities in their lives.

Authentic leadership is evident in Native leaders as: it "focuses on the leader … [having] genuine leadership, lead from conviction … This perspective emphasizes a leader's life experiences … [and leadership that develops in people over a lifetime and can be triggered by major life events such as a severe illness or a new career" (Northouse, 2016, p. 196).

Transformational leadership, as a leadership framework, similar to authentic leadership, also resonates with Native communities in that it focuses on "those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity ... They help followers grow and empower them" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 3). I especially see this with the Native faculty women in higher education because they stimulate and inspire as teachers, as scholars, as community leaders. They are an inspiration to students, colleagues, and the community and along the way achieving extraordinary outcomes, developing themselves as strong, empowering, and resilient leaders of their tribal nations.

Lastly, gender and leadership also have a major role in my study because Native American women have been and still are entering the work force and other endeavors from work and establishing themselves as good, valuable, competent leaders. Women have been continually breaking the glass ceiling and forging through, being resilient, possessing "desirable leadership attributes [of] trustworthiness, foresight, positivity, a confidence

builder, intelligence, being just, planning ahead, being dynamic, motivational, being decisive, being communicative, being honest, encouraging, being dependable, being informed, and being a team builder" (Northouse, 2016, p. 448). They are making new pathways for themselves and other women.

Native American Women Leadership

Although a formal and westernized definition, approaches, and theories of leadership are depicted in a majority of the literature, literature regarding Native American and Indigenous perspective of leadership was much fewer and obscure and was depicted in various spaces like politics, health, arts, business, and education. The commonality in the literature is that Native American women perceive leadership in whatever space they occupy via depicting, narrating, painting, illustrating, their culture, their traditions, their struggles, their resilience, their reclamation, their influences, and their perspectives of how they see leadership in themselves or in others. "There is no direct pathway to leadership for native women in tribal communities. Native Women leaders come to their positions through their own personal journey, as well as their cultural, educational, professional, and relational experiences" (Hill & Keogh Hoss, 2018, p. 228)

Native American women speak to their leadership roles "as mothers, activists, and leaders" (Badoni, 2017, p. 76). On the traditional side, "Native women continue in their roles as clan leaders, holding ceremonies such as puberty rites, all the while balancing their roles as mothers, wives, and tribal leaders who are often elected to tribal councils as the first chairwomen in their tribe's history" (Lajimodiere, 2011, p. 59). They speak to who they are, their identity, their empowerment, their strength, their resistance, their responsibilities, and their beauty as leaders (Badoni, 2017, p. 19). One woman, Diane Benson, speaks of her

terrible living conditions, her foster upbringing, her nightmares of being molested and the sexual violence she experienced, her drug and alcohol addiction, her sitting in jail and her thoughts of not expecting to live beyond her teenage years. With resilience she states, "in the effort to overcome, I may have overachieved, having run for the highest office in Alaska as a third-party candidate, fought at very public levels of controversy defending basic human and tribal rights, and graduated first in my family with a post-graduate degree" (Benson, 2008, 146). She goes on to say that people ask her what motivates her, and she says, "a little kindness goes a long way, and tapping into the strength of my ancestors guided my sense of worth and value and carries me today" (Benson, 2008, p. 146).

From a small number of Native women like Diane Benson telling their stories to countless Native women whose voices were not heard or written, and, still, today are non-existent, but we can read about them and their life conditions in government reports. In this report, Native American voices are not evident in the Survey of the Conditions of the Indians of the US (1929). In these Indian Affairs committee hearings, one can clearly see and recognize the extreme depressive and oppressive conditions, the adversity, and the degradation of colonization that Native Americans faced and what it took for a Native American woman to survive, digging deep to her very core, to reclaim herself, her identity, her culture, and to have the strength and resiliency to overcome such depths of humiliation and abasement. It depicts what Native Americans and elder Native women, my matriarchs, had to endure that make them leaders in their own right. Through their expositions, perspectives, and stories about themselves, whether they be a caretaker, a homemaker, a mother, a grandmother, an activist, an artist, a scientist, a lawyer, a doctor, or an educator, I see leadership.

Another similarity in Native American women leadership is the importance of Native women telling their stories, in their writings, using their voices, from their lens, in their paintings, in their art creations, in their opinions, providing their knowledge and sharing their wisdom. In her book, Mihesuah (2003) discusses cautions and awareness when researching and writing about Indigenous women. She points out when researching Native women, it should come from their lens, their voice and the findings should in some way benefit the Native community.

The literature review reveals gaps in Native women leadership. Tippeconnic-Fox, a well-known research professor at the University of Arizona whose area of study is Native American women issues and Native American education has talked about the need for more research on Native American women leaders; "it is clear more research needs to be conducted in this area as more American Indian women assume leadership positions in mainstream and Indian communities. Some of the many questions that need answers are whether American Indian women lead differently than males, what are their challenges and issues, and what motivates the women to lead ... It is also important to address the concept of delegation for, as more women become leaders, it is essential that they feel comfortable delegating responsibilities" (Tippeconnic-Fox et al., 2015, 97). According to Dudley (2004), "women have had an extraordinary effect on the leadership of North America's [I]ndigenous communities" (p. 69). So, as Native American women take on primary leadership positions within or outside their tribe as officials, politicians, and professionals, there is a need to explore how cultural traditions and Indigenous societal structures uniquely prepare them for these roles.

In Ressler's (2008) dissertation on Native American women leadership in tribal colleges she makes further recommendations to continue research regarding "whether tribal college leaders are using traditional Native American leadership styles … [does] age of the leader play a difference in traditional Native American leadership styles … [and] addressing what types of Native American leadership models are used" (p. 148). As Native American women take on primary leadership positions as tribal officials, politicians, and professionals, there is a need to explore how cultural traditions and Indigenous societal structures uniquely prepare them for these roles.

The complexities of leadership are expanding and divergent. With "factors as growing global influences and generational differences, leadership will continue to have different meanings for different people … Leadership is a complex concept for which a determined definition may long be in flux" (Northouse, 2016, p. 5). In looking at the pathways that were built by many Native women, definition and approaches of leadership have also changed like the mainstream definitions reported by Northouse (2016). Through women today like Deb Haaland, who became Secretary of Interior, Sharice Davids, who holds a congressional seat, Diane Benson (Tlingit) who was a candidate for the Alaskan lieutenant governorship and congressional seat, as well as those that didn't have a voice but can be seen in government reports, all have changed the meaning of Native American leadership.

The literature will support my research and enable me to continue my work exploring and investigating Native women's leadership, their roles, their traits, and factors that influence their success as a leader whether it be in higher education or in life. An important

message by Mihesuah (2003) states, “if a writer wants to find out what Native women think, they should ask them” (p. 4) That I have done.

Methodologies Used for Native American Women Leadership

In the review of literature of Native American women faculty and leadership, there were several qualitative research methodologies that were commonly used: case study, grounded theory, ethnographic study, and narrative inquiry. Koreen Ressler’s (2008) study explored Native American women and their path to leadership in tribal colleges. She implemented a qualitative approach with case study and grounded theory combined. For this study, these approaches were appropriate because the “study [was] a collective, descriptive study of the traditional roles of Native American women and determines if these roles have helped North Dakota Native American women achieve leadership positions. Therefore, a grounded theory approach [was] used to develop a theory that presented a description of a phenomenon” (Ressler, 2008, p. 58). These approaches were befitting for this study because Ressler gathered in-depth, descriptive, personal, and historical information from her participants, asked in-depth interview questions, collected rich, descriptive data in an exploratory study, and used grounded theory that “offers insight, enhances understanding, and provides a meaningful guide to action” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 12).

Ressler (2008) explains that “there are advantages … to grounded theory research, one advantage is the development of theory where inadequate, or no research exists. Another advantage is that for a beginner in research there is a step-by-step process for analyzing data. Other advantages include the rigor, building of categories and the researcher remains close to the data during the analysis phase. The disadvantages for the grounded theory research include lack of conceptual depth to a study, language can be viewed as jargon and needs to

be carefully defined, terms are not clearly defined, and the emergence of a new perspective may cause confusion for the reader in determining which procedures are best" (p. 60).

Keway (1997) conducted an ethnographic study regarding leadership roles of Native American women in education that focused on a sociocultural interpretation of leadership roles in the Native American communities. The researcher spent two years reviewing the literature on Native American women before her research started. The researcher spent three months interviewing participants who were from different tribes, spent hours interviewing each session per participant, and followed with an ethnographic interview. This study followed the central phenomenon, intent, and procedures of an ethnography where the researcher studied the "language, behaviors, and beliefs of [various Native American tribes and their cultures], the intent to described cultural patterns, and utilizing key procedures by patterns in the everyday language, behaviors, and attitudes of the participants" (Clark & Creswell, 2015, p. 289). It was advantageous to use this approach because the researcher herself is Native American and is actively involved in her Native community and understands the time and commitment it takes to respectfully conduct such extensive research especially considering many cultures and different people in the study.

In Karen Paetz Sitting Crow's (2013) study, regarding Native American women faculty in tribal colleges, she implemented a qualitative approach using narrative inquiry to illustrate the lived stories in relation to a phenomenon, leadership. This approach brought out the uniqueness of the study because a talking circle environment was implemented that provided a respectful, trustworthy, and safe environment for all the participants to tell their stories as opposed to a formal focus group environment. Utilizing this approach was advantageous for this study because it allowed participants to tell their story freely and

respectfully in a talking circle environment, a more familiar and acceptable form of speaking amongst some Native American tribes. The participants life stories then became data allowing the researcher to code, categorize themes, and analyze for key elements and "restorying" to get participants lived experiences and interpreting them as stories back into the community.

In summary, these studies have illustrated how "ethnography focuses on a sociocultural interpretation; grounded theory strives to build a substantive theory, one "grounded" in the data collected; narrative analysis uses people's stories to understand experience; and a qualitative case study is an in-depth analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 42).

Narrative Inquiry as a Qualitative Research Method

In finding a good fit for my research design, I explored these studies and concluded that a narrative inquiry approach would best suit my study. I chose the narrative inquiry research design because this approach would allow me to work in a narrative format with stories, work closely with study participants to get an in-depth connection to their lived experiences (Riessman, 1993; Riessman, 2008). Also, my research process (i.e., research problem, participant selection, data collection, and analysis) follows the foundational procedures of qualitative methods and research (Clark & Creswell, 2015).

Smith (2021) argues, "Indigenous peoples want to tell [their] own stories, write [their] own versions, in own ways, for [their] own purposes" (p. 31). "Stories are our theories" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 426). In Diné culture, as well as other Native American cultures, history, narratives, stories, about experiences and beliefs have always been a part of one's life. As Smith (2021) indicates, "story is powerful … new stories contribute to a collective story in

which Indigenous people have a place … stories are ways of passing down the beliefs and values of a culture in the hope that the new generations will treasure them and pass the story down further" (p.166). With that said, storytelling is a natural fit and perhaps can provide some comfort and familiarity as participants tell their story. Smith (2021) cites, "Russell Bishop's [suggestion] that storytelling is a useful and culturally appropriate way of representing the 'diversities of truth' within which the story teller rather than the researcher retains control" (p. 166). In a video interview, Dr. Jo-Ann Archibald, a Native researcher emphasized stories guide us:

> story becomes similar to a teacher and take on a teacher's role even though it doesn't have the human characteristics of a teacher but if we know how to work with a story it can teach us about ourselves, teach us how we can relate to each other, or to the environment, or learn to find our way in the world or help us think about having a vision and finding ways that we can work towards the vision or our goals (Higgins, 2012, 3:36).

This study's research questions call for narrative inquiry as a research design exploring participants stories, their views, utilizing open-ended questions, with Native American women faculty in a southwest university.

Są'áh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón (SNBH)

This study's conceptual framework and overall foundation is based on Diné philosophy, Są'áh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón (SNBH). This philosophy is a way of looking at the conception of the universe. SNBH is common knowledge to the Diné people. There are several sources that point to SNBH and how it is used in everyday life, in education, and health sciences. As a Diné woman, I use SNBH in everyday life. I learned through my upbringing, teachings from my late stepfather, a medicine man apprentice, and guidance from relatives, clan relations, elders, and the community, the importance of life and its connection to SNBH. Each day, I'm thinking about new ideas, having goals, creating and

planning projects, being productive, implementing policies, making changes, and with full implementation, reviewing, revising and evaluating for balance, stability, and wholeness.

A component of the SNBH philosophy as articulated by the Diné College (Diné College, 2022) and Benally (1994) uses four principles or pillars: Thinking (Nitsáhákees), Planning (Nahat'á), Living (Iiná), and Assurance (Sihasin). Benally (1994) discusses these four pillars as well as their connection to four guiding principles of Diné knowledge and their connection to Diné holistic and sacred concepts and ceremonies. His article discussed how SNBH, and holistic understandings provide a framework for pedagogy and learning.

In health sciences, Garrison (2007) writes that SNBH can be applied to health and wellness. He mentions that SNBH and fundamental philosophical concepts were developed by Diné college and Diné educational department with the onset of a new Public Health degree program in 2004, the first in a tribal college. Today, when you visit the Diné college website it states their educational philosophy as Są'áh Naaghái Bik'eh Hozhóón. The Diné College defines SNBH as the ''Diné traditional living system, which places human life in harmony with the natural world and the universe. The system provides protection from the imperfections in life and for the development of well-being'' (Diné College, 2022, p.7). It can be a practical framework for education and wellness.

In my study, SNBH is a worldview, a living system, with harmony and balance that intertwines with the four pillars of learning. With the components of the four pillars, we will understand the study's participants through their voice and stories on how they see leadership, how they prepare to be a leader, becoming a leader, and implementing their leadership to make a better community. SNBH is encompassed by ceremonies, songs, prayers, and stories. An integral part of our culture is telling stories. Thus, the method of this

study used a narrative inquiry approach to get a detailed and descriptive narrative account of each participant's experiences, voice, and identity of being a leader.

Native American Women Roles in Society

In the literature review, Native American women played an important and vital role in their tribal communities. Before colonization, "many tribes were egalitarian" (Mihesuah, 2003, p. 45). Native American women held traditional roles equal to their male counterpart having mutually supportive roles. A Diné woman's "role was one of equality, if not superior" (Roessel, 1981, p.107). Native American women were chiefs, medicine women, spiritual leaders, and warriors. According to Green (1992) the "most significant role … was that of agricultural scientist" (p. 26). "Not only were women in most tribes responsible for gathering and cultivating plants; they also were responsible for developing all the extraordinary varieties of vegetables and fruits used by Indian people" (Green, 1992, p. 27). "The survival of the tribe depended on women's botanical knowledge" (Deval, 2015, p. 14). Because of their knowledge in plants, the women used plants for medicinal purposes in their role as a healer or medicine woman (Demos, 1995). Roessel (1981) indicates that the Diné is "one of the tribes in which the women can attain the role of medicine person … [they have] always performed such a role" (p. 121). Paiute women "became shamans and curers and had the same privilege and status as male shamans" (Knack, 1995, p.150). St. Pierre & Long Soldier (1995) discussed medicine women of the Plains Indians as healers, dreamers, and pipe carriers.

There were special roles that weren't the norm for some women. Demos (1995) notes some Native American women contributed as "'hunting women' … [they] accompanied men on the hunt [and some women] would actually go into battle with men as 'warrior women'"

(Demos, 1995, p. 67). Green (1992) notes that although it wasn't the norm for women going to battle, women substituted for their "fallen husband or brothers … [earning] the privilege of fighting or war titles that gave them privilege of singing and dancing with warriors forever after" (p. 24). Mihesuah (2003) concurs that Cheyenne, Crows, and Apache women fought alongside their husband.

Other roles included women as builders and plasterers; women constructed their own homes as this was prevalent amongst the Pueblo and neighboring tribes (Demos, 1995; Green, 1992). Roessel (1981) denotes Diné women had an important role as water knowledge keepers and Dennis & Bell (2020) speak to water protectors. In some tribes the women were considered powerful as clairvoyants, spiritual healers, and seers which gave them ceremonial privileges (Demos, 1995; Green, 1992; Roessel, 1981). Some women Native American women were highly regarded for their crafts, making clothing, footwear, pottery, and various tools. "[For] survival in the wilderness [one needs] moccasins in summer, snowshoes in winter … everywhere these were made by Indian women. The process was laborious, involving, for moccasins, the tanning, cutting, and shaping of animal hides, and, for snowshoes, the preparation and webbing of 'sinews' (leather strands) to be stretched within a wooden frame" (Demos, 1995, p. 61).

Women chiefs and leaders were prevalent before colonization. "Women joined men in councils and functioned as representatives of women and children" (Green, 1992, p. 24). "Tribal councils or committees consist[ed] of multiple leaders (male and female) holding positions of leadership, most often with a group of (elder) women holding the ultimate power for decisions that affect the entire tribe" (Portman & Garrett, 2005, p. 284). Several chapter authors in Klein & Ackerman's (1995) book spoke to Native American women and power in

North American tribes like the Inuit, Seneca, Paiute, Blackfoot, Navajo and San Juan Pueblo. They reflected on egalitarian gender roles, women's status and roles in their tribal communities, and female authority, power, and strength.

As colonization began, Native American women loss their leadership, identity, rights, and even their lives, a detriment to their communities. Along with colonialism came violence, wars, slavery, patriarchy, loss of land, proselytizers, and laws and policies that took away from Native American peoples. Above all, was to "civilize the Indian" and to start the "great work of regenerating the Indian race" (S. Exec. No. 1, 1850). This meant to "civilize the Indian," to "civilize the Indian woman," stripping not only her clothes but the very core of her identity, her soul. Several accounts have been made of such atrocities and devastation to Native American women who suffered the most from colonization (Green, 1992; Demos, 1995; Mihesuah, 2003). Dunbar-Ortiz (2014) gives an historical account of Indigenous peoples in the United States. She gives an insight and understanding of the effects of settler-colonial hegemony.

From this historical trauma, the suffering, the demise, the annihilation to near extinction, the Native American women had a rebirth, a "generation rebirth of Native women," in my perspective. This was a time of true strength – mentally, physically, and spiritually. This was a time of survival and resilience. Native American women resilience and survival stories (Deer et al., 2008; Baldwin, 2004), Native women activism (Krouse & Howard-Bobiwash, 2009; Mihesuah, 2003), Native women voices (Trafzer et al., 2022) are being heard, expressing through their lens, telling their stories. Today, we can read biographies of Native women leaders (Rielly, 2022; Dudley, 2004)), stories of wise women and trailblazers (Turner, 2009), a story of a woman warrior, Lori Piestewa (Carroll, 2008);

life stories (Mann, 2008;), profiles (Sonneborn, 2007), and Native women changing the world (Schaller, 2014)

In closing, a quote from *Left Handed*, son of Old Man Hat, a Diné man, who speaks of his life and teachings. This was his thought on Diné men and women.

> I've thought about men and women, and I always thought a man was bigger and stronger. 'A man is sensible, and knows more, and he's smarter than a woman. The man is way ahead, and the woman is way behind, because a man can do anything. A man can do all the hard work. He'll haul big wood, he can carry anything that's big, and work on the farm. Even though it's a big field he'll do all the work on the farm by himself … He tends to the horses … he'll work on anything. A woman can do certain work, but all she does is cook and work on blankets and herd sheep and carry water for a short distance and carry just an armful of wood. And she'll do just a little work around the hogan.' I was that way for a long time, until I got gray hair; then I found out that a man is way behind and a woman is way ahead, because a woman can do all kinds of hard work too. I found out they're in many sufferings, and I found out that they can stand them. Like when they begin having babies; when they have babies they suffer so much. Even at that they'll stand it and start raising children. Soon they'll have a lot of children, and soon their children will have grown up and be married and start raising children of their own, and soon they'll have a lot of grandchildren … That's all a woman's sufferings. She suffers a great deal through her generations. When I found this out I thought, 'A woman is stronger than a man. A man will beget children, he makes children all right, but he doesn't suffer, he only makes a woman suffer.' So that's why now, today, I think a woman is stronger than a man (Left Handed & Dyk, 2018, p. 40).

From a once egalitarian concept of leadership to the colonization of women being put in her place, she rises to reclaim her status through her strength, resilience and culture proving to be a fierce leader and warrior.

Chapter 3 – Methods – Living (Iiná) – West

Chapter 3 presents the research design and methods that were used to answer the research questions. First, the research design is addressed followed by the study's research questions. Next, an overview of the study's participants is discussed regarding their characteristics, recruitment, sampling, setting, IRB procedures and interview questions. Lastly, a detailed account of the data collection, data analysis and validity are presented.

Research Design

The research design for this study used a qualitative design applying narrative inquiry and thematic analysis guided by the Diné philosophy of learning framework to answer the research questions. This approach gave us insight and a better understanding of Native American women leadership. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is designed to understand, discover meaning of, and interpret human experience. In finding a qualitative research design for my study, I turned to Clark & Creswell (2015) who discussed several qualitative research designs and one approach they discussed resonated with my study, the narrative inquiry approach. This approach was a better fit and appropriate methodology for this study to get at the context and the essence of the participant's experience, perspectives, and stories in rich detail, as well as addressed the study's research questions. "Stories, also called 'narratives,' have become a popular source of data in qualitive research. The key to this type of qualitative research is the use of stories as data, and more specifically, first-person accounts of experience told in story form having a beginning, middle and end" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 34).

Indigenous research involves "*re*writing and *re*righting our position in history" (Smith, 2021, p. 31). Smith (2021) wrote, "Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes" (Smith, 2021, p. 31). Lavallée (2009), further interpreted "rewriting and rerighting as a process of decolonizing the academy by incorporating Indigenous knowledge into the research rather than relying on Western theories" (p. 23). This study used narrative inquiry so participants can tell their stories, in their own way, and for their own purpose. Commonalities from participant interviews, their responses, their stories told a narrative of their perspective of Native American women leadership.

Also, as part of the research design, this study's conceptual framework guided my research and interview questions, analysis, and interpretations in that they related to the four pillars of Diné philosophy of learning. There are four research questions that related specifically to each pillar of the Diné philosophy of learning –Thinking (Nitsáhákees), Planning (Nahat'á), Living (Iiná), and Assurance (Sihasin). The interview questions also addressed each of these pillars and how the study's participants evolved as a leader. Also, the study's thematic analysis connected to the four pillars showing the research process of analysis from familiarizing with the data, coding data, reviewing data, to the final report. Subsequently, ending this study with its interpretations using the four pillars.

Research Questions

The focus of my study was Native American women leadership and how Native American women faculty at a southwest university perceive leadership in higher education. The study was guided by the following research questions:

- How do Native American women faculty think about their path to leadership in higher education?
- How did Native American women faculty prepare for a career in higher education?
- What stories do Native American women faculty tell to describe their experiences in higher education?
- Reflecting on their accomplished goals, what wisdom do Native American women faculty offer to those who aspire to become leaders?

As described in Chapter 1, a detailed discussion can be found of the research questions and their relationship to the conceptual framework of the Diné philosophy of learning.

Participants

In this study, six self-identifying adult Native American women from a southwestern university were interviewed. This study included Native American women faculty who are lecturers, research professors, tenure-track, and clinical faculty. The participants attained a master's or doctoral level of education, a requirement of a faculty position. It can be implied that they have developed leadership skills as they have obtained a faculty position at a research university. Because this is a small group that can possibly be identified, their tribal affiliation nor their workplace was asked or reported.

In Diné culture, it is customary to give a small offering or gift to someone who's giving or contributing to your cause or benefit. In this study, participants contributed and shared their stories, knowledge, culture, and traditional ways. This contributed to Indigenous research and aided fellow colleagues and researchers to help understand Native American women leadership. In appreciation for their participation, each woman faculty member was

given a gift bag, a wellness, holistic kit, that included Navajo herbal tea, a sage bundle, and soap bar from Nizhoni Soaps. Nizhoni Soaps was started by Kamia Begay, a thirteen-year-old Diné entrepreneur, who is a young woman leader in the community and the Navajo Nation.

The study used a purposive sample, "purposefully selecting the sites and individuals … This type of sampling is best suited for qualitative research because the researcher is able to select the individuals who are most appropriate for a study of the central phenomenon" (Clark & Creswell, 2015, p. 332). Thus, this purposive sample included Native American women faculty in a southwestern university who are lecturers, research professors, tenure-track, administrative appointments, and clinical faculty.

Through my own personal contacts as a Native American woman and a list provided by a university Native American organization, I identified six Native American women faculty who agreed to participate in this study. I provided a consent form to each participant explaining the research study, the process of participation, privacy and confidentiality of the study.

Procedure

The dissertation committee approved the study, and it was submitted for approval to the university's Institutional Review Board. After IRB approval was obtained to conduct this study, interviews were conducted in person or online. Interviews were recorded with the consent of the participant. The consent form provisions included information about the study, participant expectations, risks/discomforts, benefits, incentives, privacy and confidentiality, data collection and security, rights as a participant in the study, and contact information for questions and concerns.

Interview Guide

Before the interview questions were asked, a brief demographic information was asked of the participant. In this demographic section, the following questions were asked.

1. Could you tell me your age range (20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70+)?
2. Could you tell me your highest education level?
3. Could you tell me the type of school you attended (public, boarding, parochial, private, home)?
4. Are you the first in your family to attend college?
5. Are you the oldest, middle, or youngest child?
6. Were you raised on the reservation?
7. Do you live in an urban or rural community?
8. Do you practice the spiritual traditions of your community?
9. Do you participate in your Native traditional ceremonies?
10. Are you fluent in your Native language?
11. Could you tell me how many years of experience you have in higher education?
12. Could you tell me how many years of experience you have in teaching?
13. Who was the major influence in your life?

Interview Questions

This study used an open-ended interview using a narrative research approach. Each participant was asked open-ended questions that encouraged a participant to share details and information about their past, their experiences, and their thoughts. The participants' response was recorded to aid in a comprehensive data collection of their stories and perspectives regarding leadership.

Included are the interview questions for the participants. It kept with the narrative inquiry scheme that “stories are characterized by a particular structure; a beginning, a middle, and an end” (McCormack, 2004, p. 220). The questions were arranged accordingly, to provide a story format and keeping with the clockwise cycle of the four pillars. In narrative interviewing, “the goal is to generate detailed accounts rather than brief answers or general statements ... if we want to learn about an experience in all its complexity, details count” (Riessman, 2008, p. 24). The following questions provided a detailed account of each participant’s perception and experiences of leadership. The following are the interview questions for each of the four pillars in the Diné philosophy of learning.

Pillar 1 – Thinking

Prelude: Thinking about Leadership

1. Can you please describe what the word “leadership” means to you?
2. Can you please tell me about a leader you admire?
3. Can you please describe characteristics you associate with leadership?
4. Can you please describe elements of your Native American culture and traditions that have shaped the way you think of leadership?
5. When did you begin to visualize yourself in a leadership position in higher education?
6. How did you think about developing yourself to become a leader?

Pillar 2 – Planning

7. What factors influenced your career path?
8. What experiences helped you to achieve your goals for becoming a leader?
9. In your role as a faculty member in the higher education context, in which ways do you see yourself as a leader?

Pillar 3 – Living (Experience)

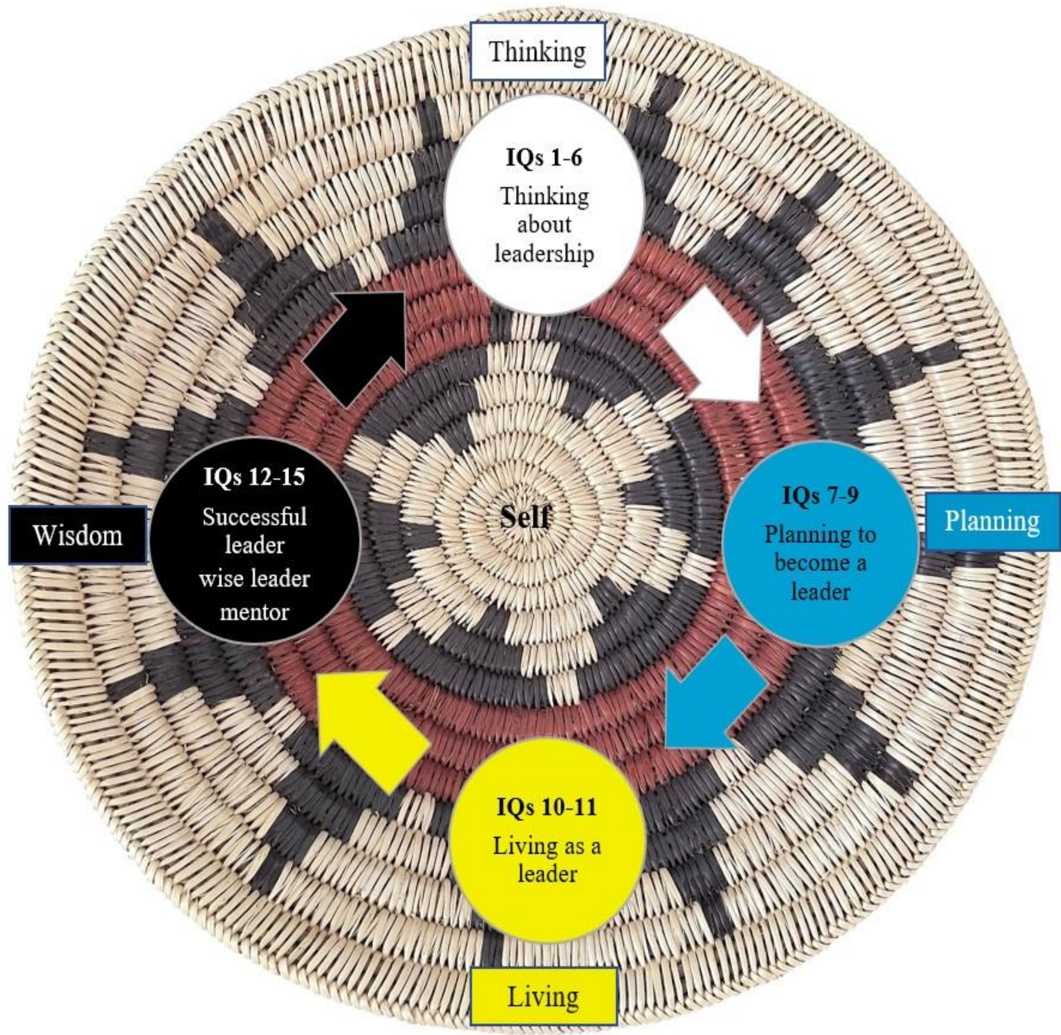
10. What are some of your lived experiences as a leader in higher education?
11. What are some challenges you experienced as you sought to become a leader in higher education?

Pillar 4 – Assurance or Wisdom

12. How do you see yourself as a leader?
13. What factors contributed to your success as a leader?
14. How would you mentor Native women who want to become leaders?
15. What is your vision for leadership in higher education for Native American women faculty?

Figure 8

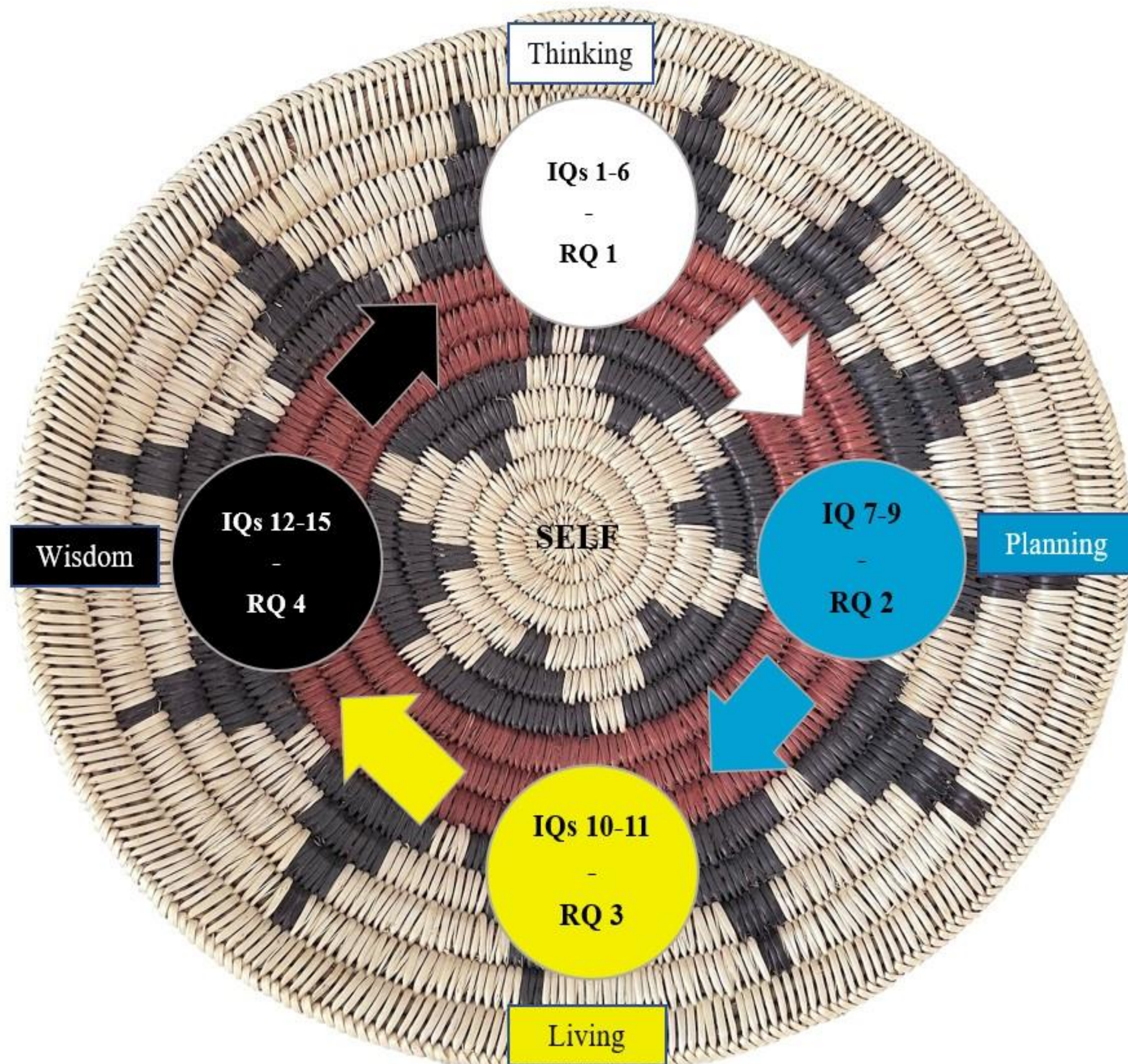
Interview Questions in relation to Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná, and Sihasin



In keeping parallel to the conceptual framework, Figure 9 demonstrates how the interview questions connected to the research questions and were guided by the four pillars. In this way, interview questions answered research questions.

Figure 9

Connecting Interview Questions with Research Questions in relation to Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná, and Sihasin



Data Collection

Data Collection included conducting individual interviews, compiling transcriptions, and inductively exploring commonalities & themes. For individual interviews, participants were asked open-ended questions that encouraged participants to share details and information about their past, experiences, and thoughts. Each interview took approximately 60-75 minutes, that gave researcher time and space to have a guided conversation with each participant. Participant's interview location was face-to-face in a designated room to provide a quiet, comfortable, private, and trusting environment. If a participant preferred an online

interview, then an internet-based platform Zoom was used. Zoom had an option for recording. With participant's consent the interview was recorded. For recording purposes, a voice recorder application included on my Apple iPhone was utilized for in-person interviews and for participants choosing an online interview, Zoom's video recording feature was used. Additionally, note taking took place only to note developing themes. All interviews, files, and notes were regarded as confidential and stored in a secure cloud storage on One Drive, only accessed by the researcher.

Prior to analysis participants were assigned a pseudonym for their privacy and confidentiality. The pseudonyms provided were the names of my matriarchs in my family: Emma, Alice, Rose, Nancy, Veronica, Dineena. The participants agreed to the pseudonym names given to them. As a Native and Diné researcher, my shared background with the participants and my understanding of their experiences as Native women in the higher education community contributed to building a trusting relationship. These relationships are important for the researcher and participants to work together, creating a relationship-centered environment, which is conducive to a study focused on Native participants.

> practicing humility and becoming personally and emotionally invested in each other's lives … prioritize … flexibility to actively work on relationships [to] make effective and beneficial change within Indigenous research compels reframing western perspectives and overcoming long-standing institutional barriers, such that enduring and trusting relationships are the focus" (Oster & Lightning, 2022, p. 56).

Transcription was completed using a transcription service. Beginning the transcription process, I listened to all participant interviews without note taking. In doing so, I gave my full attention and respect to the participant as a storyteller who's not only taking the time to support my research but to give back to the community their knowledge, expertise, and wisdom. This reminded me of being told by my parents, grandmothers, and

elders that I listen with full attention and listen with respect, listen to those who are sharing, passing on, imparting oral tradition - knowledge, culture, tradition, and values. Greg Cajete (1994) wrote,

> The cultivation of all one's senses through learning how to listen, observe, and experience holistically by creative exploration was highly valued. In addition, the ability to use language through storytelling, oratory, and song was highly regarded by all tribes as a primary tool for teaching and learning. This was because the spoken or sung word expressed the spirit and breath of life of the speaker, and thus was considered sacred. (p. 33)

As a Diné researcher, I agree with Cajete. I respect participant's spoken word, their breathe of life, their sacred word.

Additionally, as part of respect for the participants and the communities they represent, I observed the *Guiding Principles for Engaging in Research with Native American Communities*. This document was developed to aid researchers, "both non-Native American and Native American, working with Native American peoples and respective communities" (Straits et al., 2012, p.5). To achieve this, I displayed integrity and honesty throughout this research, work with each participant giving them respect, respecting their tribal community and cultural traditions, and that they "have the right to ownership and control over their own data and may choose to share or not choose to share ownership of the data" (Straits et al., 2012, p. 11). In data collection, it's important to listen, have patience, have a humble attitude, be positive, establish a sincere and trusting relationship with participants, and be mindful of my own cultural and class biases. Also important during the research process was building on the strengths of the participants, presenting a positive framework, "emphasizing resiliency factors and inspiring hope" (Straits et al., 2012, p.12), and co-learning together (researcher and participant). With the completion of the research, sharing the findings and information

with the participants and giving back to the Native community, this study contributed to the greater well-being and to the field of Native American women leadership.

Data Analysis

For this study I used a thematic analysis which will focus on stories gathered from participant interviews regarding their perspective of leadership. Four narrative analysis approaches were discussed by Catherine Riessman (2008): structural analysis, dialogic/performance analysis, visual analysis, and thematic analysis. Structural analysis "interrogated how participants use speech to construct themselves and their histories" (Riessman, 2008, p. 103). Dialogic or performance analysis "interrogated how talk among speakers is interactively (dialogically) produced and performed as narrative" (Riessman, 2008, p. 105). Visual analysis explained by Riessman (2008) was "integrating words and images from different visual genres (photography, painting, collage, and video dairy [and making meaning]" (p. 141).

In reviewing these approaches, I selected thematic analysis which I think best fit my study as I explored themes that developed from the transcriptions and "focus[ed] on what is said" (Riessman, 2008, p. 59). I agreed with Riessman (2008) that "thematic analysis can be applied to stories that develop in interview conversations … [and these] stories can have effects beyond their meanings for individual storytellers, creating possibilities for social identities, group belonging, and collective action" (p. 54). Participants told their story on leadership and will collectively bring their voices, contributing and investing their oral traditions, not for the meaning of Indigenous research, but as Dr. Tiffany Lee expressed, as a "process that we engage in and values that are shared amongst many of our communities and how we incorporate that into the research process" (Windchief & San Pedro, 2019, p. 39).

Because I used thematic analysis and the term "emerging" theme may not be the appropriate term to use, according to Braun & Clark (2019), I used "developed" and "generated" to describe the themes. Braun & Clark (2019) state,

> themes do not passively emerge from either data or coding; they are not 'in' the data, waiting to be identified and retrieved by the researcher. Themes are creative and interpretive stories about the data, produced at the intersection of the researcher's theoretical assumptions, their analytic resources and skill, and the data themselves. Quality reflexive TA is not about following procedures 'correctly' (or about 'accurate' and 'reliable' coding, or achieving consensus between coders), but about the researcher's reflective and thoughtful engagement with their data and their reflexive and thoughtful engagement with the analytic process. We increasingly refer to terms like 'developing' (Braun, Clarke, and Weate 2016) 'constructing' (Braun et al. 2018) or 'generating' to capture this process" (p. 594).

When interviews were completed, transcriptions were analyzed. The transcriptions took weeks to complete taking notes and carefully listening using active listening (McCormack, 2000). Active listening allowed myself as a researcher to establish a reconnection with the participant, with their spoken words, their story, and to consider my own personal assumptions and views and how it may have influenced or affected my interpretations of the participant's words and how I wrote about them (McCormack, 2000). An active listener "listens to the tape several times … to check for accuracy [and] to brainstorm initial reactions to the interviews and reflect on assumptions" (McCormack, 2004, p. 222). In the active listener role, themes developed and will be noted in this initial phase and will be revisited in the analysis phase.

This study inductively explored the commonalities and themes that result from participants' interview responses. This approach created an understanding of and interpretations of Native American women faculty experiences and perspectives of leadership in higher education. In thematic analysis process, "there are no strict rules … researchers generate themes … [and] continue to evolve organically" (Vanover, Mihas, & Saldaña, 2022,

p. 163). Thematic coding and analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of analysis: (1) familiarizing yourself with data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, (6) producing the report. "Analysis involves a constant moving back and forward between the entire data, the coded extracts of data that you are analyzing, and the analysis of the data that you are producing" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 11).

In the coding phase, Word was used to code in variations of color-coding schemes and using columns to separate code words or phrases from the transcriptions. Once the coding phase was completed, the themes were defined and named. Using quotes from the transcriptions will support the interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Plano Clarke & Creswell, 2015; Saldana, 2016; Vanover, et al., 2022).

Additionally, I used a visual framework of commonalities and themes developed from the thematic analysis to support the interpretations of and understanding of Native American women faculty experiences and perspectives of leadership in higher education.

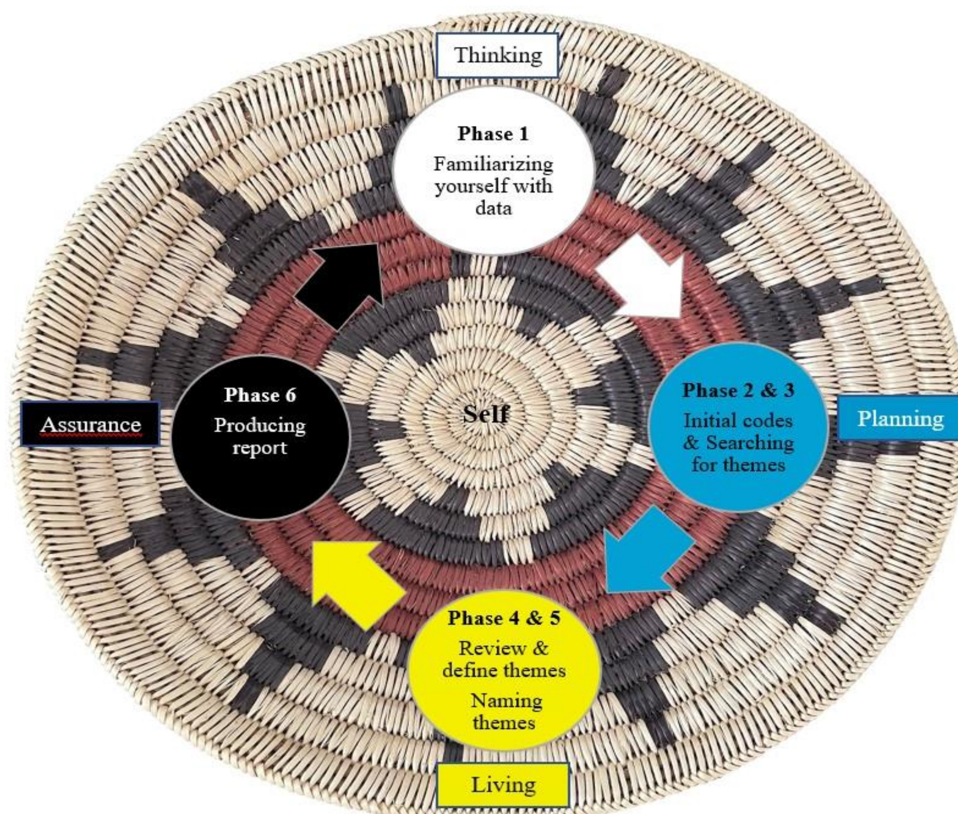
I employed a theoretical lens from a Native American woman's perspective. As the data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted, it reconnected with the study's theoretical lens and conceptual framework of Diné philosophy of learning – Thinking (Nitsáhákees), Planning (Nahat'á), Living (Iiná), and Assurance (Sihasin) and the Diné ceremonial basket and its relation to Native American women leadership.

In Figure 10, the thematic analysis process for this study is illustrated with its connection to Diné philosophy of learning – Thinking (Nitsáhákees), Planning (Nahat'á), Living (Iiná), and Assurance (Sihasin). The process followed a clockwise direction through

each pillar. These pillars of the Diné philosophy of learning can be seen in everything including data analysis.

Figure 10

Thematic Analysis in relation to Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná, and Sihasin



Validity

For a qualitative study, validity "evaluates the quality of qualitative research" (Figgou, 2015, p. 547). Validity is the accuracy that reflects the real meaning of the concept being studied and how the data is analyzed and interpreted as representative of the concept. It is the "trustworthiness of our interpretations … trustworthiness not truth is the key semantic difference" (Riessman, 1993, p. 65). Nowell et al. (2017) notes that trustworthiness is evaluating your data and "research findings are worthy of attention" (p. 3). Part of trustworthiness is authenticity, ensuring that "all voices in the inquiry effort had a chance to

be represented in any texts and to have their stories treated fairly and with balance" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 122). To ensure validity, trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility of this study (Noble & Smith, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), these techniques were used:

- "Rich and thick verbatim descriptions of participants' [narratives]" (Noble & Smith, 2015).
- Member checking - collaboration with participants, determining interview questions, follow up questions, clarification questions are acceptable to) participants, (Clark & Creswell, 2015; Creswell, 2014); More importantly, participant review of interpretations and findings (Noble & Smith, 2015; Riessman, 2008; Saldaña, 2016).
- "Meticulous record keeping, demonstrating a clear decision trail and ensuring interpretations of data are consistent and transparent" (Noble & Smith, 2015).
- Assuring the integrity of transcription and translation of interview data safeguarding the validity of interview-based research to deliver the rigor and reproducibility audiences increasingly expect (Clark et al., 2017, p. 1759).
- Documenting thoughts about potential codes/themes, diagramming to make sense of theme connections, and documentation of theme naming (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 4)
- Adequate engagement in data collection … [through transcriptions] to get as close as possible to participants' understanding of a phenomenon and being mindful of data saturation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 246).
- Own lens and intersections of my own identity that formed a lens by how I'm interpreting the meaning of the responses; "Accounting for personal biases which may have influenced findings" (Noble & Smith, 2015, p.34).

- Use of quotes for participant's voice, "participants speak for themselves" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 209).

In summary, this chapter presented a detailed account of the methodology and the narrative inquiry research design. Included in this chapter was a discussion of the study's participants and their characteristics, recruitment, sampling, setting, and IRB procedures. Additionally, an interview guide was included with a discussion on how the interview and research questions were connected to the conceptual framework, the Diné philosophy of learning – Thinking (Nitsáhákees), Planning (Nahat'á), Living (Iiná), and Assurance (Sihasin). Lastly, a detailed account of the data collection, data analysis and validity considerations were presented. In the next chapter, findings from the interview questions will be reported using narrative analysis, followed by a discussion of how the themes correspond to the research questions.

Chapter 4 – Findings – Assurance (Sihasin) – North

This chapter presents the results of the research relating to leadership of Native American women faculty in higher education. The purpose of this research was to explore leadership in higher education from the perspectives of Native American women. Using a qualitative research design and individual interviews, the study delved into their perspective of leadership, their identity as a leader in higher education, as a leader in their own community, and how their background and context influence their perception of leadership. Their experiences and stories will give us an understanding of Native American women in leadership roles by exploring their unique experiences, challenges, and contributions to their communities.

The chapter explores the themes of leadership that developed from the data through the lenses of Native American women faculty. These themes encompass the diverse experiences and strategies shared by these women leaders as they navigate their leadership journeys. Leadership development is a multifaceted journey that involves personal growth, adapting new rules, and addressing complex challenges. Leadership is a dynamic and evolving process that demands continuous learning and adaptation. Effective leaders must develop a range of skills and strategies to navigate the challenges they encounter throughout their careers. This chapter explores key themes related to leadership development and transition, emphasizing the importance of figuring it all out, adjusting and adapting, pushing ahead, building confidence, and taking action. It also delves into academic leadership, collaborative leadership, and the imperative to address challenges, failures, and inequities.

The discussion of study results begins with a participant profile describing the demographics of the six participants after participant names have been de-identified and specific identifiers have been removed. Following demographics is a detailed participant profile to get an understanding of each participant's experience and perspective of leadership in higher education. Their interview responses begin with a discussion of the major influences in participant lives, their passion and work, and their definition of leadership. This is followed by a discussion of key themes that developed. The chapter concludes by answering the research questions and providing a summary of the results.

Participant profile

The data collected for this study were based on interviews of six self-identifying Native American women from a southwestern university. The women hold appointments as lecturers, research professors, tenure-track faculty, clinical faculty and administrators. They ranged in age from twenty to sixty plus years, and had attained a master's or doctoral degree. The participants shared their stories and experiences of leadership in higher education.

It can be assumed that they have developed leadership skills as they have obtained a faculty position at a research university. For example, an excerpt from a southwest university's job website, in the preferred qualification section of the job description for an assistant professorship in education, a tenure/tenure track position, called for "experience with administrative, program coordination, and leadership skills" (University of New Mexico, 2023). In another southwest university's faculty job website, it called for leadership experience in the required qualifications and to serve as a team mentor for collaborative leading in Indigenous Communities (Arizona State University, 2024). Another southwest university was looking for leadership experience and leadership skills for an assistant

teaching professor in the College of Education (Northern Arizona University, 2024). In one of the faculty handbooks, was personal traits "that influence an individual's effectiveness as a teacher, a scholar, researcher, or creative artist, and a leader in a professional area." (UNM, 2023, p. 116) Additionally, in the faculty handbook, for an associate professor, "appointment should be made only after careful investigation of the candidate's accomplishments and promise in teaching, scholarly work, and leadership." (UNM, 2023, pg. 117) Similarly, in the handbook for professors, "professors are the most enduring group of faculty, and it is they who give leadership and set the tone for the entire University. Thus, appointment or promotion should be made only after careful investigation of the candidate's accomplishments in teaching, scholarly work, and leadership." (UNM, 2023, pg. 118) So, upon hiring, faculty qualifications include leadership skills and through the process of tenure faculty are evaluated on their leadership. After attaining tenure, faculty are considered the face of leadership for the university.

In this study all participants were de-identified and their tribal affiliation or their place of work and work responsibilities will not be mentioned. An interview guide preceded the interview questions to begin the interview, to create a comfortable space for the participants, and to get demographic information. Appendix A provides each participant's response to the interview guide questions.

In this section, a narrative profile of each participant is provided to obtain contextual background of the women and to get a deeper understanding of who they are. They responded to questions regarding their educational background, where they were raised, do they practice spiritual traditions of their community, do they participate in their Native traditional ceremonies, are they fluent in their Native language, years of experience in higher

education, years of experience in teaching, and major influences in their lives or someone they admire. The women who tell their stories are: Emma, Alice, Rose, Nancy, Veronica, and Dineena.

Emma

Emma is the second oldest in her family, raised on the reservation, attended public school, and currently lives in an urban community. She is not the first in the family to attend college, her oldest sister went before her. Emma practices spiritual traditions of her community as well as participates in traditional ceremonies. She says, “I'm becoming an elder and what's important to me now, a lot more than when I was younger, is the importance of our ceremonies and our prayers, creation stories and narratives and how those stories are the framework for understanding the world and for understanding relationships.”

Emma has over twenty-five years of experience in higher education. Along with her work in education, Emma is passionate about her community and has a strong commitment to her tribal community and Native peoples. She has been invited and called upon by her tribal community to be a leader, to be a critical thinker, to talk to the community, to write and do research, to help with tribal and federal legislation, to work on projects, and the list goes on. She says, “to me, that's a marker of what we say as Native scholars, that our work is ethical and responsible to our tribal communities. So, when they called upon me and asked me to do something, I'm happy to do it because that's what we said, our education is for.”

One of Emma’s major influences in her life was her father. Her parents met at boarding school. Emma remembers that because of her parents’ boarding school experiences, they cut her and her sisters’ hair like the kids who went to boarding school, even though they didn't go to boarding school. She said, “I hated that haircut. It was so ugly. And my dad

would send us off." Emma described her father as very strict about school, about education, and listening to teachers. She remembers a moment when her father told her, "when you meet a white man, you look at them straight in the eyes because that's what they want. When they beat you up, insult you, assault you, the next day you go back over there, and you get back in line. You just have to be really, really tough." Emma's tough skin persisted into academia. She recalled a lot of failures, a lot of feeling like a failure, learning how to take criticism, dealing with isolation as faculty, working twice as hard, and dealing with racism, discrimination, and microaggression. She says, "it is just learning how to have a tough skin; in academia, you've got to have a very tough skin." Emma's tough skin was cultivated over her thirty years of teaching and working in higher education.

Alice

Alice is the youngest in the family, raised in the city, attended public school from K-12th grade and private school for college and graduate school. She is not the first in the family to attend college; her mother attended a private and prestigious college. She mentions that her grandparents speak her native language, and her mom understands it fluently. She grew up knowing a lot of common phrases and expressions of her Native language and took four semesters of her language through an independent language study in graduate school. She currently lives in an urban community. What Alice knows about the spiritual traditions of her community she practices in part. She does participate in her tribal traditional events and celebrations.

Alice is passionate about her work in education and research. She has fifteen years of experience in higher education with 5 years of teaching experience. She has done extensive research for her tribe, giving back a history of memories, making change, and bringing to

light the voices that were not heard. Alice said, “I started my research project on lived experiences of racial segregation. So that way, we have the memories of what it was like when there were signs that would say “no Natives and no dogs allowed.” She has worked with several tribal communities and community-based organizations to connect people, especially the elders. Alice recalls that her career path and research work began when she was in high school, seeing on the news the murder of a Native woman who was killed, mutilated, and sexually assaulted by a white man. She said, “the killer showed her dead body off to his friends and bragged about how he had murdered her, and the coroner compared Della Brown's head, that had been pulverized, to a bag of ice, so, really grisly mutilation.” It struck close to home for Alice because the Native woman looked like the women in her family. A white woman was also the victim of the serial killer who murdered Della Brown. Alice said, “there was a sharp contrast between the way that Native women's bodies are perceived in society and the way that white women's bodies are perceived as more valuable.” The killer was acquitted of the charges for his grisly murdering of the Native woman but was charged and convicted to a life time of prison for the white woman’s murder. With this stark awakening in Alice’s life, Alice decided then to focus on Indigenous history and social justice for the Native community.

Alice indicates that her family, her mother, sisters, spouse, and kids are her major influences in her life. But she speaks extensively about her mother, a leader she admires. Alice’s mother came from a very poor family, a family of ten kids. When Alice thinks of her mother, she thinks about the types of things that her mother encountered growing up and going to school, and the types of ways that she is positive in the community. Alice tells of her mother going to boarding school and hating it so much that when she had the opportunity to

transfer out with a foster family through the Upward Bound Program, she did. Her mother lived with an Asian American family in Hawaii. Her foster father had been formerly incarcerated by the US internment camps during WWII. Alice's mother graduated from high school in Hawaii and soon after, she was admitted to a very prestigious private college in the late 60s. Alice says that they asked her mother if she was coming to college and her mother said her family has no money and told them she isn't coming unless they give her money. They funded her. She went on to major in mathematics, and then to law school in the early '70s. "So, it's like, I would really say my mom is the leader. She just always prioritized education and Native family values," says Alice. Her mother still has ties to Hawaii and visits her foster sister in Oahu.

Rose

Rose is the oldest in her family, raised on the reservation. She attended public school 1st-12th grade in two different towns on the reservation. Rose said when she first went to college she flunked out at a public university, then attended another public university and a tribal college off and on until she received her bachelor's degree. She then returned several years later to receive her master's degree from a public university. Rose is not the first in the family to attend college. Her mother was the first and attended a public university receiving both her bachelor's and master's degrees. She adds that "her father went to college for a little while but did not graduate and instead enlisted in the Army during the Vietnam War. He wasn't drafted, he enlisted." Rose currently lives in an urban community and mentions that she often goes home to the reservation where her mother lives. Rose practices the spiritual traditions of her community and participates in traditional ceremonies. At one point in Rose's life, she said, "I didn't have any internal desire to become anything. What I loved doing, I just

loved doing cultural things all the time. That's all that I really had a desire for was to know more about myself and my cultures. So, whatever I could do to participate in my culture, that's all I wanted. I could see that I was deficient in knowing my languages and knowing more innately about my culture." Although she is not fluent in her languages, she does know some.

Rose is passionate about her work in teaching and education. She has fifteen years of experience in higher education with twenty-three years of teaching experience. Like Alice, she is giving back a history of memories, making changes, and bringing to light the voices that were not heard. Her work has always been committed to Native American communities. She says, "I have a focus … my family always said since I was small, come back and work for Indian people. I'm not back on the reservation, but I am here and there's a high population of Native students. And I'm always going to have them as the focus for whatever work that I'm doing."

Rose says her major influences in her life are her mother and father. She says her mother is the matriarch. Rose says her mother contributed to her success as a leader. She says her mother allowed her to be herself, as a critical thinker, as an independent person, making her own choices, even when she stopped going to school. She said, "I was not career-minded. I didn't appreciate the world as it was. I had family telling me that I needed to go to college, and that I should become this, and I should become that. I didn't have any internal desire to become anything." When Rose moved back to the reservation, she said, "my mom wouldn't let me just be home. She told me you have to have a job and to keep working on going to school, so I went to the local tribal college." This was a pivotal point in Rose's life.

> I finally got a better foundation for being able to think about life and to have some kind of goals to push myself internally. So, after I went home for a while, I got to

> experience just being around my grandma and grandpa more. I had a lot of time to do things like ride a horse and take care of the cows and be free on the reservation. I really value that part of my life, the freedom feeling. I think to have a family that was understanding at the same time pushing me, of the need to kind of figure it out for myself, but still be supportive. That was so important for me.

She also speaks about her dad as an influence in her life.

> He taught us how to be outside. He would take us fishing, wood hauling, camping, and taught us how to build a fire and just basically appreciate the independence of doing things outside. His philosophy imparted on us was that we had all our appendages and they worked so there was nothing wrong with us. We could do everything and should not expect anyone to do anything for us. He was the disciplinarian and enforced cleaning, not talking back, and curfews.

Rose acknowledges and credits her mother and father for keeping her on the path and being her support system throughout her life.

Nancy

Nancy is the oldest in her family, raised on the reservation. She attended public school K-12th on the reservation and attended a public university for undergraduate and graduate school. She is not the first in the family to attend college. Her parents attended a public university where they met. She says, "they did not complete their degrees at that time. My mother went back to school after my brother, her last child of three, was born. She attended the branch campus of a public university and received her bachelor's degree in teaching. She also went back and completed her master's degree in the same area when I was in high school. My father went back to school about 15 years ago starting from the beginning earning his bachelor's degree, master's degree, and now is working on completing his doctoral degree." She currently lives in an urban community and often goes home to the reservation where her parents and extended family live. Nancy mentions that she is not fluent in her language, but she has some knowledge because her mother is a fluent speaker. Nancy

practices spiritual traditions of her community as well as participates in traditional ceremonies. She said her mother and extended family regularly participate in and support traditional ceremonies in the community. She says, “growing up I did go to some traditional ceremonies but not all of them. I make efforts to attend them now that I don’t live there.” She adds, “I always have my community, my spiritual traditions and ceremonies. Those are the things that I participate in to remind myself of the things that are bigger than me, that are bigger than issues of academia. When I am able to participate in those things and remember where I'm from and who I am, I connect with them directly. I need that because otherwise I get too overwhelmed or stressed out. So that's really important to me to do those things and take the time for them. That helps me keep going.”

Nancy is passionate about her work in teaching and education. She has fifteen years of teaching experience and fifteen years of experience in higher education. Nancy is passionate about helping and supporting students and colleagues on campus. She says,

> I’ll make myself available and support any students where I can. I'm going to help them. In the Native community, I'll say hi and introduce myself and let them know if they need anything, I'm happy to help. That's how I see myself and my role as a faculty member. As a Native person, that's why I'm here because I want to provide support in a lot of ways that I got support, too. I want to continue that and give that to other people if I can.

Nancy also worked with colleagues on and off campus advocating for Native opportunities that include funding, policy changes, and improvements. She worked with colleagues on the university’s cluster hiring of Native faculty, collaborated on proposing state funding for a Native centered program plan, and advocated for the validation of Indigenous research methods as a methodology in research as well as promotion and tenure. She served on several committees in her department, on campus and in the community to make an impact, make changes, make improvements, and create opportunities. She says, “I’ll

go out of my way to advocate for Native people in whatever way I can on and off campus. So that means if there's something that comes up at a meeting or I bring a concern to the table, or issues that need to be addressed, I will speak up. I'll take those opportunities, bring that advocacy, speak up for those who are not there, using my space at the table to raise issues and concerns and see if I can get people to understand what we might make better and improve our communities." She adds, "there are responsibilities that I have for myself in being a representative and supporting and advocating for my tribal community and tribal people in general. So, all of those things I think are part of how I try to be on campus or try to serve in this role as a Native faculty."

Nancy mentioned her grandmother as one of the major influences in her life. Nancy said she spent a lot of her time with her grandmother and learned so much from her and that she was a very supportive and caring person. She describes her grandmother's resilience and spirit for living life to the fullest.

> My grandmother was and continues to be a guiding influence in my life because she was always supportive and caring, a grounding force in my life. It was amazing to me how much she did in her life, going to school, getting married, raising six kids, keeping up with her 15 plus grandchildren, and the changes she saw during her lifetime, riding a wagon to the next town which took more than a day, to knowing Harry Potter when it came on tv. She is also inspiring because she persevered through difficult times, such as losing two children at birth and losing my grandfather when he was in his mid-60s. My grandmother was also just fun to be around, and I enjoyed hearing her stories and spending time with her. I miss her but I imagine telling her about the work I do and hope she is proud of me, which is what guides me today.

Her parents were also a big influence in her life in that they were supportive in her endeavors. She said, "they always made it seem like I could do what I needed to do, and it wasn't like they thought of the barriers. They just assumed I would be doing something because I was a good student and learner. They had expectations of me to do something and were supportive of it, like going to college. There was never a question. So, I didn't even

think about questioning it. They didn't push me about it. They just figured I was very independent and would figure it out. They just trusted me to do it." Another impactful person in Nancy's life was her supervisor, a Native woman she worked for as a student employee in college. She said,

> she was a Native woman leader. She was a model to me because she brought herself, her whole self, as a Native woman into her role. She was an advocate for Native people and culture. I even saw her really fight for what she knew was the right thing to do on campus. She wanted to have money, grant funds to have a conference to bring in artists and elders from tribal communities to look at the pottery pieces they had on campus. And, folks from the tribes wanted to make offerings and bring food for those pottery pieces because the pieces were from the community. Some university people didn't understand, or they didn't think it was a good idea to do the offerings and food. She really had to advocate for that saying this is important, this is their stuff, this is what we have to do. She didn't back down. So, they let them do it. That was really cool to see. So, I thought, wow, she's tough, and she stands her ground, and she just does what she needs to do to make those things happen. Her actions, her advocation, her self-confidence, and her respect for people changed my life.

Veronica

Veronica is the oldest in her family, raised on the reservation. She attended public school K-8th grades on the reservation, a private school for the 9th-12th grades, and a state university for undergraduate and graduate school. She is not the first in the family to attend college. Her mother attended a public university for undergraduate and graduate studies. Currently she lives in an urban community and mentions that she goes home to the reservation to visit family. Veronica practices spiritual traditions of her community as well as participates in traditional ceremonies. Because Veronica grew up on the reservation and was raised by her grandparents she is fluent in her Native language. It is her first language and English second. She adds, "so, some of the things I learned from them is really the sacredness of our voice, our speech, and things that come from our mouth is to be very

thoughtful about that and that it's intentional. So, I think I listen or try to listen first. That's something I really value."

Veronica is passionate about her work in teaching and education. She has six years of teaching experience and twenty plus years of experience in higher education. Veronica said her first intentions were not in higher education or to become a teacher because growing up her mother told her never to become a teacher, but she did. Veronica said her mother's dissuasion was only because "she worked in the time when women were undervalued especially as a classroom teacher and she was frustrated with the way Native people were being taught in her community, and she felt powerless." Veronica's experience is teaching and researching. She says,

> you're teaching students and the community. I'm more so a researcher than a traditional classroom teacher. I think that's one of the main ways I see myself as a leader, is that there's an expectation that I'm not just learning this for myself, to climb the ladder, or to make more money. I'm learning this because through my research and observations, I have to pass on to students, to the next person behind me, so they can build on that. And that's the main way I see myself as a leader. So, it's just maintaining that continuation.

Veronica spoke passionately about her mother, and her grandparents as major influences in her life. She says, "my mom's values and beliefs are really what pushed me, pushed me into higher education, pushed me to go to school, pushed me even in the work I do now. She continues to be my rock who I go to for my own research questions." Veronica tells a story of her mother's upbringing, struggles, and resilience and why she is her rock.

> My mom was the first person in our whole family to go to college. She's the third oldest. She had a very difficult childhood. She was in that boarding school generation, that really traumatic time. They tried to tell her that she belonged in special education and that she was not smart. All through high school, she fought against that, to actively resist. She went to NAU and fought it there. So, that was sheer determination. I don't know how this woman did it. She got her master's degree in special education before I was born. She now has an administrative leadership role. She is an incredibly disciplined woman. In high school, she was a cross-country

> runner. Running sustained her all the way through college. My mother and dad divorced and she never remarried. She just stuck with it. She's the most disciplined person I've ever met in my whole life and there's no way I can live up to that, just no way. I'm just in awe of her.

Veronica also spoke respectfully of her grandparents as impactful people in her life. Her grandmother was her favorite person, who raised her, taught her to weave, taught her to cook, and taught her what she needed to know. She said,

> my grandparents raised me while my mom worked. I grew up thinking my grandma was my friend, my sister. My grandma was really bossy, like my mom. She was definitely the head of our household and the matriarch of the whole family. She was an elegant woman. She was strict about some things but also a funny person. All I did was laugh when I was with her. She was also a lot like my mom, very buttoned up, very strict, and very disciplined. She was hard on people and wasn't very affectionate. My mom was the same. They're not affectionate people and neither am I. They had very high standards.

Like her grandmother, Veronica speaks just as highly of her grandfather and his influence on her life. Her grandfather and great grandfather were both involved in the tribal government as elected tribal officials. Her strength embodies what her grandfather instilled upon her. She fondly remembers her grandfather as a man who uplifts the women in the family.

> He was very clear in my grandmother's role as a matriarch. He never interfered with that. He only uplifted her and held her up. It was never a question of what my role was because my grandfather uplifted me that way. He reinforced my grandmother's power, her role, and what his role was. So, I will have to say even though we're mostly talking about women here, in order to become a strong woman leader, you also need strong men leaders, too.

Dineena

Dineena is the only child in her family, raised in the city. She attended public school K-12th grade in the city, and public university for undergraduate and graduate school. She is not the first in the family to attend college. She says, "my dad attended college on the GI Bill after serving 4 years in the Navy (Vietnam war). My mom attended college at the same time I

was in college. Both attended state universities. They both received undergraduate degrees, but not graduate degrees." Currently, she lives in an urban community. Both her parents are Native people. Dineena does not practice spiritual traditions of her community. She does not participate in traditional ceremonies. Dineena is not fluent in her Native languages. However, her mother was raised on the reservation and raised to speak two Native languages but she did not teach Dineena. Her father did not learn to speak his Native language.

Dineena is passionate about her work in teaching and education. She has twenty plus years of experience in higher education with eighteen years of teaching experience. At the beginning, teaching wasn't something that Dineena was comfortable doing. She says, "I never thought I could teach. I was scared of teaching and being in front of people. You kind of get forced into teaching … It was a requirement." Dineena gives credit to her teacher for his encouragement and kindness because he helped her realize that it's okay to be nervous and she can do it. With Dineena's teaching experience and higher education experience over the years, she and her colleagues have worked as a collective to establish a program which meant interactions with departments and campus administration. She goes on to say, "I had a lot of positive experiences. I never think of myself as a leader, but I know I am. Maybe I'm thought of as a leader among the faculty, even though I don't have a position of power. I work well with people and build support." Along with her teaching experience, she also likes writing and research. She says, "I was able to publish. I found out that I like research. That's what I do in my job." She emphasized,

> we need Indigenous researchers using Indigenous methods, the kind of thing that influences higher education. What I would love to see is higher education bending around us rather than us bending around higher education. I would love to see us change the culture of higher education rather than it trying to shift us. So, if we could bring some Native values to higher education, where we're supporting each other and we are valuing the community over individual success, where we are bringing and

> still honoring traditions, and still honoring those who came before us. I think that those things to me would be really valuable.

Dineena's major influences in her life are her parents. Her mother was raised on the reservation but her father was not. He was raised in an urban area. Her father's parents were both students at a boarding school who eventually settled in the city where the boarding school was located. They both worked at the boarding school. Dineena says, "that's where my dad was raised. He actually spent a lot of time as a kid on the grounds of the boarding school." She says, "my parents worked in organizations mostly with Native people and they preferred to work with Native people. If you had a choice, you would be with Native people and listen to what Native people said."

Dineena also mentions a leader she admires, Paul Farmer, who also has an influence on her way of thinking. He was a doctor who founded Partners in Health, who advocated for the poor and sick. She says,

> he mostly worked with the Indigenous communities in different countries in poor places. He developed an entire international organization that was founded on developing health educators and health care workers in the communities, and spending money on these communities, pushing back against the inequities in international health care. The assumption was that it wasn't worth it to spend a lot of money on poor people. That the only people you could spend a lot of money on were rich people from rich countries. He was a revolutionary, very radical. He was extremely kind to everyone and really placed value on every person. I got to see him speak once. He was very self-sacrificing and also very smart about dealing with the international health care system. So, that's a leader.

The profiles introduced six Native American women faculty —Emma, Alice, Rose, Nancy, Veronica, and Dineena—each with unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives shaping their individual life paths. These women shared a commitment to education, cultural preservation, and community service, each navigating their unique paths. Their stories reflected a blend of cultural heritage, academic pursuits, and a strong sense of

responsibility toward their communities. They navigated challenges in higher education and strive to bring positive change to the system while staying connected to their Native identities. The next section explores the definition and perspectives that developed from the lens of these six Native women faculty.

Perspectives on Leadership

In this section, each of the women discussed their unique perspectives on leadership, offering in-depth definitions of leadership and sharing their individual perspectives through their experiences and their lens as a Native woman. Their unique understanding and insight will contribute to the understanding of Native American women leadership in higher education.

Emma

Emma defines leadership. “I think leadership means the way in which you draw upon your education to support your Indigenous nations and your communities and to be ethical and responsible and accountable to your people.” Regardless of her definition, Emma didn’t visualize or think of herself in leadership roles or as a leader. She says, “my role is to just do the work … I think I see myself as someone who supports people, who supports initiatives. I have a great deal of respect for people who hold traditional knowledge and our knowledge of our practices. It makes my day when I can sit with them in ceremony, and I can listen to them, and I can learn something.” Even though Emma doesn’t see herself as a leader, she has the community telling her so. Her relatives tell her that what she is doing is of leadership qualities. A person working with her on a huge project tells her she is a leader because her knowledge and wisdom are helping the tribe and Indigenous people. A healer also tells her

that she is doing leadership. She remembers a community leader telling her she is a “leader who scouts and looks around and thinks about the future.”

As others see Emma as a leader, she does, eventually, humbly accept her leadership role as faculty and as a leader because she says she’s an educator. She’s there to support and mentor students and she gives back to her tribal community. She supports initiatives. She is accountable to her people. She respects people who hold traditional knowledge and practices. For these reasons, her tribal community, her relatives, her family, her colleagues, and her students call upon her for her knowledge, skills, wisdom, support, and most of all, her leadership. Emma is a leader.

With all this on Emma’s shoulders, she still wakes up every single morning and is grateful for the day. She says that she doesn't always go out and do her prayer, but she does remember her father always saying, “there's always that opportunity because it's a new day, a day for you to do things, to come alive, and to keep moving.”

Alice

Alice defines leadership as “someone who works with communities, works to bring positive change, and to maintain positive spaces within the community.” She says, “the Western concept of leadership is all about power, but I would say a leader is the opposite of power. The leader is the person who listens, who bolsters other people, who bolsters the community without supporting themselves, without putting themselves on that pedestal.” After speaking with Alice, I would say Alice is a leader. However, Alice says, “I don't know if I ever thought I would be a leader, or I don't know if I ever wanted to be a leader.” She comments,

> in my culture you get teased if you put yourself too big. It's like you almost never want to be perceived as the leader, right … It's a kind of social fabric where you're

> working together in a manner where one person isn't necessarily standing out. So ideally, a healthy community would have a fabric of strong leaders all around who are almost behind the scenes.

In regard to the teasing and putting yourself too big, Alice wondered at what point then does one transition to become some type of leader. For her, the beginnings of maybe being a leader came from being a part of a Native leader's summer internship program when she was in college. The program was committed to keeping alive the history, culture, and traditions, as well as, working at Native organizations, both non-profit and Native corporations. She said that's when they were told they are the leaders and they were told how they should act as a leader. She said,

> which is kind of funny. It's like at some point they even had an etiquette person come in and basically teach us things about the Western working world. It's like when you have a job interview, don't get the spaghetti, get a salad because it's easier to eat, like things that you never thought of, but they were trying to train us in such a way, and they were trying to school us on the history of our state and education. So that way we had this kind of skill set that went between both places within the Native community and also within the Western working world.

Alice says,

> today, I'm transitioning to accept that I might be some kind of leader of some degree. And I think we tend to think of a leader as being like Deb Haaland, like the political person who has a powerful platform and is representing the people. But I think it's also how do we make positive impacts on people in our environment, how can we help people, support people, and find resources.

Although Alice says she's transitioning to be some kind of leader, she embodies her definition of leadership. She works with Native communities. She works to bring positive change. She maintains positive spaces within the community. She listens to people. She bolsters people. She bolsters community without putting herself on a pedestal. Alice is the leader.

Rose

Rose defines leadership as "a person that is in a position to be influential, a humble person, a person who thinks things through, a person who can admit errors, a person who can find ways to grow even through errors, and a person who has compassion for others." Given Rose's definition of leadership, she doesn't visualize herself in a leadership position. She says,

> that's strange for me. I didn't really think that I ever internalized myself as being a leader. For some reason, I don't know why but even though I have held positions where the wording clearly says you're in charge, you're the person, like a director or those words, you know, internally, I don't really feel that word, leader, yet. I just do the work to assist others to hopefully realize in their own self that they can do it or that they carry some things innately in them to be whatever it is that they want to be. In the positions that I've been in, I try to contribute in thinking. Thinking about myself, I don't really think of myself as that word, a leader.

Rose thinks about leadership through a Native woman's lens. Rose thinks of leadership in the sense of a collective. She resets her thinking and says, "when I think about leadership it's through a Native person's view. I think about it as how everyone is part of a collective, working towards a goal, working together to accomplish something, and not about viewing yourself as above other people." She also adds,

> the only other place that I can really acknowledge that it's my responsibility to be a leader, it's as a mom. There, I know that I am the center of my family. I have to embody what I'm hoping that my children will carry forth, to be respectful to people, watch how they talk to people, being aware of their actions, how they make others feel, but also being aware of how others make them feel, working to be the best person they can be, whatever it is that they want to be.

Although Rose said the word leadership was strange for her and she didn't internalize herself as being a leader, Rose is a leader. Through her eyes as a Native woman, Rose is a leader. She encompasses her definition of leadership. She is humble. She's a person who thinks things through. She's a person who can admit errors. She's a person who can find ways to grow even through errors. She's a person that has compassion for others. She is

influential. Rose is a leader in the family. Rose is a leader as a mother. Rose is a leader amongst her peers. Rose is a leader in the community.

Nancy

Nancy defined leadership as “someone who is a good listener, a good communicator, is upfront, engages with people, is trustworthy and is able to see the big picture perhaps in a leadership role as a supervisor, or a person in a group or a person in the community. A leader has a guiding vision, guiding purpose, bringing people together, and working together.” Nancy also sees a difference in leadership between higher education with its Western views versus leadership in tribal communities, each tribe with its own leadership perspective. She says, “in her tribal community, they have women leaders who have decision-making positions but that’s not the case for all tribes.” She thinks that “Native concepts of leadership are more about supporting the whole group, supporting the collective, supporting the tribe, and that’s different to western thinking.” She says,

> being faculty in higher education, it's all about the tenure and promotion process, centered on your work, showing what you’ve done, what's your record, what’s your title, individual achievements, the competitiveness. To me, it’s hard sometimes to really talk about my work in that way because it's not just me who did it all, I didn't get here by myself. I don't say, see I did it all by myself. I work with lots of people who have been supportive in different work environments. It seems odd to say, oh here's all the great stuff I've done. I wouldn't say that because it is not to diminish my own work, but it seems like bragging about how great you are.

Nancy sees higher education as “western leadership being more about making your mark as a person. How can you lead, getting ahead of others? How can you do things as an individual? Whereas leadership, in tribal communities, is generally about what can I give back. How can I improve things for everybody?” She says, “it's not about making myself look great. It’s about working together, supporting each other and improving things for the community.”

Nancy said that she wouldn't call herself a leader and that talking about it is a hard thing for her to accept that people would see her in a leadership position. She says, "I guess that's my role, my job role, that I am in charge of a department, and being a faculty member. I don't know if that means leader necessarily. I don't think so … It feels like leader is more of something you choose to do." Nancy speaks of her helping and supporting students and her colleagues and being there for Native people, advocating for them. She speaks of going the extra mile, that extra step for people on campus and in the community. She speaks of changes she made and will make in higher education. She says,

> I realized that I wanted to be in higher education because I didn't have that same opportunity outside of higher education. Early in my career is when I started to think, if I want to make change and I want to be the decision-making person and influence how Native people could be supported in services, policies, and spaces, I have to be in a leadership position and be a decision-maker. But even so, I wouldn't have said immediately that I want to be in charge, but if it means having the ability and the resources or at least to have a say at the table, then that's what I have to do. Maybe that's how I am helping and leading by doing those things. I had to see myself getting to that point.

Even though Nancy finds it difficult to label herself as a leader, her humility and actions speak volumes about her commitment to the community, working together, supporting each other and making improvements, particularly for the Native community. Her journey in higher education, driven by her desire to influence change and advocate for Native people, underscores the importance of being in a leadership position to shape policies and services that benefit the community. Nancy is a leader.

Veronica

Veronica describes leadership in a few ways. One is "that sense of leadership, that sense of matriarchy, that sense of inherent power, not power over, but power with, and that balance part of it. I think that's something that is strongly ingrained in me and I carry that into my work practice." Another leadership description she liked, she says,

> came from a tribal leader, who talked about being a leader. It isn't something you intend or something you expect to happen to you. It's something you mature into. It's a natural role that you are either asked to fulfill by your peers or naturally fall into. A leader is like the tip of an arrow. Your community is the shaft and the other parts of the arrow. You become the first one, at the front, which means all good and bad things. You're the first one to feel the benefits, but you also are the first one to protect everybody who comes behind you.

She says, "I really like that image of the arrow, which I think is really meaningful. But I think for me, given that image, I think of a leader as somebody who guides from behind, somebody who facilitates. Somebody who helps create pathways or helps others find their own path. I see it more of a facilitation role." Through Veronica's lens as a Native woman she visualizes leadership like water.

> Water can be a gentle stream, or it can be just a drop and it has the ability to carve things, make things very grand. It's definitely humility, humble, humble leadership. I definitely think that it's really important to experience things, to teach from your own experience. My grandparents never stopped me from doing anything bad or anything stupid. They would say, well, go ahead and do it and then you can teach other people and you'll know why we tell you not to do it. So definitely teaching from experience.

Despite the many leaders in her life and her own definition of leadership and what she thinks as qualities of a leader, Veronica did not visualize herself as a leader or being in a leadership position. She says, "to be honest with you, I still struggle with that, even now." But Veronica says she thinks her leadership role may have started when she was a staff member. She says,

> I realized I had a choice between sitting back and doing what I was told versus coming up with my own ideas and sharing my ideas. I like to challenge myself. I like to think about how I could do things better. I made a conscious choice to open my mouth basically and give input. I could have just kept it quiet the whole time and just kind of gone through the motions. I don't know if I'm a reluctant leader, I wouldn't say that. I know some people are pushed into it. But I think that, if we don't do it, who is. We're just going to continue to realize that this system is not generous or supportive to Native people like us or to Native students. I feel like it's a tremendous amount of responsibility, but at some point, somebody has to step up to take that challenge.

Then she acknowledged that she definitely became a leader when she stepped into her position. She said as a graduate student and staff member the faculty and professors presented opportunities to her, opened the door for her, and she walked through it. She said because of that she is at her job today working with Native people in a Native organization. She said,

> there were a lot of things that needed to get done and there was nobody to do it. My director would say we really need this and there's nobody to do it. Would you like to give it a try? I would do it. She said we need more faculty. We need to bring in research dollars, do you want to give it a shot? That was how I became faculty. So, it's just recognizing opportunities, being scared, but still doing it. Also, I think having a very firm understanding of who I am as a Native woman, as a daughter, as a granddaughter that was what helped me, really being centered and connected to my own identity. Now, I know what to fight for and I know what matters to me. I can advocate for my own boundaries.

With these words Veronica is a leader. She embodies inherent power, not power over but power with. She is the tip of the arrow, at the front, the first to feel the benefits and also the first to protect everybody who comes behind, the shaft of the arrow. She is the droplet of water that has the ability to carve things, to make things very grand.

Dineena

Dineena doesn't think of leadership as one definition. She explains:

> when I think of a leader, I think of people who are wise, generous, kind, working towards the common good, and someone people trust to have good opinions. Somebody who can help people and make the best choices to benefit everybody. A leader does not think of themselves first. They think of the group first. You are there to help your community and to help other people. That's the primary value of leadership. It's not for you to be successful, to make money, or to be a big name. I think from my perspective, a preference for the poor, a preference for Native people.

Similar to the other women, Dineena expresses that she doesn't think of herself as a leader, nor does she actively consider herself to be in that role. Even so, she does humbly acknowledge it. She says, "I feel like I fell into it, I know I technically am. I have a

leadership title, which means I have some small positional authority, not a lot." She acknowledges her leadership qualities.

> I would say the thing that makes me a leader is that I can get work done in groups. I can help motivate, inspire people within the groups, build support, strategize, acknowledge people's capabilities and reach our goals. Also, I think, for me, what made me feel like a leader was my ability to see others' strengths. It was also important that I know my own strengths. I think that's probably when I started to think more of myself in leadership.

Dineena speaks of the expectations of leadership in the Western world especially in higher education.

> You have more expectations put on you the longer you're in the field. You have things that people expect after a while. I initially never spoke up. I've always been very quiet my whole life. I've been very shy and reserved. I had to force myself not to be that way when I got into professional life because it's not acceptable to people to be that way in higher education. It's not tolerated. It took a while for me to speak up. Which wasn't ever a problem with my parents or Native people. They never had a problem with me not saying anything. It was never an issue, but it became an issue.

Dineena further discusses leadership post-tenure, emphasizing the shift in focus towards junior faculty members. She highlights the transition from being supported to supporting others, emphasizing the responsibility to motivate, assist, and advocate for their success. This shift marks a significant change in perspectives and priorities.

One of the challenges that faculty face in their leadership role, Dineena says, is rejection. She said,

> it's something that I had to get used to, getting rejected a lot. I feel like that's a higher education experience that everybody has to come to terms with, papers get rejected, ideas rejected. You have to learn to deal with it. Certainly, as a leader in higher education is getting rejected. But you just try again, try a different thing, keep going. It keeps happening. You have to learn how to handle it or you can't be in higher education.

While Dineena may not identify herself as a leader, she does humbly recognize her leadership role and responsibilities as faculty. Now, as faculty, as a mentor, as a leader, she is

confident. She is no longer shy. She engages. She speaks her mind. Now, when her ideas get rejected, she can handle it. She is changing the culture of higher education rather than it trying to change her. She does not think of herself first. She thinks of the group first. She is smart, kind, generous, and helps others. Dineena is a leader.

Native Women's Perspectives on Leadership

Each of the women offered their unique perspectives and insights on leadership in higher education. Through their lens and voices as Native women, they shared their definitions of what constitutes a leader and what a leadership role encompasses. They also defined Native leadership through their lens as a Native woman. Additionally, the women conveyed their experiences and perspectives on higher education leadership through their own experiences navigating leadership roles as faculty.

Some commonalities developed regarding the women's perspectives of what defines a leader. Everyone agreed that a leader is opposite of power. They described a leader as humble, generous and kind, someone who listens to people, has compassion for others. Each also provided these definitions of a leader. A leader inspires within a group, is a wise person. A leader "does not think of themselves first. They think of the group first." A leader is a thinker, is strategic, is insightful, and makes positive impacts. A leader is articulate, motivates others, "bolsters people, bolsters the community." A leader knows people's strengths and their own strengths. A leader can admit errors, can find ways to grow even through errors. A leader is someone that is in a position to be influential. A leader has a guiding vision, guiding purpose, working and bringing people together. A leader is ethical, responsible, accountable, and trustworthy.

Next, the women shared their perspectives on what constitutes a leadership role. They all concur that in a leadership role one engages with people, supports communities, supports Indigenous communities, gives back to the communities, and has commitment to communities. Each of the women also offered their perspectives of leadership roles. A leadership role can be a supervisor, or a person in a group or a person in the community. Having a leadership role means bringing positive change, maintaining positive spaces, doing the work, being a mentor, supporting students, colleagues, and people, and supporting initiatives. Being in a leadership role means to see the big picture, assist others to see their potential, help people move in the right direction, towards a common good, and make the best choices to benefit everybody. It is "not power over, but power with." This contrasts to Western concepts that power, in this case, power over is often "synonymous with leadership" (Northouse, 2016, p. 10).

The women also shared their perspectives of Native leadership through their lens as Native woman. All agree that Native concepts of leadership are about supporting the whole group, supporting the collective, supporting the tribe. Everyone is part of a collective, working together towards a common goal, and supporting each other to achieve a shared goal. Leadership is about improving things for the communities and giving back to the communities, particularly your tribal community or Indigenous communities. It is not about putting yourself above others or making yourself look great. Much less, it is not for you to be successful, to make money, or to be a big name.

One alternative viewpoint from Veronica of Native leadership was that:

> it isn't something you intend or something you expect to happen to you. It's something you mature into. It's a natural role that you are either asked to fulfill by your peers or naturally fall into. A leader is like the tip of an arrow. Your community is the shaft and the other parts of the arrow. You become the first one, at the front, which means

> all good and bad things. You're the first one to feel the benefits, but you also are the first one to protect everybody who comes behind you.

She also expressed her perspective of Native leadership with symbolism of leadership in relation to water, “water can be a gentle stream, or it can be just a drop and it has the ability to carve things, make things very grand.” All the women expressed that Native leadership was emphasizing a preference for Native communities, advocating for Native people, and a preference for the poor.

There are some commonalities of leadership definitions between these women’s perspectives and the Western approach. Similarly, Northouse’s (2016) definition of leadership is a non-linear interactive event unfolding within groups having common goals and a mutual purpose which corresponds with the perspectives of these Native women. However, the perspectives on Native leadership held by these women diverge from conventional Western leadership principles because “power is a concept that people often associate with leadership [and] common for people to view leaders and people in leadership positions as individuals who wield power over others” (Northouse, 2016, p. 10). “Power over” does not apply to Native leadership but “power with” is essential. Everyone is different. Cultures are diverse. With “factors as growing global influences and generational differences, leadership will continue to have different meanings for different people … Leadership is a complex concept for which a determined definition may long be in flux” (Northouse, 2016, p. 5).

Additionally, higher education leadership developed as the women articulated their perspectives and experiences in their role as faculty. They all spoke to the Western concept of assuming a leadership role and taking on leadership responsibilities. The Western concept focused on the work, individual achievements, making your mark, track record, title,

personal advancement, recognition, reporting every detail of your work for tenure review, all immersed with competitiveness and getting ahead of others. It is all about tenure and promotion. Two of the women spoke to leadership post-tenure emphasizing the shift in focus towards junior faculty members. They highlight the transition from being supported to supporting others, emphasizing the responsibility to motivate, assist, and advocate for their success. This shift marks a significant change in perspectives and priorities.

Several of the women discussed the challenges they encountered in speaking up, expressing their opinions, and battling imposter syndrome as they stepped into their faculty leadership roles. One woman explained, “I initially never spoke up. I've always been very quiet my whole life. I've been very shy, socially awkward, and reserved.” She related the necessity of forcing herself to overcome these traits because as faculty in a leadership role it's not acceptable to people to have that kind of disposition in higher education. She states, “it’s not tolerated.” Another challenge that faculty face in their leadership role is rejection. One woman expressed that it’s a common experience in higher education that everybody has to learn how to handle because papers get rejected or ideas get rejected. As a leader one must learn to navigate and cope with such situations by “trying again, trying a different thing, and keep going. It will keep happening over and over again. If you can't handle it, you can't be in higher education.”

These women offered unique perspectives and insights through their own experiences navigating faculty leadership roles in higher education. Through their lens and voices as Native women, they shared what constitutes a leader, what a leadership role encompasses, as well as, their insight on Native leadership and higher education leadership. In consensus, the women described a leader who stands in contrast to the concept of power. A leader is

humble, generous and kind, someone who listens to people, has compassion for others. Other unique perspectives developed regarding the definition of a leader, emphasizing that a leader prioritizes the group's needs over their own; a leader bolsters the community; a leader can admit errors, can find ways to grow even through errors. In addition, the women agreed that a leadership role is defined by a commitment to community engagement, support, and advocacy. Other unique perspectives generated regarding perspectives of Native leadership, emphasizing that Native concepts of leadership are about supporting the collective, supporting the tribe and being part of a collective, working together towards a common goal, and supporting each other to achieve a shared goal. An alternative perspective was offered with symbolism of water in relation to leadership, "water can be a gentle stream, or it can be just a drop and it has the ability to carve things, make things very grand." Higher education leadership developed from the faculty roles held by these women. Holding a leadership role as faculty entails Western leadership concepts of focusing on one's work, individual accomplishments, making your mark, track record, title, personal advancements, all immersed with competitiveness that it's all about tenure and promotion.

In these discussions, leadership encompasses a commitment to community, prioritizing the group's welfare over individual concerns and accomplishments. It is "not power over but power with." These diverse perspectives provide valuable insight on the complexities of leadership within academia. As these diverse perspectives on leadership definitions and concepts developed, it will provide an understanding of leadership from a traditional Western hierarchical approach to a more inclusive and community-oriented approach from the perspectives of Native American women faculty in higher education. The

following developing themes of leadership intertwine with their definitions, insights, and experiences as Native women faculty in higher education.

Developing Themes of Leadership

This section explores the themes that developed from the six interviews: self-discovery and transitioning to leadership, leading in academia, collaborative leaders, and from adversity to assurance to advocacy. Previously, the women provided their perspectives on leadership definitions and concepts. This will extend our understanding of their leadership perspectives and experiences as faculty in higher education and how these concepts and approaches are interrelated to these developing themes. These themes encompassed the diverse experiences and strategies shared by these Native women leaders as they navigated their leadership journeys.

Self-discovery and Transitioning to Leadership

This section explores the first of four developing key themes, leadership development and transition, a commonality, for all the women in this study. I thought the women would initially identify themselves as leaders; however, they were humbly hesitant to call themselves leaders. The women often found themselves in a transition state, evolving from “not a leader” to embracing the identity of “I am a leader” and accepting leadership roles. This transformation is a pivotal aspect of their leadership development. In their path, they encountered having to figure it all out, constantly adjusting and adapting, and pushing ahead with gained confidence, taking on the challenges and grabbing opportunities encountered during this transition as a leader.

Native Women's Perspectives on Being a Leader

Rose says, "I didn't really internalize myself as being a leader. I don't really think of myself as that word, a leader." "I don't know if I ever visualized myself in leadership roles. I just do the work," says Emma. Alice says, "it's like you almost never want to be perceived as the leader … I don't know if I ever thought I would be a leader, or I don't know if I ever wanted to be a leader." Nancy says, "I don't know if I would have said that I'm a leader … talking about it is a hard thing to accept, that people would see me in a leadership position. Being a faculty member, I don't know if that means leader necessarily. I don't think so." Veronica observed, "I really didn't visualize myself as a leader, to be honest with you, I mean, I still struggle with that, even now." Dineena shared, "I have never really thought of myself as a leader. That's not something I actively consider myself to be."

In their leadership journey, the women did not visualize themselves as leaders or in leadership roles. I think some of the hesitation of visualizing one's self as a leader stems from cultural influences that emphasize modesty, humility, respect, collaboration, collective decision-making and shared responsibilities. The women defined and discussed this collectiveness and community-oriented leadership in contrast to the Western concepts and viewpoints of a leader and leadership roles. When talking about leaders and leadership, the concept of power and influence are associated. Because higher education has a "formal organizational system, the power position is the influence capacity a leader derives from having higher status than the followers have. Like, vice presidents and department heads have more power than staff personnel do because of the positions they hold in the organization. Position power includes legitimate, reward, coercive, and information power" (Northouse, 2016, p.11). Furthermore, if coercive is associated with what position power is

then that is not associated with Native leadership. Northouse (2016) defines coerce as "influence others to do something against their will and may include manipulating penalties and rewards in their work environment … Involves the use of force to effect change" (p. 12). Native leadership would prefer to lead from behind, empowering, supporting, and contributing to the collective. They do not think of themselves first nor do they place themselves above others. It's a positive within our Indigenous communities because you're always giving back and you're also receiving from your communities; there's reciprocity. Unfortunately, when you go out into the outside world people really value labels and titles. So, how does a Native woman balance cultural values of knowing that you don't need to be defined as a leader, but rather you serve, give back, and receive from your community. So, it's not a bad thing to not call yourself a leader. But also, in educational spaces or higher educational spaces that are white dominated spaces one may have to go against that instinct and call yourself a leader even though it feels uncomfortable. Because, literally, the women have different cultural values and walk in two different worlds and spaces.

In the interview process, the women did not initially state or identify themselves as a leader until halfway through the interview, when I asked them to describe their role as faculty in higher education and describe the ways they see themselves as a leader. Thus, I think as a Native woman and as a researcher serving as a messenger on these women's behalf and having an inherent trust, I'm giving them, in a sense, permission to call themselves a leader. So, in a way validating that it's ok to identify as a leader. I do identify them as leaders in the interviews. Also, the women acknowledged being a leader and having a leadership role because of their role as faculty, as an advocate for Native people, as mentoring and supporting students and colleagues, working with the community, and working with scholars

globally. Emma spoke of people who told her they saw her as a leader. Two colleagues said she has leadership qualities because of her academic and cultural knowledge. A healer told her the work she is doing is leadership. She acknowledged her leadership and said she "just does the work." Looking at myself as a Native woman, I think that I work with my own set of values in mind, all the time, so I'm coming from a place where my values weren't necessarily defined as someone with leadership or as a leader. We're not encouraged to be individualistic, ego-centric, assertive, or hierarchical.

Native leadership stands apart. As a Native person, I do not aspire to the Western leadership model, nor do I believe these Native women think in that regard. A new definition of leadership developed from the Native women faculty in this study. Characteristics of being a leader included: humility, unselfish, kind, respect, ethical, trustworthy, guiding vision, wise, community support, giving back to community, advocating for Indigenous communities, collaboration, collective decision-making, shared responsibilities, common goal, persistence, patience, resilience, power with. This view contrasts with Western views of leadership that focus on power (Northouse, 2016), hierarchy (Klenke, 1996). Also, there are not always positive connotations with the term leadership or leader. In Western spaces it's common for individuals to be labeled as the moniker leader based on factors such as higher pay, prestigious titles, or education from elite institutions. That's not necessarily what embodies leadership. So, these women are redefining leadership and letting Native women know that it's ok to advocate for themselves in spaces and jobs and say that they're leaders and that they can claim both sides of that. The duality of, yes, you serve the community and you're humble but you're also a leader. In this way, the women humbly call themselves a leader and accept these leadership roles as faculty.

Figuring It All Out

All the women expressed that in their higher education journey from the time they were students, they had to figure it all out and at times feeling like they were on a lonely path. Emma expressed that she encountered a lot of failures from the beginning while in college, as well as in her career, and “dealing with isolation.” Alice talked of her journey as a college student and as faculty. Alice recalled a distressing encounter when she was a student at an elite institution, following her passion of her research regarding her tribe’s oral history, her white male advisor showed academic dismissiveness and did not support her project. She spoke of her devastation and having to figure out what to do. She switched departments and her major and figured out funding, and continued with her project. As faculty Alice finds herself “in this in-between stage definitely having some kind of position of power and privilege that are right above a graduate student in terms of having a tenure track job.” She says, “but it's like I'm not quite there yet because it's at any point the institution could still boot me to the curb, so to speak. And so, there's a level of like precarity or a level of caution that exists. But I also have to balance that.” Rose indicated that she was in a bad place with no personal drive, lacking ambition. She flunked out of college and went home. This was an important time in her life when she had to navigate her path independently. She recalled it being a pivotal moment where she established a stronger basis for thinking about life, setting goals, challenging herself, and figuring it out. Being in an environment of Native people at the tribal college with students and staff who look like her helped her to figure things out and gave her direction. Nancy had supportive parents. They had confidence in her when she went to college, assuming she was very independent and she would figure it out. She said they didn’t think of the barriers but she figured it out. As for her career, in academia, she realized

there were different skills and experiences that were needed to move into certain leadership positions. She said, "so, then I had to figure out how to do that. Sometimes it wasn't easy." Veronica said, "you have to do it on your own. That's the academic system, right. I learned to teach myself … I would recognize qualities that I liked or skills that I liked, or questions that I had. Then, I would just try to teach myself those things or I would try to find a way to attain them." Dineena said, "I got a faculty job. It required teaching. I never thought I could teach. They required you to publish and in order to keep the job, I had to learn how to do that. I remember feeling really confused once I had my first professional position. I didn't know what I was doing. Overtime, I gained experience and learned what I could do."

All six women faculty talked about having to learn on their own the conventions of academia and their place in it from when they were students to when they became faculty. The hidden culture of academia was new to them, and some of them felt like failures, and others, through persistence and patience, came to understand what was required. During the process there was devastation and disappointment, but through their own determination they were able to figure it out.

Constantly Adjusting and Adapting

As the women were figuring it all out, the women also had to adjust and adapt to their new roles and responsibilities as a faculty. Emma says, "I've never wanted to be in any kind of administrative role. I'm learning a whole new understanding of the university. It's interesting, but I just want to do my research and my writing. You have to make choices. I think about priorities. It's good to learn other things and how administration works." Alice comments,

> I don't think I realized with the faculty the number of requests they get both to review articles and to review books, and to do these different things, and to come be on this

> panel, and to come do this conference, to do your own research, and the institutional service work like committee work and meetings.

Rose speaks of her adapting to her new roles and responsibilities throughout her life. She spoke to the adversities she encountered in her life, struggling with college, responsibilities as a mom, leaving her stable job, relocating, continuing her education, eventually, landing a new job, a new career. She adds, “I’m now faculty. Expectations within the position are sometimes really overwhelming emotionally, physically and mentally. I do like the field that I'm in but I still feel like I'm adjusting in a lot of ways.” Nancy says, “going through the tenure and promotion process, there's always different responsibilities and other responsibilities that I have for myself, in being a representative and supporting and advocating for my tribal community and tribal people in general.”

Much of faculty responsibilities and roles are adapting and adjusting to the university, to the job, to colleagues, to people, to family, to more expectations, and to changing times in the world. Faculty are constantly adapting and responding to student and institutional needs. Their role requires them to constantly adjust to new expectations, students, and scholarship while also maintaining additional responsibilities. For Native women faculty members, this can be especially true. Dineena mentioned that “more expectations are put on you the longer you're in the field.” These expectations can include serving on “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” committees for the university, mentoring Native students and colleagues, and serving as cultural representatives and advocates in their departments and beyond. Advocacy work can be at a local level within the university but can also require extra work at a tribal, state, and national level. Oftentimes, Native scholars and faculty are one of just a few experts in their field meaning the responsibilities to help their communities is urgent and necessary.

In addition, if you are a single mother like Rose, the urgency and the necessity of motherhood and parenthood carries extra responsibilities outside of work. Rose faced a multitude of challenges and pressures, navigating the balance between work and family responsibilities and juggling the demands. Rose recalled, when she was a graduate student, figuring out finances and childcare. She says, "I got on TANF. I got on food stamps. I got on all of it and the hardest part was the childcare and the move. I still have college debt and it's mainly because I had to have childcare while I was doing it." Rose also expressed that her "children had challenges in school and challenges without their father and there were difficult times." As a mother she was the center of the family. She had to raise them and balance school, work, and family. Although Rose did not explicitly state this, societal stereotypes and biases often designate women the role of caregiver and caretaker which can adversely affect their professional careers.

All in all, with the continuous process of adjusting and adapting to their new roles and responsibilities, these women have undoubtedly experienced emotional, mental, and physical impacts as they navigated through their journey in academia.

Pushing Ahead

As a faculty, as a researcher, and as a leader, in a multifaceted profession, changes are constant no matter who you are. Adjusting and adapting to these changes takes struggle, rethinking, makes one push herself out of her comfort zone, take on opportunities to be a better educator, a better researcher, and a better leader. The women in the study discuss some of their challenges, their undertakings, and their persistence to make it better for themselves as well as those who follow.

Emma commented, “I had a hard time learning how to write. So, those things were done just with persistence and a lot of failures, a lot of feeling like a failure. I think the broader picture is to be patient and to just keep at it, keep at a project, or keep at whatever you want to do, just not giving up” Emma also says, “surround yourself with people you respect who have an intellect that will challenge you and give you things to think about.” Rose mentioned her struggles of not being career minded, not having the desire to become anything and quitting school but through all that she credits her family, especially her mother, for supporting her and pushing her to overcome her struggles and to get a job and to continue her education. She says,

> I finally got a better foundation for being able to think about life, to have some kind of goals, and to push myself internally. It’s life, you do it, you just do it. It was hard. I knew the profession that I wanted to do. So, I was like let's just go for it.

Nancy mentioned it was hard to serve in a leadership capacity where she felt that other colleagues were more deserving to serve but she agreed to do it. Nancy says,

> If they think that I can do it and they trust me to do it, I guess, I should do it. Even though, it didn't feel like I was okay or capable of doing it. But I also thought, well, if this is how I contribute, then I need to do it. So, I made peace with it and I tried to also make the group feel welcoming to everyone. Not that it wasn't before, but I just think there's different ways where we can go about that. So, I tried to put my own sort of way to do things onto the role. So, that was surprising they asked me to serve in that position. And that involved planning meetings with campus administrators to address some of our issues. It was kind of scary in some ways, but I was thankful for the opportunity.

Pushing ahead for Veronica meant realizing the importance for Native people, Native women, and people from her generation to be able to be a leader, even though sometimes you are pushed into it. She says,

> if we don't do it, who is? We're just going to continue to realize that this system is not generous or supportive to Native people like us or to Native students. I feel like it's a tremendous amount of responsibility, but at some point, somebody has to step up to take that challenge.

Dineena mentioned the numerous times her ideas and papers were rejected and emphasized not giving up, staying persistent, until they were accepted. She also addressed her struggles with her shyness and not speaking up because academia doesn't tolerate such reserved behavior. So, she had to assert herself and overcome her obstacles.

Each of the women navigated their role as a student and as faculty by adjusting and adapting, pushing forward with persistence and resilience, having support systems from family, mentors, and peers, and embracing leadership opportunities by stepping up. All re-evaluating their role, stepping out of their comfort zone, and taking opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Building Confidence and Taking Action

These women figured it all out; they adjusted and adapted to their roles; they pushed ahead; drawing from their experiences they forged ahead emerging as confident leaders and taking action. The women shared their successful experiences, working through failures, dealing with biases and discrimination, confronting academic dismissiveness, persevering through struggles as a single mother, and grappling with personal obstacles.

Emma expressed her failures and always feeling like a failure especially when learning how to write. It took her many years to finish her dissertation. Through her academic career, she adjusted, she pushed through and figured it out. Today, she is confident, and she likes to write. In her writings she is an activist and advocates for Native peoples. She has written articles, written books, written essays, and helps her community and tribe with various writings and projects. She's done work with oral histories and work "to revitalize the language and reclaim knowledge." She is always there to help when called upon by her tribe and she contributes her knowledge, her critical thinking, her expertise in writing and she

gives back to help make changes. Through her trial and tribulations, Emma having "a tough skin," says it takes "a lot of patience for the process and that things don't happen overnight, and that whatever you do takes a lot of work. It takes a lot of persistence." With her tenacity and determination, becoming an accomplished writer, and stepping into a leadership role through her publications, people saw her work and validated her work. She said, "to me, that's a marker of what we say as Native scholars, that our work is ethical and responsible to our communities and our tribes." She delivered and gave back to the community.

Alice's experience was battling white male academics at two highly reputable colleges who didn't think much of her expertise and passion of her tribe's Indigenous knowledge and history. She described one incident of academic dismissiveness, biases, and discrimination.

> I was in a different major and I met with a white male academic who was my advisor my junior year. For my project, I told him I wanted to interview Native elders about segregation and their memories. He did not support my project. He told me to go to Native Studies or Ethnic Studies. I was kind of devastated. I met with another professor who I took a class from two years before and I told him what happened. He said switch majors to Native Studies, and he'll be my advisor, and he'll get me research money. That's exactly what he did.

Many Native scholars share similar encounters with bias and discrimination. She adds, "a lot of non-Native or western people will see Native American studies as an easy major. But it's what they don't realize is it is incredibly academic in terms of these oral histories and the documenting and the methods of carrying out the project." She emphasized a valuable lesson about academia "it's quote unquote progressive as academia seems, it's really not that progressive. And it's like you're lucky if you have supportive Indigenous or even anti-colonial thinkers." Through her figuring it out, adjusting, adapting, pushing ahead, her passion, persistence, cultivated confidence, she took action, her once-rejected project was

published. Most importantly, she credits the mentoring she received from supportive Native faculty members. She expressed, “it's really the people who believed I could do it and I think if I hadn't had that, I don’t think I'd be here today.” Furthermore, with self-assurance she expressed,

> At some point, I don't know when that was, in my 20s, I just stopped caring what people thought. And I was like, I'm just going to do this project. This is just who I am. Go ahead in the back of your head if you think I'm an XYZ type of person or faculty member. It's like, I know my value and I know the type of work that I'm doing is valuable and it's not gunna be silenced.

For Rose, it was figuring it all out for her and her kids which meant building confidence and taking action immediately. She recounted her struggles, challenges, and the necessary steps she had to undertake. Balancing the demands of caring for a newborn and a toddler, navigating a divorce, resigning from her teaching job, and recognizing her role as the sole provider for her kids. These were just the beginning. Added to that, having the wherewithal and determination to manage and assess her finances to relocate and enroll in the university where she previously struggled. All, overwhelmingly, taking a toll on her emotionally, physically and mentally. Despite these obstacles, she found the strength and resilience to pursue her master’s degree. She emphasized,

> I wanted to make more money so that I can support the life of my kids. I thought if I got a master's degree, the hope would be that whatever salary I was making as a teacher, I would be able to make 10,000 to 15,000 more. I applied to a program, and they said they would fund me. I made plans, we moved, and I started school. It went fast. I finished in a year and a few months. So, I just went for it and got it, and switched careers.

Similarly, many Native women find themselves as mothers, some as single mothers, encountering similar challenges and somehow manage to persevere, finding confidence, and taking action in their own unique ways.

Although Nancy is a little uncomfortable about her leadership role, she does have decision-making ability to support and advocate for Indigenous spaces, projects, and efforts. Although she feels that she isn’t at the same level as her faculty peers she does take actions and advocate for Native students and Native communities.

> I see myself as a leader in a job role that could have administrative responsibilities … that lead to decision-making ability to manage my work with Indigenous projects in a way that's respectful and how I do that. I have to be in that position to make those decisions. So, in a way, I am a leader guiding those things. I think of our campus faculty who have been here for many years. Some of the stories I heard from them and some of the things they had to deal with. I’m like, Wow, they're the leaders! I think about one of our faculty and her language work. I can’t imagine all the things she's had to do to advocate for her space, for her funding, for her time, to do the work she does to support Indigenous language teachers. She's done so much work to support that. That's why I feel uncomfortable sometimes to say I’m a leader because I think of people like that or other faculty. These people that have really sustained time and record doing and being involved in a lot of projects and efforts on campus that I feel like I'm not in that same group. But I guess I, too, give myself that space. In my role … I have raised issues and concerns and tried to support and do different things in my job that support Native students and Native communities. So, as a leader, I try to use my small leverage that I have and use it for that. It's not about me. It's about supporting those issues and people.

Veronica takes action by sharing her ideas, voicing her opinions, and giving input. She says,

I suppose when I did, it was probably when I was a staff member when I realized I had a choice between doing what I was told and just sitting back versus coming up with my own ideas and sharing my ideas. I like to challenge myself and I like to think about what and how I could do things better. So, there was a point in my life when I decided I should share this or else nobody's ever going to know. So, I decided I made a conscious choice to open my mouth and give input. I could have kept quiet the whole time and gone through the motions.

Likewise, the women in this study echoed similar sentiments, as they cultivated confidence and self-assurance to speak up and take action. They challenged themselves much

like Emma who was told she couldn’t write and became an accomplished writer, or like Alice who pursued her passion despite facing prejudices, ultimately seeing her work published.

Dineena mentions before her career began, she was a TA and she was scared of teaching and being in front of people but she pushed herself to become comfortable. Today, through her determination, pushing herself, and years of experience, Dineena teaches courses. She also expressed challenges with publishing, “you’re required to publish. I never intended to do any of that, but in order to keep my job as faculty, I had to do that. So, I learned how to publish.” Since then, Dineena has published journal articles. Dineena also comments,

> I got help from people who I worked with who were really kind to me and I also experienced people who weren't so helpful. As I went along, I would learn better how to deal with people through experiences. I saw it as maturing, learning how to act. So, learning how to not respond in anger, learning how to watch people and see what they need, to be kind, and learn what that is for different people. I think that, over time, to me, a lot of it is about emotional maturity. It's about knowing, about listening to other people, and learning how people think and feel.

This section focused on thematic findings related to leadership development and transition among Native American women faculty in higher education. Initially, Emma, Alice, Rose, Nancy, Veronica, and Dineena expressed reservations about being leaders but navigated a path of self-discovery and embraced their leadership roles. The women went through a transformative process, evolving from a perception of "not a leader" to embracing the identity of "I am a leader." Their path involved perseverance and resilience, figuring it all out, dealing with constant adjustments and adaptations, pushing ahead, cultivating confidence, and taking action. With these attributes, self-discovery and transformation, they faced challenges and seized opportunities in their leadership journey. Individual stories showcased the diverse paths these women took to leadership. Emma emphasized persistence

and learning from failures, while Alice highlighted the importance of supportive mentors. Rose's journey involved making tough decisions for her family, and Nancy acknowledged the discomfort of leadership but recognizes her role in supporting Indigenous spaces. Veronica and Dineena stressed the value of voicing opinions and continuous learning. The study underscored the continuous changes in academia and the importance of perseverance, resilience, and a supportive network. In summary, the study captures the dynamic process of Native women faculty in academia transitioning into leadership roles, emphasizing the challenges faced, the need for adaptation, and the importance of resilience and support in their leadership journeys.

Leading in Academia

The second developing theme was academic leadership. As the women transitioned into and accepted their leadership role as faculty, their role intersected with academic excellence, institutional service, mentorship, and challenges in their academic roles. In this section, academic leadership refers to the participants' roles and responsibilities as they held leadership positions within higher education. In their journey, these women play crucial roles in shaping and guiding the overall direction of higher education and institutions as they foster a positive learning and research environment ensuring educational success and remodeling institutional structures to be more inclusive and equitable. Their commitment extends to student success, scholarly activity, community engagement, collaboration and societal impact, all the while, upholding adherence to academic standards and regulations. These women exemplify adaptability and work towards overcoming obstacles. Through their dedication, these women contribute significantly to the transformation of higher education into dynamic, inclusive, and forward-thinking hubs of learning and research.

Role as Faculty

Each of the women in the study spoke of their role as a faculty. They expressed expectations to excel, going through tenure and promotion, teaching, publishing, research, community engagement, and making societal impacts.

Emma mentioned that she's always working on several research projects at once. One project she mentioned was to revitalize the language and to reclaim knowledge where she talked with an elder for oral history research, transcribed and translated the language to English. Not only does she have research responsibilities, she has an administrative role that takes her away from what she really likes to do. She says, "I just want to do my research and my writing. And right now, I'm not able to do [that]. I have to put it off because I said I was going to do these other things. But it's good to learn other things and how administration works."

Alice referenced her oral history research in Native communities "interviewing elders about the lived experiences of racial segregation. So that way, we have the memories of what it was like when there were signs that would say "no Natives and no dogs allowed," She says, "in my writing, I can give voices to the women because I think the writing is a form of justice." In her role as faculty, publishing is required, she says, "it is incredibly academic in terms of these oral histories and the documenting and the methods of carrying out the project … it did publish in a Native Studies journal … my first publication. It was an anthology with other Native scholars." In addition to research Alice notes the importance of having funding for graduate students to carry out oral history research: "in terms of becoming a leader … I'm trying to perpetuate if there's some kind of pipeline in terms of making sure we have oral history work or making sure grad students have funding that we can have those resources and

we can make it happen." She also spoke of possibly working with other institutions who reached out to her to "being a co-sponsor [and] work with scholars across the globe, North America, Europe, South America, and Asia, to work together … on Indigenous migration histories."

Rose described her tenure review process and the push for publication and the importance for her work to be substantial and influential. As mentioned earlier, the work of a Native scholar can be dismissed or perceived as lacking rigor or credibility. Rose says, "I see myself as a leader that embodies, you walk the talk. That's what I want to be. I'm hopeful that my work will speak for itself, kind of a leader." Going through a tenure review process can be stressful and nerve-racking but Rose seemed to handle it with a positive outlook, remaining focused on self-acceptance and continuous improvement, and expressing a willingness to handle negative feedback constructively. She says,

> I just went through a review period … understanding what the requirements are for me to reach the midpoint and then promotion and tenure. I'm just now starting to understand the requirements of it. There is the push for publication … I can tell that the expectation is that I should have published more from the time I was hired … And, at my previous employment, there was no expectation of publishing. So, now I'm expected to publish, which is fine. I'm excited to, but I do need my thoughts to be clear. I don't want to be murky, and I don't want to just be publishing for publishing sake. I want it to be substantial in the work that I'm actually doing and how is it going to be influential. So, I'm actually writing right now ... I have another thing that's in motion already. It should be published next year. It feels like there should be more. When you read other people's promotion and tenure packets and mid probation, I mean, people really elaborate, and they can really tell everything. If there was a competition in that, I cannot see myself as being like everyone else at this point. The promotion and tenure committee and tenured faculty were looking at my review packet. They gave me ones all the way and I looked at the one and what it said, and it said something like I'm progressing, as I should. So, I just took those words, and I was like there's nothing negative about those words. So okay, I'll just keep on going. That's it. I'm going to accept myself as is. If it comes to where I'm receiving negative feedback on my progress, that's fine, because I know that I'm moving forward. Nonetheless, I'm always going to try to do my best.

Nancy discusses the importance of recognizing Indigenous methods in academia, particularly in promotion, tenure, and research, suggesting a need for a commitment to value diverse research methodologies. She shares her personal challenges faced during her own tenure process, where colleagues questioned the validity of Indigenous methods. Nancy also expressed the difficulty of deciding when to speak up on such issues and mentioned the additional challenge of being advised to remain silent until receiving tenure. Nancy advocates for a more inclusive and understanding approach to Indigenous perspectives in higher education. Nancy states,

> working together with Native colleagues on campus regarding Native issues and concerns that departments should recognize Indigenous methods for promotion and tenure, and research … It's very department dependent, college dependent thing, where it should just be across campus, to say, we value this, this is a valid methodology to do research.

Like others, Nancy experienced academic bias and dismissiveness from colleagues. She expressed,

> colleagues didn't recognize or value Indigenous methods during my own tenure review process. I had to really make a case for why they're valid. And having a colleague imply, you keep saying you're Native throughout your whole packet. Why do you need to do that? Why do you keep saying that? Because I can. That's why I'm here. That's important to me. If I cannot have this job tomorrow, I'm still who I am. That's who I am. So, I'm going to include that. That's who I am. So, just having to explain some of those things, which is fine to explain and educate. But I guess it really depends on if somebody is coming to you with curiosity and they're just really wanting to learn versus this was sort of like being questioned, is that a thing, is that real.

Recognizing and valuing Indigenous research is important because it documents and sheds light on historical and ongoing injustices faced by Indigenous people. Such documentation can inform, create policies, and address inequities. It creates community empowerment involving their collaboration, control of the research process, and ensuring research benefits their community. And it's important to have unique perspectives, insights,

and approaches that contribute to the broader body of knowledge and challenge dominant paradigms.

Nancy emphasized a crucial aspect that might resonate with Native scholars who have personal challenges of when to speak up and advocate for their rights. She expressed,

> I think it's a challenge to have to pick your battles about when do you speak up and fight about something or really try to engage with whatever the issue is or the conversation, and sometimes it's just not worth it. Or there's been my experience when you're not tenured and really being told, don't say anything. Don't push it until you get tenure. Because you don't want to have people see you as being argumentative, defensive, so really being told to not say anything until you get tenure. That's a challenge when you know there are issues that are very controversial, [especially for the Native community]. This happened before I was tenured. It was really hard to have conversations about the issue and explain why it was so problematic and you're being told not to say anything.

For Native faculty, this presents a particularly challenging and a contradictory dilemma. On one hand, academia may allow for speaking up, yet on the other, it imposes silence. Native scholars serve as representatives of their community and have responsibilities to their community. They shoulder the burden of responsibilities both to their people and to their academic roles as faculty including navigating the tenure process. The ultimate goal is to attain tenure, to be a professor. Consequently, it’s difficult for a Native scholar to be silent on matters regarding Native concerns. They are the advocates. They are the leaders to effect change not to be silenced. Thus, academia must embrace their voices and support their endeavors.

Veronica manages multiple research projects in her job. She mentioned that she worked her way up to being faculty because early on as staff “there were a lot of things that needed to get done and there was nobody to do it.” Her director presented her with responsibilities and opportunities, and she took advantage of each situation. She says, “so, it's

just recognizing opportunities, being scared, but still doing it." Veronica doesn't' consider herself a traditional classroom teacher. She sees herself more as a researcher. She says,

> I feel like even in research, I'm learning and I'm teaching. And so, I think that's one of the main ways I see myself as … not just learning this for myself … to climb the ladder … to go to the next step … or to make more money. I'm learning this because … what I'm learning through my research or through my observations, I have to pass on to the next person behind me or to all the students … I think some of the other things too like advocacy, making sure that we advocate for other people who look like us. You know, other Native people, other women, people of color, people from rural areas … No matter how many ways you slice it, somebody connects to you for some reason and it's important to set those up for them.

Dineena spoke earlier of her passion for working in education for over twenty years. She had a lot of positive experiences. She has many years of experience in teaching, writing, publishing, and research. In her first job, she started out teaching and in the next job she was teaching and publishing. She says, "I was able to publish, and I had some success with that. And I found out that I like research and I like thinking and I'm not bad at it. And so, after that, I was able to move into my current position … and I do research … and I got tenure." Her research and writing have led her to publishing opportunities. Thus far, she has several articles under her belt and a couple of books. In her role as a faculty, she, too, has to multitask and juggle several projects, build programs, build courses, supervise people, and work with many people, including students, colleagues, leadership, campus administration, and the community. One of the things she advocates for is the need for:

> Indigenous researchers using Indigenous methods ... I think it influences higher education, you want to see it going that way. You don't want to see these other things trying to change us. You want to see us changing the system … I would love to see us change the culture of higher education rather than it trying to shift us. So, if we could bring some Native values to higher education, where we're supporting each other and we are valuing the community over individual success, where we are bringing and still honoring traditions, and still honoring those who came before us. I think that those things to me would be really valuable.

What Dineena advocates for emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing Indigenous research and Indigenous researchers. This fosters an inclusive environment that can only enrich the institution and cultivate diversity and equity. She gives an example of perhaps integrating a different perspective of institutional values.

> I think that one of the things that I find problematic with western institutions is that they have these generic values stated. I don't feel like they really uphold those values. I also feel like there's all these unstated values that they don't articulate for us and so we don't know what they expect. Whereas at Diné College, you go there and if you're not Navajo, I mean, almost everybody is, but if you aren't Navajo and say you're a faculty member out there, you know how you're supposed to act. Because they tell you they wrote that down. They give you those values because that's what they expect. And for me, I would like us, I would like to see more of us actually living up to our values and having values that I believe in as well.

Mentoring

Faculty members are expected to excel in their academic roles, which typically involve teaching, conducting research and publishing, and service. Academic excellence implies a deep understanding of their subject matter, effective teaching and research methodologies, and the ability to contribute meaningfully to the body of knowledge in their field through research. Due to their roles and academic prowess, these women assumed the role of mentors, actively engaging with students, colleagues, and the broader community. As part of their role as a faculty, mentorship was important for their own success to obtain tenure as well as mentoring students for their success and extending mentorship to the community to have a successful relationship with the institution. The women discuss their mentorship experiences.

According to Emma, mentorship is:

> to be accessible to students and [they] come with all kinds of qualities and limitations. Sometimes you have students that are just ready to go. They're experienced. They can do the work. They don't need very much direction. And then you have other students

> … they constantly need direction and mentoring and firmness … And so that's one thing about being a professor is working with students.

She also commented on networking with people and receiving support to talk over frustrations or reaching out to people who will challenge you intellectually. She says,

> you do the work and then you draw strength from each other. You look to people that you respect for your spiritual and mental well-being. You make sure that you surround yourself with people you respect who have an intellect that will challenge you and give you things to think about. I think that's always been important to me is to surround myself with … my relatives, my friends, my colleagues who I'll call, and we'll talk about ideas, or I'll be grumpy and I'll call [a colleague] and say I need to rant … and then we'll start talking and laughing … and so, it always makes me feel better. This week I had a conversation with a colleague … he was willing to talk to me about my project that I'm working on. He was really direct with me and sometimes you just need to hear that. So, those kinds of people whose thoughts that challenge you.

Alice was also a mentor and mentee in several Native communities engaging with and listening to people and elders and giving back using her writings as social justice. She indicates,

> I started the oral history projects interviewing elders about their lived experiences and visited different tribal communities. I had a summer research grant and so I was also receiving mentorship from a Native organization for the research I was doing and meeting with them to make sure my research was ethical and right and going through the types of questions I was asking. And I think that was really eye-opening because even though I had grown up in [the area] … I hadn't really been to these communities. I was also working with community-based organizations … and I formed these partnerships to work with them.

She also spoke of mentorship from faculty who were very supportive of her and believed in her. She described,

> mentors supported me, found research funding, and cared about the type of work and projects I was doing. They believed I could do it. It’s like where I said, I really want to do this and they were, here’s the resources, go make it happen. Here’s the money, go do it. And I think if I hadn’t had that, I don’t think I’d be here today.

Alice adds that as a mentor to Native women who want to become leaders she would:

> help them to make sure that they have the research funds available to make the project happen, to put the plan together, to apply for external grants, if they need to go over their essays, to make sure that they can receive these funds, and to make sure that these projects are working within the community.

She also emphasized:

> working, partnering with community-based organizations, partnering with other Native peoples, and really doing collaborative projects. Because really the type of work that we're doing, it's only impactful if it's a collaboration. The Western concept of leadership, we tend to just think of one-person. But really the powerful types of work that are coming out, or the positive things in the community come from collaborations. And it's from people who can collaborate well and work well with others … I try to also be an approachable person to talk to, like with the grad students I have, to really listen to them, to help them work through problems, or work through their grant proposals and practice kindness for goodness sakes. Actually, why is it a rarity. I don't see kindness in academia. It's like honestly really depressing. And so, I try to practice that kindness and to practice the listening and to treat grad students like colleagues as well. Like if you can't dismantle the hierarchy structure even in your one-on-one interaction, right. Because it's like, otherwise the hierarchy is always there and it's always pressing on you and it's always a reminder.

Rose spoke of mentoring from a mother's aspect and receiving mentoring from her mother and family. She says it's "my responsibility as a mom … I have to embody what I'm hoping that my children will carry forth to be respectful to people, watch how [they] talk with people, [and] working to be the best person that [they] can be, whatever it is that [they] are." She also received mentoring from her mother at a time when she says she was:

> not career minded … didn't appreciate the world as it [was], and … didn't have any internal desire to become anything. My mom was always there as a support person. She recognized that I have my own critical mindset in thinking about things and she allows for that. I know she will always be there for me all the way through her life to push, to encourage, to talk with, and to be my support system.

Rose also comments on mentoring Native women who want to become leaders. She would:

> help another person to see themselves for maybe the ways that they don't see themselves … and to always be encouraging of a person. I really do think that the way that we're born is the way that we are from the time we come out of the womb. Whatever it is that we're born, that's what we are. And it takes some time to get to

> know yourself and be accepting of yourself … I would be encouraging or [look for] ways to assist a person.

Nancy speaks of having supportive mentors or leaders. She says it was valuable having supervisors that were helpful and developing your network of people.

> When I first got my job, my boss was really nice, very helpful, talked to me, and explained stuff to me, answering questions, and she didn't have to do that, but she did. She was a model for bringing your whole self into your role. She emphasized being grounded in a leadership position with your traditions and your culture guiding you is really important. And I have a network of people I can ask as professionals, as colleagues for help or support … It's really keeping in touch and building that network of people.

And so, Nancy explains that mentoring is impactful because her supervisor took the time to teach her and guide her, she is where she is today. She also recalled a colleague who said she worked with a Native woman, and she was influenced by her. The colleague didn’t know she could do a certain type of job or had that type of job as an option for her. Because of the Native woman’s mentoring and guidance, she has a career in higher education. Nancy comments, “and that's the impact that a mentor can have.” As a mentor herself, Nancy says, “as Native women faculty we can share things that we care about in our communities from our culture because we understand. We can advocate and work together to raise issues and to make change. That’s the benefit of it is the impact that you can have and also the ability to educate people.”

Mentorship for Veronica meant, “good mentorship and diverse mentorship contributed to her success as a leader.” She gives us her interpretation of mentorship for Native women who want to become leaders and her mentorship as a supervisor. She says,

> I would build an interpersonal relationship with them. Because when I mentor somebody, I want to mentor them honestly and openly. I don't want to hide what I've been through and what I go through on a daily basis. I want somebody who I can feel safe with, somebody who I know is going to honor my privacy, my confidentiality, and so that way they know that I will do that for them, too. So, creating safety in that environment, in that relationship. And I think … I want somebody who asks me

> questions. I have intellectual curiosity and I think I want somebody who is inquisitive and who's curious, to mentor, and not somebody who just wants to be told what to do and how to do it. That to me, it doesn't suggest that they are self-directed. I would like collaboration. When I mentor them, I try to create personal and interpersonal relationships. I try to demonstrate to them when I'm doing things, and how and why I say things that I say. And I always try to communicate my own limitations. If I'm struggling with something, I try to tell them, for example, we had a conversation today because my team wasn't answering emails or responding to emails. And so, I had to tell them, this is a difficult conversation for me, because I don't like to micromanage, and I personally don't like being micromanaged. However, this is not about micromanaging, it's about building relationships. I think it's important to really reframe things, so they have a bigger meaning. And that took a lot of practice for me. So, when I mentor, I try to explain why and how I make decisions. I also try to model things for them. So, I'm like you can't learn this from reading or from going to school. You need to come follow me and you and I need to drive out to the sticks, and we need to go out there and do this data collection. We both need to be over here with the homeless people asking them questions. We both need to do that. So those are things, not being scared to get into the weeds about things, too. Then also, I think being honest and open, of course, is always helpful for everybody, me included. But underscore all of this, it's really important to create safety, a safe environment, and that includes cultural safety.

Dineena speaks to mentoring and seeking out support from other Native people. She comments,

> I think I would probably look for their strengths and encourage them to develop those strengths and to encourage them to be unafraid, to bring their Native selves to work. Even if that's hard sometimes. I would focus on thinking about what they can do and work on that because everybody is going to be different. I think the other thing is to rely on the other Native people and other people of color who are in that community to help you and talk to them and really get to know them because they will have experienced similar things. And they will understand where you're coming from when you get frustrated or need help.

In summary, the women highlighted their experiences in academic leadership roles within higher education. The women navigated their roles as faculty and the expectations for excellence and to obtain tenure. This section highlights the diverse scholarly activities of these women in their role as a faculty and mentor. Emma engaged in oral history research to revitalize language and reclaim knowledge and emphasized the importance of community and support networks. Alice shared her experiences with challenging colonial structures and

advocating for social justice through research and community collaborations. Rose emphasized her experience of the tenure review process and focused on self-acceptance, perseverance, and family as sources of strength for navigating academia. Nancy highlighted her advocacy for a more inclusive and equitable academic environment that recognizes and values Indigenous research methodologies and perspectives as well as the importance of supportive mentors and leaders in her career. Veronica saw herself as a researcher, a lifelong learner and teacher, and emphasized learning shouldn't just be for personal gain, but should be passed on to others. She feels it's important to advocate for underrepresented groups and set them up for success. She underscored the role of open communication, cultural safety, and diverse mentorship. Lastly, Dineena, with her experience in education, emphasized her passion for research. She envisions a positive change in the culture of higher education by bringing Native values, supporting community over individual success, and honoring traditions and predecessors. She encouraged self-awareness, recognizing individual strengths, and building on cultural foundations.

Overall, this section provides insights into the multifaceted roles and challenges faced by Native women in academic leadership positions, showcasing their dedication to academic excellence, research, and advocacy for inclusivity and diverse perspectives in higher education. These women, change agents, play crucial roles in shaping the direction of higher education institutions, fostering positive learning environments, and promoting inclusivity and equity. From their lens we get a picture of their role as a faculty and the significance of mentorship in the academic landscape. This section paints a powerful picture of Indigenous women taking ownership of their roles as academic leaders and actively shaping higher education towards a more inclusive and equitable future.

Collaborative Leaders

The third developing theme was collaborative leaders. As the women have now accepted their leadership role in academic excellence, their leadership extends to a collaborative engagement with colleagues, people in the immediate community, Native American and Indigenous communities, and larger communities that include the campus, local and global communities. Their roles and responsibilities are all the more crucial in shaping and guiding the overall direction of higher education and institutions as they foster a positive learning and research environment, ensuring educational and institutional success and remodeling institutional structures to be more inclusive and equitable. The women are in consensus and committed to community leadership and community engagement. In this section the women discuss the importance of collaboration in leadership, working together with students and colleagues, supporting people and communities, and working with Native people and communities.

Emma strongly encourages community engagement and especially initiatives for Native and Indigenous communities. She says she "always tries to highlight people, highlight community people … I [invite] community members that come to the university to share their knowledge and their expertise … I think that as a leader you always highlight people. You always support them. You always open up space for people to share their knowledge and their expertise, to hold people up." She also works with students and for the most part goes out of her way to not only highlight them, support them, and mentor them but she says there are times you have to have limits. She says,

> because I think for me, you're working with students and them coming with their own histories. It's not just students, but it's also our people in our community that there's just so much need and there's so much poverty … And then having to put a limit on what my capacity is. I used to bring people into my house and then I would find out

> that they weren't respectful to me. They took advantage of me. And so, I tried really hard to have boundaries and limits … I'm not trained, as faculty, we're not trained. We're not health care workers. We're not therapists. So, we have to make sure we know what and where people can go to for help. I'm always dubious about exactly what kinds of help are available, but it's something that we constantly always have to deal with.

As a leader, Emma gives back to her tribal community by "drawing upon her education to support Indigenous nations and communities and to be ethical and responsible and accountable to her people". She talks of her own tribal community asking for her expertise. She says,

> my tribal community … called upon me and asked me several times on different kinds of things. And to me, that's a marker of what we say as Native scholars that our work is ethical and responsible to our tribal communities. So, when they called upon me and asked me to do something, I'm happy to do it because that's what we said, our education is for. So, that's one of my lived experiences that I'm really proud of. Also, just being able to deliver, people will ask me for a critical analysis. They'll say, what do you think of this? We were asked to offer a statement, a resolution to an issue, and a draft was written for me, and I looked at it and I revised it and sent it out and it made a difference in the community.

Alice was very community minded ever since high school. She says, "I'd say a lot of it started when I was in a lot of this kind of focus on Indigenous history and social justice for the Native community. I think a lot of it came from when I was in high school, and it was things that I saw in the news." Alice has since carried her work and passion into college and into her role as a faculty. She has done service work to the communities and collaborated with several Native American communities working with, talking to, and interviewing many people and elders and shared their narratives and gave them voices which otherwise would have been lost, but also, "a form of justice." One of her works was working with Native elders. She says,

> every time I do a research trip to a different place, I can put a photo album together of the place and some of the elders I've worked with. And then sometimes when I meet elders for the first time, I'll bring one of those photo books and I show it to them to

> show them the type of community work I do, and like working with community-based organizations in the area. And sometimes they even recognize people from boarding school even if they're different tribal geographies. They're like, oh, I knew this person from boarding school … you'll see those connections … It was a lot of love from the communities and support that they liked the oral history project.

In working with communities, Alice collaborated with many people. She had to ensure projects were within the community, partnering with community-based organizations, partnering with other Native peoples, and doing collaborative projects.

> Because really the type of work that we're doing, it's only impactful if it's a collaboration. The Western concept of leadership, we tend to think of one-person, right. But like really the powerful types of work that are coming out, or the positive things in the community come from collaborations. And it's from people who can collaborate well and work well with others.

Alice is also thinking ahead to the future generation, especially now that she's a parent. She says,

> as I became a parent and a mother. I really truly believe that we need to invest in the younger generation. We need to make sure that children are cared for, that they're provided for, that they have healthy meals, that they have safe places to go home, that they have safe schools. So, I would say that my idea of leadership has also evolved in terms of being a mother and like not just caring for my own children, but caring for children in the community.

Alice's passion for community service most likely came from the influence of her mother. She says,

> my mom being the leader … who inspires me … who I think of when I think of a leader, [she] had that educational experience with boarding school, and then going to college, basically, a full financial aid kit … and then went to a law program … ended up becoming a lawyer … she defends a lot of people from the Native community and that's something she's done for decades. So basically, I've always seen her as a trailblazer … she has her own law firm … and a lot of her clients are Native. And she's pretty well-known in the Native community. Also [she's] on the board of one of the organizations that provides food to homeless people in the [community]. And so, I've just seen my mom always involved in the … community and with humanitarian projects.

Alice thinks that a leader is “someone who works with communities and works to bring positive change or to maintain positive spaces within the community. So, it's not always change, but sometimes it can be just keeping positive flow within the community, too.” Not only is her mother a leader but Alice is a leader, too, following in the footsteps of her mother’s devotion for community service and work. Alice says,

> collaborations are what make us all stronger … to find ways to keep the collaborations going and to make sure that we can listen to each other and work together and respect each other, and also keep these solidarities together. Because that's how we're strong is by staying together and supporting each other.

Rose thinks some elements about leadership, as seen through her lens as a Native person, is “about how you are part of the collective … part of the organization … working towards something together. You don't view yourself as above other people.” She says,

> I've always felt that was important for growth … [in my job] I have to lead a team that's dedicated to projects regarding Native people. I have to continually learn about what research means for Native people and to be informed in that way and then to model it. So, in modeling it, we're working as a group to get to a certain point and that takes time … That's where you really find out more through other people and working with other people and thinking about it before actually getting to a certain outcome … and writing something as a collective that is published … That was to me an accomplishment, a big accomplishment.

Rose’s family always told her, “come back and work for Indian people.” She says that even though she’s not back at home on the reservation she is here working on campus where there's a high population of Native students and she can see the ways in which to serve Native students. She also offers her support to colleagues fostering collaboration and cultivating network for collective success. Rose says,

> we need more inclusion, more discussion talking, and participation as well. Whenever there's something that I see happening, then I make sure to go. A colleague has a book talk coming up next week, and I worked with her. So, I’m making sure to go. And I’m trying to make sure that I stay in contact with the Native programs and departments and see what kind of things they have going on … because there's a lot

> of really dynamic Native women and they're putting on different kinds of programming.

Nancy mentioned people she admired in the community who have influenced her in some way to support communities, make commitments to communities, advocate for Native communities, and to give back. Nancy talked of her supervisor when she was a student employee. She commented that her supervisor "brought her whole self as a Native woman into her role. She fought for what was right … She was an advocate for Native people and culture" which changed Nancy's life. Nancy commented on tribal leaders working toward improvements in their education system by obtaining their own school district and the collective hard work it takes to do that. Nancy also spoke of Deb Haaland, who is the first Native women Secretary of the Interior. Nancy said she:

> connects with [her] because she is bringing those values of our communities, tribal communities, to her work … she takes the time to listen and time to engage with people … Because how else do you know what's going on in communities you're working with, unless you take the time to do that. I think that's important to listen, to communication and to recognize.

With that kind of community and collaborative leadership that influenced Nancy, she, too, has made her path and commitment toward supporting communities and advocating for Native communities and giving back. Nancy has worked with students and colleagues on and off campus. She says,

> I'll support any students where I can. I'm going to help them. In the Native community, I'll introduce myself and let them know if they need anything, I'm happy to help … As a Native person, that's why I'm here because I want to provide support in a lot of ways that I got support, too. I want to continue that and give that to other people if I can … That's really important to me to do those things and take the time for them. That helps me keep going. Hearing from students even if I haven't supported them … hearing what they're researching or what they're working on or what they're needing, I always find that really energizing because it reminds me these are the ways that we can support them and then they turn around and do it for somebody else, you know, it's that circle … So that's important to me.

Nancy also worked with colleagues advocating for Native opportunities that include funding, policy changes, and improvements on and off campus. She worked with colleagues on the university's cluster hiring of Native faculty, collaborated on proposing state funding for a Native centered program plan, and advocated for the validation of Indigenous research methods as a methodology in research as well as promotion and tenure. She served on several committees in her department, on campus and in the community to make an impact, make changes, make improvements, and create opportunities. She says,

> I'll go out of my way to advocate for Native people in whatever way I can on and off campus. So that means if there's something that comes up at a meeting or I bring a concern to the table, or issues that need to be addressed, I will speak up. I'll take those opportunities, bring that advocacy, speak up for those who are not there, using my space at the table to raise issues and concerns and see if I can get people to understand what we might make better and improve our communities.

She added, "there are responsibilities that I have for myself in being a representative and supporting and advocating for my tribal community and tribal people in general. So, all those things are part of me being on campus and serving in this role as a Native faculty." Nancy reaffirmed that:

> Native concepts of leadership are more about supporting the whole group, supporting the collective, supporting the tribe … a guiding vision, a guiding purpose, bringing people together … different to Western thinking … In tribal communities, it's generally about what can I give back. How can I improve things for everybody?

She said, "it's not about making myself look great. It's about working together, supporting each other and improving things for the community." Nancy continued that it's important to her as a Native person to bring in the Native culture in her role and in her job and advocate for Native people and communities because that is why she is there to provide support and give back.

Veronica defined a leader as “somebody who’s in tune with the people … is a team builder. Somebody who knows how to collaborate and construct teams and motivate folks.” Veronica makes sure that she:

> advocates for other people who look like [her] … other Native people, other women, people of color, people from rural areas, people from Arizona, I don't care. No matter how many ways you slice it, somebody connects to you for some reason and it's important to set those up for them.

She spoke of her experience in planning which entailed:

> developing some kind of vision and doing it together as a group. Collaborating and connecting with people and building … a tiny idea, collaborating with folks and turning it into something bigger. Designing spaces, places and things. So, it was all about starting from something very small to something very big. I think for leadership, you have to kind of do it the other way. You have to have a vision. You have to do the big picture and then you delegate it, or you engage other people to help you do … the details, the mechanics, the how.

She takes some of that experience into her work as a researcher and as a supervisor where “part of her work is teaching in community settings and … her research work and research experience is [done through] good collaboration outside with other universities.” As a supervisor, she works collaboratively with her employees. She says, “I don't like to micromanage, and I personally don't like being micromanaged … It's about building relationships.” She works side by side taking her employees out in the field saying:

> you need to come follow me and you and I need to drive out to the sticks, and we need to go out there and do this data collection. We both need to be over here with the homeless people asking them questions. We both need to do that … not being scared to get into the weeds about things, too. Then also, I think being honest and open, of course, is always helpful for everybody, me included.

Veronica is someone who is in tune with people, a team builder. She is somebody who knows how to collaborate and construct teams and motivate folks.

Dineena thinks of collaborative leadership as:

> people who are generous and kind … who are working towards the common good. I think of someone that people trust to have good opinions. They will be able to convince people of the right things to do without bossing them around. Somebody who can help people move a group of people in the right direction in a way that's going to benefit everybody. And [someone who] does not think of themselves first. They think of the group first. They know how to help the group make the best choices and they move them along that way.

Dineena thinks that "in terms of [her] own values around leadership, there's a sense that you are not by yourself … that you are there to help your community and you are there to help other people. That that's the primary value of leadership, that it's not for you to be successful and make money or to be a big name." She expressed being in a leadership position, collaborating on various tasks with people and instilling motivation and enthusiasm for projects. She has led search committees, and departmental initiatives, working alongside faculty members, administration, and the institution at large. She said she has had very positive experiences in her leadership role. Dineena also expressed another change that happens once you step into tenure:

> when you get tenure. You suddenly have to think about the junior faculty and you have to recognize that you have to help them and be supportive. You change from being the person that was being supported … You want to help them, and you want them to get through and be successful. I was a supervisor early on and that was actually very hard because it was hard to feel like I had the authority to supervise them. Because so much of the way higher education is structured around this tenured thing and the senior versus junior faculty and all of that.
>
> Dineena also reflected on her approach to collaborative leadership:
>
> the thing that makes me a leader is my ability to get work done in groups and that I can help motivate people and inspire people within the groups … I can get stuff done that way. I'm good at looking out and seeing where we could go and starting us on that path and getting people enthusiastic about it … I'm good at spotting people's capabilities and putting together a team because I can tell who's going to fill what role. I'm much more of somebody who's interested in the team winning than myself winning. It's always on a team basis.

Dineena would like to see in higher education and working together and bringing community in is to:

> bring Native values to higher education, where we're supporting each other and we are valuing the community over individual success, where we are bringing and still honoring traditions, and still honoring those who came before us. I think from my perspective there's a preference for the poor, a preference for Native people.

Dineena's vision would be to see "us change the culture of higher education rather than it trying to shift us … I think that those things to me would be really valuable."

In summary, six Native women leaders discussed and shared their views on commitment to collaborative and community-oriented leadership, with a focus on their experiences in higher education making positive impact on both academic and Indigenous communities. The women were in consensus emphasizing the importance of collaboration, community engagement, and supporting others over individual success. Their leadership styles draw inspiration from Indigenous values and traditions, which prioritize collective good and responsibility to the community. The woman shared personal stories of their leadership journey, highlighting challenges, successes, and lessons learned.

Emma highlighted the need for leaders to support and highlight others. She acknowledged the challenges of leadership, emphasizing the importance of setting boundaries and being cautious about providing support beyond one's capacity. Emma shared experiences of being called upon by their tribal communities, emphasizing the ethical and responsible use of education to support Native people and having positive impact on the community. Alice's leadership is influenced by her mother's dedication to community service and humanitarian projects. She sees leadership as working collaboratively to bring positive change and maintain positive spaces within the community. Alice values community engagement and collaborating with elders and Native communities, emphasizing community

empowerment. Rose emphasized the significance of "collective" leadership and working towards shared goals within institutions, unlike the Western model of leadership that often focuses on individual power and authority. Nancy emphasized her commitment to supporting Native communities. She advocates for Native opportunities, policy changes, and validation of Indigenous research methods. She sees her role as a representative for her tribal community. Veronica highlighted her leadership as team building, collaboration, and motivation, encouraging inclusivity and empowering others. She is a leader who is a team builder and advocates for underrepresented groups. She highlighted the importance of collaboration, delegation, and honest communication in leadership. Dineena valued working in groups, strategic thinking, and recognizing the strengths of others to achieve collective goals. She discussed Native concepts of leadership, focusing on supporting the collective, guiding vision, and bringing people together. She stressed the importance of improving things for the community rather than individual success. Dineena envisions bringing Native values to higher education, emphasizing support for each other, valuing the community over individual success, and honoring traditions. She hopes to change the culture of higher education to better align with Native values.

This section showcased diverse perspectives on collaborative leadership rooted in Native American values. It challenged traditional Western leadership models and offers valuable insights on building inclusive, community-centered leadership practices within higher education and beyond.

From Adversity to Assurance to Advocacy

The fourth and last developing theme was about overcoming challenges, failures, and inequities that these women faculty encountered. Throughout their professional journeys,

these resilient women leaders faced the task of overcoming a myriad of challenges, navigating through failures, and confronting pervasive inequities. Their narratives, shared in this section, provide an intimate insight into personal struggles which includes failures, racism, microaggression, systemic racism, isolation, toxicity and imposter syndrome. The women faculty unveil their experience of the obstacles they encountered, the setbacks they endured, and the injustices they fight against. As they delve into the fabric of their leadership experiences, they will continue to be resilient and take action to these persisting challenges. These women aim to inspire and empower others, fostering a collective spirit that transcends individual narratives and contributes to the broader discourse on women's leadership and societal equity.

Failures

Emma expressed her challenge with writing and feeling like a failure but with persistence and not giving up, today, she is an author of several essays, articles and books.

> Realize that it’s a process. You have to have a lot of patience for the process and that things don't happen overnight, and that whatever you do takes a lot of work. It takes a lot of persistence. It took me almost ten years to revise my dissertation into a book. And, then it took me a long time to write my dissertation because I had a hard time learning how to write. So, those things were done just with persistence and a lot of failures, a lot of feeling like a failure. I think the broader picture is to be patient and to just keep at it. Keep at a project or keep at whatever you want to do until you get to that point where you've done something … Just not giving up. Learning how to take critique and learning how to accept something that might be seen as a failure and then just do it again.

Rose previously discussed her challenges of failing college and lacking purpose in life. She did not give up and persevered, eventually returning back to the college she left and earning her master’s degree.

Stereotypes and Racism

Emma says, “you're always having to deal with their stereotypes and their racism about Native people or Indigenous studies, always challenges.

When Alice was in high school, she saw on the news the murder of a Native woman who was killed, mutilated, and sexually assaulted by a white man. She said, “the killer showed her dead body off to his friends and bragged about how he had murdered her, and the coroner compared Della Brown's head, that had been pulverized, to a bag of ice, so, really grisly mutilation.” It struck close to home for Alice because the Native woman looked like the women in her family. A white woman was also the victim of the serial killer who murdered Della Brown. What’s more, Alice said, “there was a sharp contrast between the way that Native women's bodies are perceived in society and the way that white women's bodies are perceived as more valuable.” She said that the killer was acquitted of the charges for his grisly murdering of the Native woman but was charged and convicted to a life time of prison for the white woman’s murder. Seeing such brutality toward Native women she “focused on Indigenous history and social justice for the Native community.” Which led to extensive research for her tribe, giving back a history of memories, making change, and bringing to light the voices that were not heard. Alice said, “I started my research project on lived experiences of racial segregation. So that way, we have the memories of what it was like when there were signs that would say “no Natives and no dogs allowed.” Not only was this a stark awakening to Alice’s young life, she would continue to see racism, systemic racism, microaggression throughout her life and her family’s life.

Alice also spoke of racism and systemic racism in the boarding school system that people in her family experienced as well as people she interviewed in her research projects. She says,

> I had thought about stories I heard in my family about segregation and how I never learned about it in school. And I thought, well, what do Native people have to say about segregation and racism and what's happening. What I found talking to people is without me asking about the boarding schools, they equated the boarding schools to racism. And then that's when I realized that there's something really toxic about segregating Native people while you're trying to assimilate them. Because that itself is a paradox where you are basically creating a racial hierarchy. Where Natives are racialized as a race to be assimilated because they're quote savage, but then they're never good enough to be white. So, I think that's what my academic and intellectual journey started as was the social justice component from seeing stuff in the news growing up where it seemed like there was no justice. I get frustrated when I see no justice.

Veronica voiced her thoughts on challenges she experienced in higher education. She expressed her thoughts on institutional racism.

> In this institution, I definitely know and have felt the tiring effects of systemic and structural racism. I definitely feel that on an everyday basis, it's embedded and ingrained in every single policy of the university system, higher education system. It wasn't intended for people like us who are community-driven with our own ways of leadership thinking and not always about the money. I definitely feel that every single day. It's very stark for me. So, we have to advocate for other Native people, other women, people of color, people from rural areas, no matter how many ways you slice it, somebody connects to you for some reason and it's important to set those up for them. And I think that's the way I see myself, especially in higher education.

Veronica experienced lateral violence. She remarks, “lateral violence is harassment, coming from other Native people, other women of color, from community members.” She also experienced people saying, she’s not Native enough, a part of the lateral violence. She expressed,

> As a Native person, you're constantly told that you're not Native enough. That's something that is still definitely there … because they're doing the exact same thing that's happened to our ancestors. Being told you’re too Native and now they're like you're not Native enough. So, just doing the same thing, you're perpetuating those values.

Veronica spoke on the challenge of tokenism.

> I do see a lot of people who tokenized me, who underestimate me, constantly. So, like the initial bias that people have is very clear. Like they see me. They're like, oh, you look like a little kid. You couldn't be a leader, or your skin is brown, you don't look like a researcher. And I'm like I'm a researcher, I've been doing this for 20 years. It's stuff like that, constantly, but that could be a good and a bad thing. You can surprise them and be like, ta-da, I know everything you think you know. You can't really surprise me. But that can be a bit of a challenge, sometimes. Things that are hard for me to deal with, I think, are not being paid what I'm worth. And I think I'm underpaid. I think that there's gender bias in this institution. I think that men start up way at a higher level than we do in pay. And, yet, I think that there's the issue about women as teachers. And it's like you're supposed to be in service to everybody else, including your colleagues.

Dineena elaborated about her research work and the challenges she encountered that was stressful, frustrating, tiresome, and scary. Dineena experienced misattribution.

> One of the things that happened with my work was that there was a certain part of my professional community that was extremely critical of my work and the work of me and my colleagues. They're supposedly progressive but they assumed I was white because our article and work were influential that they assumed that the people who were doing the research were all white. And so, they criticized us saying that we weren't thinking of diversity. So, it was really weird because we were being attacked regularly by white male scholars for the work that we were doing. They were getting up and giving speeches, conferences about how our work was terrible and saying our work was hegemonic. And a lot of these people were coming from elite institutions, when we were all working at public institutions or community colleges. Our work was based on our experiences working with students from extremely diverse backgrounds, different classes. It got really tiresome because they were criticizing us for being racist. And, they didn't know me because my last name sounds white. That was really hard. It was hard because there were articles published just to criticize my work. It felt very stressful. So, in a sense, I think that my work, there's a little bit of dismissiveness around it. It got canceled a little bit, not entirely, but it's still influential. At the time, it was very scary for me. I really do feel like it was based on the very racist assumption that somebody who's publishing important work is white. Because that's what they assumed. My name is not obviously Native. It's difficult because of that. So, I think that definitely was a challenge for me.

Dineena also spoke of her family where you can clearly see colonization quickly taking its affects over the generations with systemic racism in education, in the culture, and in their lives. She said,

> I was raised by two Native parents. My mother was raised on the reservation, my dad was not. He was raised in an urban area, and my grandparents on my dad's side, were both students at a boarding school, and then they eventually settled in the city where the boarding school was located, and they worked at the boarding school. So that's where my dad was raised. He actually spent a lot of time as a kid on the grounds of the boarding school. Both of my parents always worked in organizations where they were working mostly with Native people, and most of their socializing and everything was done with Native people. And so, I think that they just always preferred Native. Like if you had a choice, you would be with Native people. My mom was always a bit uncomfortable with white culture and my dad was just reserved. Mom was pretty poor growing up, no running water, no electricity (kerosene lamps and wood stove), mostly raised by her grandparents in a two-room house, 2 rooms, not 2 bedrooms. She always worked really hard, and she worked her whole life, from early teens. She eventually went to college in her 40s. My dad barely made it through college, but eventually he ended up in a leadership position in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. I admire them because they were able to make good lives for themselves with solid jobs without the advantages that many people are raised with. They were great parents, always came to all my kid stuff, always encouraged me to prioritize school, and let me choose my own path.

Microaggression

Nancy previously mentioned her encounter with colleagues during her tenure and promotion process having to validate her use of Indigenous methods and the colleague who questioned why she kept mentioning she’s Native throughout her tenure packet. Nancy didn’t mention that as a specific microaggression incident, but it is microaggression. She does comment, “there's just so much microaggression that come up, that are a challenge to my own confidence where I’m thinking to myself maybe I don't really know, maybe I am wrong, maybe I shouldn't be the one saying this” and creating imposter syndrome. She also spoke of an incident she encountered in a professional space, a colleague telling people that a Native person applying for a job had an issue with alcohol. She also adds,

> unfortunately, recognize there's still an uneducated and uninformed people when it comes to Native people, even nearby us. Because I guarantee wherever you went today, if you live in New Mexico, there's a Native person there. You run into uneducated people and … [you'll] have to decide, is it worth it to push back or educate them, or just leave it alone … because sometimes it's just not worth it. And so, you have to decide.

Dineena experienced microaggression in academia:

> I think that working in institutions that are white has been a challenge at various points. I've had some interactions with white supervisors that have not been great. I've had some people who felt threatened by me for various reasons. I've had weird stuff happen like I came around a corner and one colleague talking to another colleague about me looking like a character from a romance novel because of my long hair and Native background.

Inequity

Veronica mentions hiring where "there's just no rhyme or reason, there's a committee and all that stuff but they try to pretend that it's very structured and very clear, but it's really not, not from an equity stand for it. It's not equitable." She also states,

> Natives always being put in with diversity, equity, and inclusion, or they always put us in the Native American programs, like you should apply for Native American studies. Okay. But I'm a planner. Why can't I apply for the School of Architecture and Planning? You can't just put us all into the same category. They shepherd you into it … So, it's insulting because they are in a way, they're kind of telling you, you don't have what it takes to compete in this tradition or this field.

Toxicity

Alice experienced toxicity in academia and in the institutions. She Stressed that there have always been the challenges. The challenges have always existed. She recalls,

> Even more overwhelming is the politics of academia and the toxicity. And well, I would even say the structures of white supremacy that are actively trying to push you out, all the time. And it's hierarchical and it's intended to exhaust you. It's intended to wear you down and to wear your spirit down … they are there and their point is they try to make it miserable for you. They try to push you out any chance they can. Toxic. And so, the kind of solace I found was thinking about like trying to be one of those voices who augmented Native voices in history and in this western archive. And that was what kept me going. It's like maybe a little bit of spite, but honestly it was a lot of love. It was a lot of love from the community and support that they liked the oral history project.

Alice mentioned previously her encounter with the professor who dismissed her work, slighted her, and told her to go to another department. She also spoke of a white male undergraduate and graduate colleague who attended the same prestigious colleges as she did.

She said that he always tried to make her look the lesser and himself more important. She recalled an incident that happened at their graduate orientation program where he made a sarcastic rude remark toward her and her field of study being Native American Studies. She expressed her frustration that people may not receive her as an intellect. She comments,

> so, I knew that if I went to this college, people would think I was not as smart as them, even though we are at the same college … that was devastating because I knew that if I went there, I knew that I would have these feelings of people not thinking of me as part of the cohort … It's presumed to belong. Somebody there who is white or white male is presumed to belong. Well, people assume them to be qualified … You work twice as hard to get half as much.

Rose was confronted with a toxic work place environment when she got into her professional career in higher education. She said it was not a place for one to flourish.

> I could really see a hierarchical structure … I honestly felt not empowered in that framework, to flourish. I didn't feel like there was encouragement from leaders, from my own supervisor, from leadership. In that environment, I felt like there was always a punitive aspect to looking at the workers and the type of work that we did. And there was always like the threat punishment. It was always about punishing Native people for being who they were, and the punishment carried over into, you have to change or you're going to be punished. I felt that the whole time. So, it was very hard to want to continue at that place. It's hard even now to want to encourage any students to go there because I just think there's better places to learn about yourself and to get confidence and to be encouraged. And it's strange because I did see some students do well there. They were visibly good when they were there, and they went on to other places. So, the structure of that place was, just, it didn't fit me.

After Rose left the toxic environment, she got a job at another institution. There were challenges that entailed publishing, going through a tenure review process, but she felt accepted and qualified for this job. She says, “I felt empowered.”

Adversities in Life

Rose spoke of challenges she experienced during her life before she became faculty. In her upbringing, she said,

> I had a harsh father. He was scary, and I had to listen. We listened. But there was a point there that I recall around 17 to 20 years old where I wasn't afraid of him. And I talked back, and I rebelled so because of that our relationship kind of split where we didn't really have that great of a relationship for a while. And it had a lot to do with

> alcoholism. And I don't want that, and I don't want to be that. Also, in raising my own children, I don't want to be harsh on them. I want them to think. That's what I tried to encourage. And they both had a lot of challenges in school. They've had challenges without having their father in the picture … I tried to guide them towards knowing their worth, their self-worth, despite everything, despite education, despite friends, despite comparing themselves to others, despite their dad living far away from them. That they had a lot of work, and they are beautiful people, born with gifts that no one else has. That's what I conveyed to them. That's what I want, my hope. Now, they are older, and I have to let them go. That's really hard. And that's the phase that we're in right now.

Rose also spoke of when she first went to college. She failed at the university and later was able to go to another university. She said, "I was not career minded. I didn't appreciate the world as it was …I didn't have any internal desire to become anything." She left the university. She battled her own insecurities and self-doubt when she failed college, returned home, and confronted her challenges, where she turns her life around and moves forward.

> I didn't want to go to school. I decided to go home and live on the reservation and experience just being around my grandma and grandpa more. But my mom wouldn't let me just be home. She said, you have to have a job and keep on working on going to school. There was a local tribal college. That's where I finally got a better foundation for being able to think about life and to have some kind of goals to push myself internally and kind of figure it out for myself.

Finishing tribal college, Rose got back on track and completed her undergraduate education at the same university she left before going home to the reservation. Some years after, with perseverance and her resilient spirit, she received her master's degree from the university she flunked out.

Before she went to graduate school, she started her family and still had the focus and mindset to continue her education. She spoke of the time when she had to resign from her teaching job so that she could take care of her infant son and her toddler daughter, moreover, realizing that her relationship with their father was ending. She would be a single mother

with two children caring for them for the rest of their lives. Despite all that, she had to refigure her life once again because now she had to think about 3 lives, her kids and her own. She spoke of the money she saved from her teaching job and the money from social programs and food stamps that helped pay her living expenses for a year until she got accepted to graduate school. In all her responsibilities as a single mom she "breezed through the master's program and did it in a year and a few months and … switched careers."

Veronica experienced a jealous colleague. She describes,

> I don't even believe that. But the reality is, yes, that they're jealous of something that I do or some relationship that I have that they feel like they also need. I had a Native woman colleague who outward consistently challenged me. And I was so oblivious to it … So, controlling yourself and disciplining yourself to keep focus on what's important that's something I've had to do … That is something that's a major challenge. I've also had people take my work and take credit for it … And so that meant I did take a lot of abuse, but I tried to discipline myself to not internalize it.

Veronica recounted her mother's challenge when she was a teacher "how women [were] treated in professions like teaching and nursing, service professions. One of the things that she felt as a teacher, especially a classroom teacher, is that they were really undervalued and they were taken advantage of, taken for granted. She was frustrated with the way Native people were being taught in our community, and she felt powerless when that happened. I think those are challenging." So, gender bias still perpetuating today.

Isolation

Emma comments that academia requires a lot of your time and a lot isolation:

> And so, there are a lot of things that you wish you had done differently, that you have behaved differently, that you had different relationships with your family and your relatives. So, sometimes those are really hard things to accept and that you just have to live with it. And It just doesn't end. In academia, you've got to have a very tough skin.

Veronica also expressed isolation as one of the biggest challenges in higher education:

> I think the biggest challenge for me these days is actually isolation, social and professional isolation. I was always the one that had to get put into accelerated classes. And I was by myself, I was the only student in AP calculus. So, it's really isolating and I still live that way as an adult. I'm like, I can't be the only one. It's very isolating. I would say I'm like in middle-management because I'm not a professor yet I'm somewhere caught in the middle. I'm almost overqualified for where I'm at right now. That's why I'm working on my PhD. Because I need to, system wise, I need to get into that professor role because that's where my work has been. That's what I've been trying to do. So, it is very isolating. I mean, I feel like I don't have any peers. So, I have to really look hard for them. And then I have to really find people who are genuine in their desire to be my colleague. Because sometimes they're very competitive. Sometimes, like I said, it leads back to lateral violence. Like sometimes I noticed, too, that even at other universities it's becoming harder and harder to find colleagues and collaborators. People you can feel safe with. And it's really rare. Feeling safe with somebody is really important. So, I've had to open up my circle outside of my own culture and my own ethnicity. So, I feel like I found a couple of folks who are non-Native, who are other ethnicities, but who have similar values and similar kind of approaches.

In this section, there were powerful and moving stories of the challenges faced by Native American women faculty in higher education. Their narratives offered valuable insights into the complexities of navigating academia and society as Native American women, while inspiring collective action to address systemic inequities These six resilient women described and shared their experiences with colonization, racism, microaggressions, sexism, and imposter syndrome, as well as the isolation and toxicity they encountered in academic institutions. Systemic racism and microaggressions are pervasive and all the women speak to the constant presence of racism and microaggressions in their academic lives. This can range from assumptions about their intelligence and abilities to outright hostility and discrimination. Imposter syndrome is also a common challenge. The feeling of not belonging or being qualified enough is a frequent theme in their narratives. This can be exacerbated by the lack of role models and the expectation of representing an entire

community. Isolation and tokenization are also significant barriers. These women often feel isolated and alone in their experiences, both socially and professionally. They may also be tokenized or placed in specific roles because of their identity, rather than their skills and qualifications.

A summary of each woman's account is provided. Emma reflected on her struggles with writing and feelings of failure, emphasizing the importance of persistence and patience in achieving goals. Alice recounted witnessing the brutal murder of a Native woman in her youth, leading her to focus on Indigenous history and social justice. She described facing challenges, microaggressions, and toxicity in academia. Rose shared her challenges, including a difficult relationship with her father, overcoming educational setbacks, and navigating a toxic work environment. Despite these hurdles, she emphasized the importance of guiding her children and instilling a sense of self-worth. Nancy discussed challenges during her tenure process, including colleagues' lack of recognition for Indigenous methods and microaggressions questioning her identity. She highlights the dilemma of choosing when to speak up, especially when not yet tenured. Veronica addressed systemic racism in higher education, experiencing lateral violence, jealousy from colleagues, and gender bias. She emphasizes the isolating nature of her position and the challenges of finding genuine collaborators. Dineena elaborated on her research work and her experience with misattribution of race from colleagues in the field. She also spoke of colleagues romanticizing her as a romance novel character. The narratives collectively underscore the persistence, resilience, and determination of these women in the face of systemic obstacles, contributing valuable insights to the broader conversation on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Despite the challenges, these women are resilient and inspiring. Each of these women has overcome significant obstacles to achieve success in academia. They are role models for other Native American women and their stories are a testament to the power of perseverance and resilience. They aim to inspire and empower others, contributing to the broader discourse on women's leadership and societal equity. It is also a powerful reminder of the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our academic institutions.

Summaries of the four themes are provided, Leadership development and transition, Academic Leadership, Collaborative Leadership, and Overcoming challenges, failures and inequities. After seeing each woman’s narrative in these four themes we get a better understanding of Native American women leadership in higher education. These themes encompassed the diverse experiences and strategies shared by these Native women leaders as they navigate their leadership journeys.

In leadership development and transition, there were four areas, commonalities, the women discussed: figuring it all out, constantly adjusting and adapting, pushing ahead, and building confidence and taking action on challenges and grabbing opportunities. To my surprise, initially, the women were humbly hesitant to call themselves a leader. The women often found themselves in a state of transition, evolving from they are “not a leader” to embracing the identity of “I am a leader” and accepting leadership roles. In their path they encountered having to figure it all out, constantly adjusting and adapting, and pushing ahead with gained confidence taking on the challenges and grabbing opportunities encountered during this transition as a leader. The transition was not often a smooth one but they eventually accepted and identified as a leader in the field.

As they transitioned and became a leader the women discussed academic leadership. They discussed their role as a faculty and mentorship. In their journey, they foster a positive learning and research environment ensuring educational success and remodeling institutional structures to be more inclusive and equitable. They are committed to student success, scholarly activity, community engagement, collaboration and societal impact, all the while, upholding adherence to academic standards and regulations.

In Collaborative leadership, the women have accepted their leadership role in academic excellence, extending to a collaborative engagement with colleagues, people in the community, and larger communities that include the campus, local to global communities, and Native American and Indigenous communities. Their roles and responsibilities foster a positive learning and research environment ensuring educational and institutional success and remodeling institutional structures to be more inclusive and equitable. The women discussed their commitment to community leadership and community engagement and the importance of collaboration in leadership, working together with students and colleagues, supporting people and communities, and working with Native people and communities.

In the section discussing overcoming challenges, failures and inequities, the women spoke of their experiences in overcoming challenges faced by Native American women in higher education. Their narratives, shared in this section, provided an intimate insight into personal struggles which include failures, racism, microaggression, systemic racism, isolation, toxicity and imposter syndrome. These leaders aimed to inspire and empower others, fostering a collective spirit that transcends individual narratives and contributes to the broader discourse on women's leadership and societal equity.

Research Questions Discussion

In this section, four themes were generated, leadership development and transition, academic leadership, collaborative leadership, and overcoming challenges, failures, and inequities. Each of these themes answered the study's four research questions:

1. How do Native American women faculty think about their path to leadership in higher education?
2. How did Native American women faculty prepare for a career in higher education?
3. What stories do Native American women faculty tell to describe their experiences in higher education?
4. Reflecting on their accomplished goals, what wisdom do Native American women faculty offer to those who aspire to become leaders?

Research question one, "How do Native American women faculty think about their path to leadership in higher education?" was answered in their profile and all the passages the women spoke to in themes one through four, leadership development and transition, academic leadership, collaborative leadership and overcoming challenges, failures, and inequities. In their leadership journey in higher education, these Native American women faculty members viewed themselves humbly as leaders and embraced a humbled leadership style. Their path was often solitary, requiring them to navigate and figure things out on their own. Despite the isolation, the women found solace in the support of family, colleagues, the community, and cultural and spiritual traditions during moments of vulnerability, uncertainty, doubt, inequities, and ongoing challenges. This support played a crucial role in assisting them during pivotal moments in their leadership development. Their experiences indicated the importance of self-discovery, adjustment, and adapting as they laid the

foundation of their leadership path. As they progressed, they built confidence, tackled challenges, and seized opportunities each woven into their narratives, illustrating the evolving nature of their journey in higher education leadership. As they humbly accepted their leadership roles, the women embodied their role as faculty in academic leadership. They dedicated and committed their time, expertise, and passion to mentoring and supporting students, colleagues, and communities, especially Native American communities, fostering an environment of growth, collaboration, and inclusivity. Lastly, the women discussed overcoming challenges, failures, and inequities, a path each woman encountered before, during, and, presently in their professional journey. These resilient Native women leaders faced, every day according to one woman, the task of overcoming a myriad of challenges, navigating through failures, and confronting pervasive inequities. Their narratives provided an intimate insight into personal struggles which included struggles with writing, feelings of failure, racism, microaggressions, toxicity in academia, overcoming educational setbacks, challenges during the tenure process, systemic racism, lateral violence, isolation, gender bias, tokenism, harmful stereotypes, and misattribution of race. As leaders, they continued to be resilient and confronted these persisting challenges, insults, demands, disrespect, bullying and aggressive behaviors. These leaders aimed to inspire and empower others, fostering a collective spirit that contributes to the wider discourse on women's leadership and social equity. Through their unwavering efforts, they not only enrich the academic environment but also are inspiring figures for future generations, leaving a lasting imprint on the landscapes of education and social justice.

Research question two was “How did Native American women faculty prepare for a career in higher education?” In their leadership journey in higher education, the Native

women faculty had preparations before and during their careers as a faculty. Before their faculty journey began, there was support, groundwork, and preparation to lay the foundation for a successful academic path. The women discussed leaders they admired, mentors, family members, specifically mothers, those who have supported them, family who have taught them values, traditions, culture, and gaining inspiration from role models and mentors, and discovering their potential and resilience through self-reflection, seeing what they can do or what they can be, seeing how much resilience they really do have. This foundational root is an important aspect of fostering a positive and empowering academic environment. It recognizes the significance of role models, mentorship, family support, and cultural values but also underscores the interconnectedness of personal growth and professional development in their academic journey.

Along with the support base, the groundwork of education and employment played a crucial role in their trajectory, finishing high school, completing college, obtaining a graduate degree, working as a student employee, finding a job, and getting experience. The women spoke of their pursuit and the importance of education. They navigated the challenges of pursuing higher education, breaking barriers, and overcoming obstacles with determination, persistence, and perseverance. This groundwork then gave them the fortitude and diligence to pursue their careers as faculty and as a professor and to face challenges head-on and take action. As they progressed through their academic journey, the foundational values instilled by their families and the inspiration drawn from non-Native and Native mentors and role models continued to shape their professional identity. The support and the groundwork were preparations to lay the foundation for a successful academic path to professorship, to leadership. Their experiences highlight the interdependent relationship between personal

development and career success, emphasizing that education and a supportive foundation are not only crucial in the early stages but remain a guiding force throughout one's entire academic and professional life.

Once the foundation and the groundwork were established, the women spoke of preparations during their role as faculty, transitioning into leadership roles, taking on academic leadership roles, engaging in diverse scholarly activities, research, and publication, navigating the tenure review process, advocating for Indigenous methods, mentorship of students, and commitment to the community. Through rigorous academic preparation, including core functions like teaching, research, and writing, these women built a strong foundation for their careers. This foundation, interwoven with their expertise, experience, and passion for a more inclusive and equitable academic space, empowered them to take on leadership roles. They not only excelled in their academic paths but also became advocates for diverse perspectives, Indigenous research methods, and decolonizing academic practices. With gained wisdom and a commitment to the community and to nurturing future generations, they now actively engage as mentors with students, colleagues, and the wider community, pushing forward positive change within and beyond the academy.

Research question three was, “What stories do Native American women faculty tell to describe their experiences in higher education?” The journey began with their profile, who they are, where they’re from, their education, their passion, influences in their life, how they define leadership, and who they are as a leader. They spoke of their experiences in leadership development and transition where, initially, they didn’t think of themselves as leaders and as they walked through the stages of development and transition they humbly accepted their leadership role. As a leader they stepped into their role as faculty continuing their journey in

academic and collaborative leadership. The women described the tenure and review process and the expectations colleagues and the institution placed on them evaluating their scholarship which included teaching, research, writing, and community service. They described mentorship, collaboration, and support from colleagues and eventually themselves becoming senior faculty and mentors, reciprocating the support and bolstering others. Along with collaborating with colleagues, the women described the one essential part of being a leader is the importance of supporting, engaging with, and working with people and the community, especially Native American communities. They stressed the importance of giving back to their tribal communities as well as other Native American and Indigenous communities. As a leader, one will surely experience challenges, failures, and setbacks. With fortitude and perseverance, these women confronted what was thought as inconceivable, hopeless, impossible like getting a degree, learning how to take constructive criticism, authoring articles and books, getting tenure, fighting against racism, confronting inequities, and conquering imposter syndrome. With this wisdom, their asdzą́ą́ ways (I used this phrase in chapter one to describe a woman who has passion, perseverance, fearlessness, and wisdom), and t'áá hó' ajít'éego (it's up to you to make changes) they've come full circle figuring it out, exceeding expectations, pushing the envelope, and succeeding as faculty, as a professor, as an educator, manifesting leadership, and giving back to people and communities. A leader stepping into the world, taking back what they initially had, embodying their version of Changing Woman (Asdzą́ą́ Nádleehé), reincarnating as the modern metamorphosis of Changing Woman.

Research question four was "Reflecting on their accomplished goals, what wisdom do Native American women faculty offer to those who aspire to become leaders?" The women

discussed their leadership path, their goals, their career preparations, their experiences in higher education as well as their life journey, self-reflection, figuring out life, encountering hardships and appreciating triumphs, and making personal impacts. The women expressed the importance of research and writing. One of the requirements of faculty is the tenure process. To succeed in the process, one is required to research and write articles that the women have accomplished but not without challenges. Persistence, patience, finding what you're good at, building your skills, and accepting constructive criticism are essential in attaining scholarly work. The women expressed the importance of meeting people, learning from them, listening to their perspectives, working together as a community, specifically connecting to elders, visiting tribal communities, building alliances and collectivity between Native women faculty members and Native faculty members, working together to combat institutional structures of oppression, maintaining collaborations, strength in numbers so staying together, and supporting each other, and practicing kindness. The women were in consensus having to deal with stereotypes and racism against them, against Native people that can be an everyday occurrence but to keep moving forward, be knowledgeable, challenge these stereotypes and racism, do the best that you can, not give up, be patient, be persistent, be brave, and take action. The women expressed that aspiring Native women leaders can make changes and impact the culture of higher education influencing and affecting the system and institutions to adapt and align with Native values and perspectives, to honor traditions and honor those who came before us, to accept and recognize Indigenous methods, to bring in Indigenous researchers, to increase representation of Native women faculty in all fields, to support Native women in leadership roles, and to value community over individual success. The women want to see Native women changing the system and not

the system changing them. The women would love to see Native women become leaders, whether that be in a role as a professor, as an administrator on campus, as a student, or outside of higher education, as an activist, as a business owner, as a tribal leader, or as a politician.

The women answered this study's research questions by giving intimate narratives of their journey in life, their path to leadership, their preparations for a career, and their role as faculty. Further, they described their experiences, positive and negative, and how they overcame challenges, failures, and inequities. The women came full circle in their leadership journey by thinking about their path, having goals, planning and preparing, experiencing a career as an educator, and gaining wisdom by fulfilling the role of a leader, having agency, self-confidence, and strong mental stability. They were recognized as a leader amongst peers and community, they understood lifetime learning, and obtained a sense of balance with self and surroundings.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the findings and show how the themes that developed align with SNBH. I will conclude with implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5 - Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion - Hózhǫ́

Chapter 5 reviews the study, presents a summary and discussion of main findings, and provides implications for practice and future research. This narrative study analyzed developing themes guided by the Diné philosophy of education framework to explore Native American women faculty perspectives on leadership in higher education. The purpose of this qualitative study using narrative and thematic analysis was to explore leadership in higher education from Native American women faculty perspectives. Thus, the study examined Native American women faculty perspective of leadership, their identity as leaders in higher education, their leadership in the community, and how their background and context influenced their perception of leadership. The study is significant as it provides insight and understanding into Native women's leadership through their lens and their lived experiences. Additionally, it aims to serve as a valuable resource for Native women pursuing the field of education whether as students or professionals, and to contribute to the preservation of Native women's voices through oral history.

Using my lens as a Native woman researcher, I documented the lived experience of women telling their stories through the use of a narrative inquiry approach (Riessman, 1993; Riessman, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This qualitative approach was a better fit to get at the context and the essence of the participant's experience, perspectives, and stories in rich detail (Creswell, 2014). This study adhered to Mihesuah's (2003) principle that research involving Indigenous women should only be from their lens and their voice. These women provided their voices and personal accounts through their lens to address this study's research questions. Additionally, as a Diné researcher, I saw the importance of applying my

own cultural and Indigenous lens in this study as Indigenous worldviews can "chang[e] the realm of research" (Hart, 2010, pg.1). Also, Hart expressed an important message about Indigenous research when he observed: "Indigenous peoples, were faced with leaving [their] indigeneity at the door when [they] entered the academic world, [and] several [Indigenous people] are now actively working to ensure [their] research is not only respectful, or "culturally sensitive," but is also based in approaches and processes that are parts of our cultures" (p. 1). Thus, all the more reason for my decision to use parts of my culture and a Diné framework in my study, and ensure that my research is respectful and culturally sensitive.

Collectively, the women's six narratives, my lens, the narrative inquiry approach, and the Diné framework I adapted for this study, provided insights and understanding of Native American women's leadership in higher education. The women provided a picture of their life and their journey to leadership as a humbled leader, as a colleague, as a mother, as an activist, as an advocate, as a mentor, as a trailblazer, and as a change-maker. In Minthorn and Chávez (2015), Dr. Cassandra Manuelito-Kerkvliet, the first Native American woman President of Antioch University Seattle, "subscribes to a personal philosophy that everyone is a leader, whether that someone is an employee, a student, or, at the simplest level, oneself" (p. 166). After listening to these women's narratives, I concur with Dr. Manuelito-Kerkvliet's belief that leadership extends to all individuals and that each person possesses the capacity to lead. The leadership path these women presented connected with the holistic approach of the conceptual framework that was presented in Chapter 1, the Diné Philosophy of Learning and the Diné ceremonial basket. Four research questions guided this qualitative study:

RQ1: How do Native American women faculty think about their path to leadership in higher education?

RQ2: How did Native American women faculty prepare for a career in higher education?

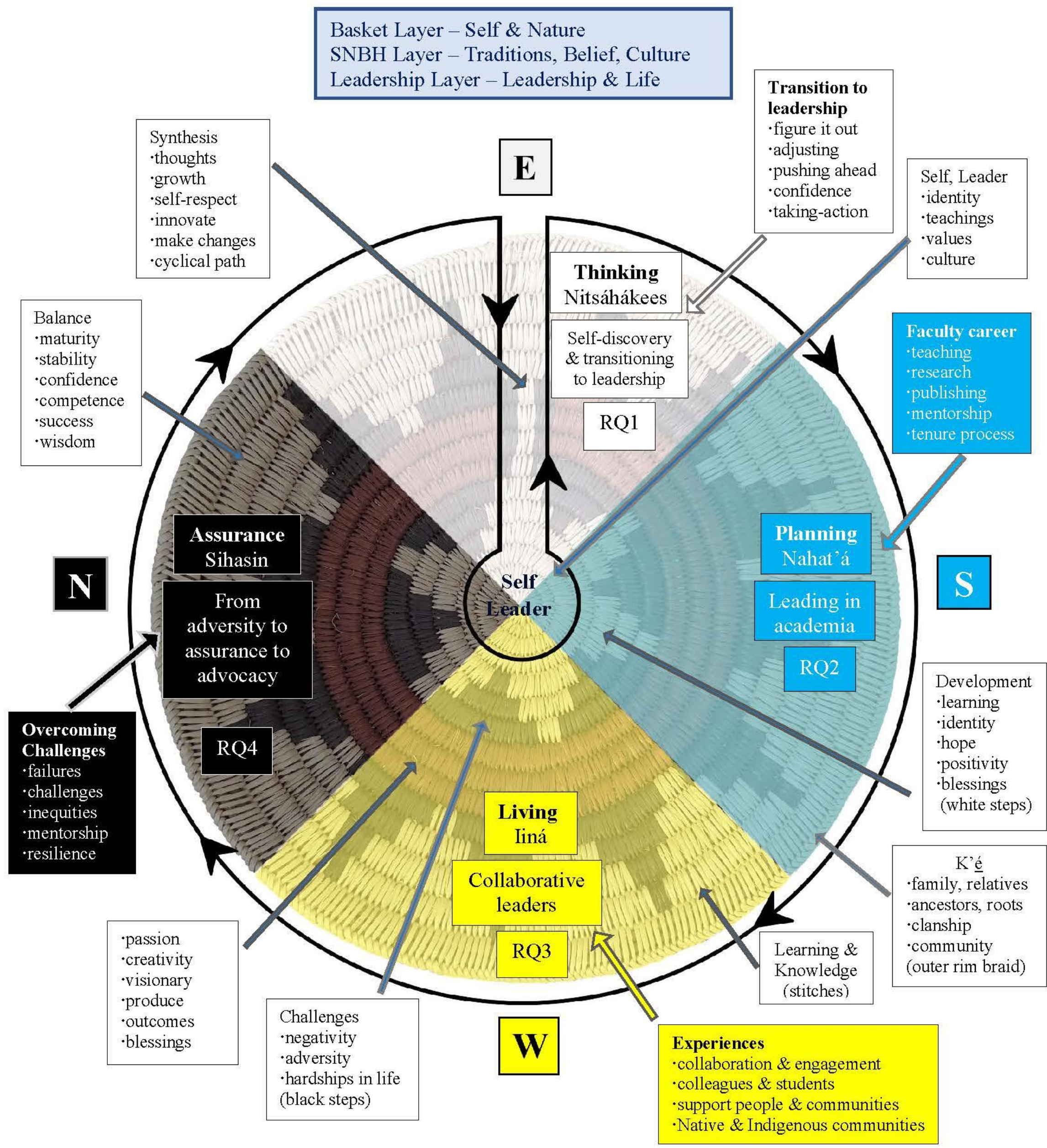
RQ3: What stories do Native American women faculty tell to describe their experiences in higher education?

RQ4: Reflecting on their accomplished goals, what wisdom do Native American women faculty offer to those who aspire to become leaders?

Interdependently, the three concepts, the Diné philosophy of education (or philosophy of learning), the Diné philosophy of life (Są'áh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón - SNBH), and the Diné ceremonial basket were introduced in Chapter 1 as components of the conceptual framework to show how they interweave with Native American women leadership. The ceremonial basket shows the maturation of a person's life and the universal elements that include the animals, the environment, the celestial bodies, the universe, and the spiritual world. The basket works interconnectedly with SNBH and the four pillars of the Diné philosophy of education - Thinking (Nitsáhákees), Planning (Nahat'á), Living (Iiná), and Assurance (Sihasin). These three concepts guided my study using Diné beliefs, values, history, and traditions encompassing the four pillars in Figure 11. The assumption for this study was to use this Native American holistic approach to leadership to obtain interpretations and understanding of Native American women faculty experiences and perspectives of leadership in higher education.

Figure 11

Higher Education Journey to Leadership: A Holistic Approach

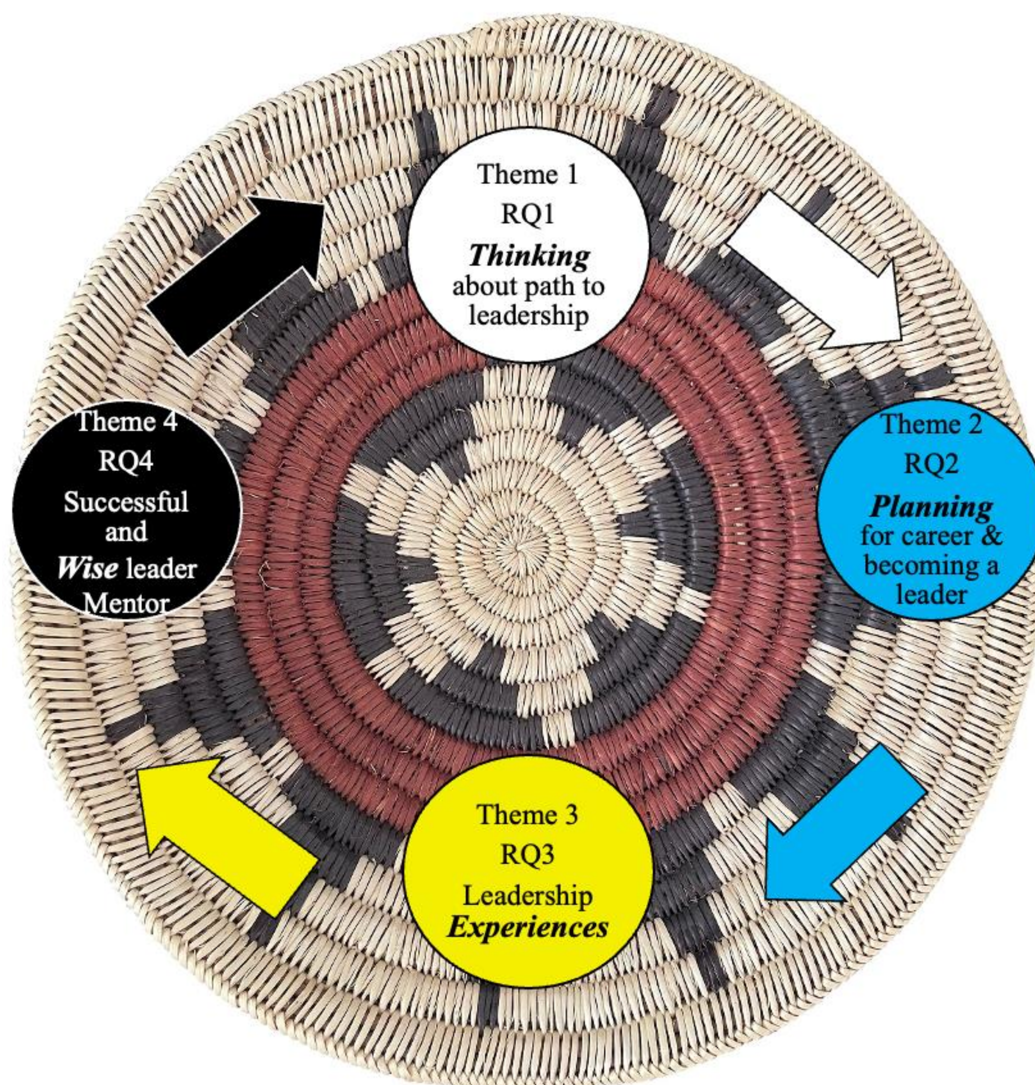


RQ1: How do Native American women faculty think about their path to leadership in higher education?
RQ2: How did Native American women faculty prepare for a career in higher education?
RQ3: What stories do Native American women faculty tell to describe their experiences in higher education?
RQ4: Reflecting on their accomplished goals, what wisdom do Native American women faculty offer to those who aspire to become leaders?

Note. The Four Themes developed Self-discovery and Transitioning to Leadership, Leading in Academia, Collaborative Leaders, and From Adversity to Assurance to Advocacy each relate to the four pillars Nitsáhákees, Nahat'á, Iiná, and Sihasin.

Figure 12

Themes and Research Questions in relation to Thinking (Nitsáhákees), Planning (Nahat'á), Living (Iiná), and Assurance (Sihasin)



Thus, in relation to the conceptual framework, the four research questions and the four themes worked in harmony reflecting the framework in a non-linear approach in Figure 11 and Figure 12. This holistic leadership framework can serve as a foundational leadership pathway for Native women as they embark on their leadership journeys guiding them through the pillars: Thinking (self-discovery and transition), Planning (leader preparation, leading in academia), Living (collaboration and becoming leaders), and Assurance (overcoming challenges and becoming a successful and capable leader). The model depicts a leadership life cycle.

The Diné College defines SNBH as the ‘‘Diné traditional living system, which places human life in harmony with the natural world and the universe. The system provides protection from the imperfections in life and for the development of well-being, [hózhǫ́]’’ (Diné College, 2022, pg.7). The “SNBH framework is a flexible interpretative framework not a definitive model” (Lee, 2004, pg. 95). With this in mind, the four pillars can be as complex as the SNBH, but it also has its flexibility, simplicities, and common knowledge and understanding for use by anyone in everyday life. I learned these teachings from my late stepfather. Thus, this study used the flexibility to interpret the voices and perspectives of the Native American women participating in this study even though some participants had other tribal affiliations other than Diné.

Discussion

In this section, a discussion of findings and interpretations are presented. The data gathered from six Native American women faculty (Emma, Alice, Rose, Nancy, Veronica, and Dineena) highlight their experiences and perspectives of leadership in their role as faculty at a southwestern university. The study used thematic analysis from which four

themes were generated: Self-discovery and Transition to Leadership, Leading in Academia, Collaborative Leaders, and From Adversity to Assurance to Advocacy. In each of these themes, sub-themes were generated. These themes intertwined interdependently with the components of the conceptual framework. All four themes answered each of the four research questions because the themes encompassed all aspects of the women's leadership path in higher education, their preparations for a career as faculty, their experiences as faculty, and the wisdom they offer to aspiring leaders.

Before I get further in the discussion, I'm providing an explanation to my use of the basket in this study. The Diné basket is intertwined and interconnected with the four pillars as well as the journey to leadership. The leader's life path and journey to leadership is depicted in the basket and the SNBH pillars in Figure 11. There are several interpretations of the Diné basket and I presented the Diné basket in Chapter 1 in respect to one's phases of life and universal elements that include animals, the environment, celestial bodies, the universe, and the spiritual world. Respectfully, in this discussion section I present my thoughts, my observations, and my reflections of the basket. This is what I was taught and is common knowledge to most Diné. The basket has several meanings and representations as well as the interconnectedness of SNBH and its use in songs, prayers, ceremonies that are far more complex. I am representing the Diné basket as a person's life map and how it can be representative in this holistic leadership approach with that of the study's findings.

When I began this study, I anticipated that this Native American holistic framework and approach would guide the exploration of Native American women faculty perspectives on leadership in that it would relate to the leader herself spoken from her lens and what it takes to become a leader. I also anticipated a model, an approach, or a tool that anyone can

use or follow in their journey to leadership or in everyday life, one that empowers individuals to cultivate their strengths and foster self-discovery and self-awareness, to thrive as a person or as a leader personally and professionally. This aligns with T'áá hó' ajít'éego (means it's going to be up to yourself to make changes). The women embraced this holistic framework as each embarked on her life journey and journey to leadership, starting from middle of the basket and emerging through the opening at the top of the basket and continuing in a circular motion clockwise. See Figure 11. In her journey she began with the four pillars of the Diné philosophy of education. First, the thinking pillar, the beginnings of her journey to leadership, where she learned and observed, acquired knowledge and skills, moved to self-discovery and transition, all the while figuring it out, adjusting, pushing ahead, gaining confidence, taking action, and moving to the planning pillar. Second, she transitioned into the role of the planning pillar, engaging in a faculty role teaching, researching, publishing, mentorship, navigating the tenure process and recognizing roles and responsibilities in her faculty career. Thirdly, she progressed into the living pillar where she collaborated and engaged, working with colleagues and students and supporting people and communities, particularly Native and Indigenous communities. In this pillar she comprehends her roles and responsibilities, embodying maturity, vision, advocacy and wisdom. Lastly, she journeyed into the assurance pillar. She is respected for her wisdom, confidence, and dedication to fostering empowerment and mindfulness. Her journey is marked by resilience overcoming challenges, failures, and inequities by walking from adversity to assurance and advocacy. She understands the value of lifelong learning; she contributes to the community; she is a mentor and leader.

As illustrated in Figure 11, the leader's life path is denoted in the middle of the basket, as she is born into human life. This inner part of the basket represents her development and learning, her identity, her teachings, her values, and her culture. It is who she is. As she follows the circle of life and branches into the inner white areas of the basket she grows from infancy, to childhood, to adolescence, to adulthood and outward beyond the red area of the basket, to old age and into the spirit world (designated by the white areas above the red of the basket). As she matures she encounters the inner black steps with struggles, negativity, adversity, pain, and hardships. However, the inner white steps always remind her that when she encounters challenges and adversities there is always light, hope, positivity, enlightenment, and blessings. The white pathway leading out to the East reminds her that there is always an outlet, always a way out in times of difficulty or darkness. The red area reflects rites of passage, Kinaaldá, marriage, creation of family, purity, happiness, blessings, and hózhǫ́ (meaning health, beauty, and wellness, spiritually and physically). As she continues along that path as a leader she has passion; she has creativity; she is visionary; she is productive; she has outcomes; she is successful. As she continues from adulthood to old age she experiences less hardship and encounters fewer challenges, fewer difficulties, and less darkness (upper black steps). She also reaches assuredness, balance, mindfulness, confidence, empowering others, success, well-being, and wisdom (upper white steps). All the while, throughout her life, from birth to old age, K'é (family, relatives, ancestors, friends, colleagues, communities) embrace her with support, and encouragement, and uphold her along her journey (represented on the outer braid of the basket). In addition, each stitch in the basket represents learning and knowledge so as she moves throughout life she learns and gains more knowledge in every stitch.

In this way, the women in this study began their journey to leadership in the middle of the basket and emerged through the opening at the top of the basket and continued in a circular motion clockwise entering the pillars of SNBH, Thinking (Nitsáhákees), Planning (Nahat'á), Living (Iiná), and Assurance (Sihasin). Their journey to leadership is presented in the findings and the developing themes. The path is not linear. It is always circular in a clockwise motion. This clockwise circular motion validates the life cycle and leadership cycle of these Native women leaders because the women have not taken a linear path or linear way of thinking regarding their life, education, career, or leadership. For instance, in one narrative, Rose mentioned that she didn't have an idea what she wanted to do or be. She had difficulties in college and failed. She was not career-minded and didn't have the desire to become anything, so she left college and returned home to the reservation. At home, with the support of her family, she started a new beginning when she enrolled in a tribal college. That was a new foundation and pivotal point for her thinking about her life and life goals and to figure things out along the way through T'áá hó' ajít'éego. When she finished tribal college and with a renewed sense of purpose, Rose got back on track and completed her undergraduate education at another university. She began a new career as a teacher. During this time, major changes in her life occurred. After having children and going through a divorce, she had to rethink her path, once again. With perseverance and her resilient spirit, she received her master's degree from the same university she flunked out. She then began a new career.

So, in this way, one can see Rose's path in this holistic framework where she *thinks* about going to college, *prepares* for college and takes classes, *experiences and lives* as a college student, but, she doesn't complete the assurance cycle when she flunks out and leaves

the university. However, as I presented, there's an outlet (the pathway leading east in the basket). There's always a way out or a way to restart. it doesn't mean failure. It means adjustment, re-evaluation, and through this outlet Rose began another journey as she reassessed her life and made changes, continued on with her growth, synthesizing all these elements to start over. In Rose's case, she returns home and starts up the path again by figuring things out, adjusting, pushing ahead, building confidence, taking action, once again finding her identity, rediscovering herself. She once again continues on the circular path where she *thinks* about going to college and enrolls in the tribal college; she plans and *prepares* for college and takes classes; she *experiences and lives* as a college student. This time she reaches the *assurance* cycle with confidence, completing her degree and graduates from the tribal college. The circular path is a constant continuous path. So, again, Rose reflects on her accomplishments and re-evaluates her life and life goals in the pathway that leads East. Again, she starts up a new path, a new beginning, as she *thinks* about continuing her education enrolling at a university to obtain her undergraduate degree, figuring out her life. Once again, she continues clockwise, plans and prepares her education, taking required coursework, studying, taking tests, gathering information for next steps. Rose steps into the next pillar of living and experiencing college life where she is engages in her classes, completes her requirements, decides on a major, and lives independently. She moves into the assurance pillar where she completes her requirements and graduates from the university with a bachelor's degree. Rose repeats this holistic cycle after having children, going through divorce, and leaving her teaching job. This was a very stressful and challenging time for Rose but there is an outlet to reassess and synthesize all the elements to guide Rose to another path in her life. In the basket there is an outlet, a reset, there's always a way out. It is

indicated with the path that opens to the east. She thinks about what to do now that she's a single mother with two kids. She decides to leave her job and go back to school to get her master's degree. She plans and prepares her journey in the planning pillar when she budgets for the costs of going back to college, budgets for the move, plans for moving her and her children and paying bills. Then she is in the living and experiencing pillar where she is settled and living in her new location and experiencing college, taking classes, fulfilling requirements, living independently, caring for her children, and doing what it takes to survive. Finally, she steps into the assurance pillar where she completes her courses and requirements, graduates, and receives her master's degree, all while balancing motherhood and leadership. Her journey is a testament to her resilience, determination, and unwavering commitment to both her personal and professional aspirations. She inspires others with her ability to thrive in multiple roles and responsibilities. In the course of Rose's journey, her K'é (family, relatives, ancestors, friends, colleagues, communities) embrace her with support, and encouragement, and uphold her along her journey. Rose's lifelong learning and progress are intricately woven with each stitch in the basket. Her experiences, challenges, and achievements contribute to her growth creating a tapestry of resilience, wisdom, and capability. This holistic circular path is ever continuous as Rose develops new goals, acquires new skills and knowledge, has new experiences, overcomes challenges, and makes changes in her life through T'áá hó' ajít'éego.

Findings and Themes

Next, I move on to discussing the findings that did not closely align with the western leadership approaches that I initially specified at the outset of this research journey. This is

followed by a discussion of the themes that were generated in relation to the basket and the four pillars.

Findings

Some of my findings did not align with the leadership theories and approaches that I originally specified when I began this study. What I initially outlined was my anticipation that three distinct leadership approaches would manifest in the findings of this study regarding Native American women leadership in higher education: transformational leadership, authentic leadership, and resilient leadership. Through the lens of the Native women leaders in this study, and knowledge gained through my lens, this was not the case. However, if using a westernized viewpoint, possibly two approaches; authentic leadership and transformational leadership, may be congruent. But I write this with hesitance because I did get a sense from the women that they had "a real sense of purpose, [were] passionate, [understood] their own values and [conveyed] toward others based on those values, [had] strong relationships and connections with others, [had] self-discipline, and most importantly [had] compassion and heart" (Northouse, 2016, pg. 197).

I anticipated transformational leadership as being associated with Native women leadership in higher education because Bass & Riggio (2006) described transformational leadership as "those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity. [They] help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization" (p. 3). Bass & Riggio (2006) stated that transformational leadership was a "powerful source in military settings … [and] transformational leadership is

in some ways an expansion of transactional leadership [which] emphasizes the transaction and exchange that takes place among leaders, colleagues, and followers. This exchange is based on the leader discussing with others what is required and specifying the conditions and rewards these others will receive if they fulfill those requirements … Transactional leadership occurs when the leader rewards or disciplines the follower, depending on the adequacy of the follower's performance (p. 4).

I did not appreciate the word "follower." According to Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, a follower is "one in the service of another, one that follows the opinions or teachings of another, one that imitates another, a devotee." However, this is not the perception that I observed from the women in this study. They were definitely not followers, and as leaders definitely not expecting anyone to be in their service or for anyone to imitate them. I do perceive the women in this study as leaders who not only lead and inspire but also support and mentor colleagues throughout the tenure process, guiding them from junior faculty to senior faculty, empowering them along the way. They do not employ rewards or discipline in any way as a means of influence.

The Native American women in this study provided their definition of what leadership means to them and gave their perspective of their own leadership roles in higher education and in life as a student, as a faculty, and as a leader. Their definitions are diverse and do not fit neatly in the western leadership theories and practice.

Emma expressed that leadership means:

> leadership means the way in which you draw upon your education to support your Indigenous nations and your communities and to be ethical and responsible and accountable to your people … my role is to just do the work … I think I see myself as someone who supports people, who supports initiatives.

Alice defined leadership as:

someone who works with communities, works to bring positive change, and to maintain positive spaces within the community. The Western concept of leadership is all about power, but I would say a leader is the opposite of power. The leader is the person who listens, who bolsters other people, who bolsters the community without supporting themselves, without putting themselves on that pedestal.

Rose defined leadership as:

a person that is in a position to be influential, a humble person, a person who thinks things through, a person who can admit errors, a person who can find ways to grow even through errors, and a person that has compassion for others … I just do the work to assist others to hopefully realize in their own self that they can do it or that they carry some things innately in them to be whatever it is that they want to be.

Nancy defined leadership as:

someone who is a good listener, a good communicator, is upfront, engages with people, is trustworthy and is able to see the big picture perhaps in a leadership role as a supervisor, or a person in a group or a person in the community. A leader has a guiding vision, guiding purpose, bringing people together, and working together… each tribe has its own leadership perspective [and] in her tribal community, they have women leaders who have decision-making positions but that's not the case for all tribes … Native concepts of leadership are more about supporting the whole group, supporting the collective, supporting the tribe, and that's different to western thinking.

Veronica described leadership as:

that sense of leadership, that sense of matriarchy, that sense of inherent power, not power over, but power with, and that balance part of it. I think that's something that is strongly ingrained in me and I carry that into my work practice. A leader is somebody who guides from behind, somebody who facilitates and somebody who helps create pathways or helps others they are leading, find their own path. I see it more of a facilitation role. She visualizes leadership like water. Water can be a gentle stream, or it can be just a drop and it has the ability to carve things, make things very grand. And so, I think that's something that comes from Native American culture, too. It's definitely humility and humble leadership.

Dineena observed that leadership has more than one definition.

I think of a leader as people who are wise. I think of people who are generous and kind, and I think of people who are working towards the common good. I think of someone that people trust to have good opinions and makes the best choices to benefit everybody and does not think of themselves first. They think of the group first. Someone who helps the community and people.

These definitions share a common commitment to supporting communities, supporting tribal communities, supporting people, supporting initiatives, listening, doing the work, working together, working toward the common good, creating pathways for others, fostering positive spaces and positive change. A leader is humble, kind, generous, a good communicator, wise, unselfish, ethical, accountable, the opposite of power, not power over but power with. Although there are many definitions and perspectives of Native American and Indigenous leadership, there were several shared characteristics of leadership as noted above in the quotes on leadership. These definitions resonate with the collective insights in Minthorn and Chávez's (2015) book Indigenous Leadership in Higher Education, as articulated by other Indigenous leaders. Although, there are many definitions and perspectives of Native American and Indigenous leadership, there are some commonalities that were presented above. Given these Native faculty perspectives on leadership, it is important that higher education institutions expand or rethink the definitions of leadership they have promoted and develop more inclusive definitions of leadership that include worldviews from the Native American perspectives on leadership.

Regarding resilient leadership, I anticipated this type of leadership due to the resilience ingrained in the women leaders within my family. Resilience was part of their core values to help them overcome adversities and hardship. The women in the study encountered challenges and adversities in their leadership as discussed in the section on overcoming challenges but it was not the focus of the way they perceived their leadership. However, they do show strengths as resilient leaders as shown in Figure 7, Six Strengths of Resilient Leaders.

I transition now from the definition of leadership to the themes identified in the study.

Theme 1

Theme one, self-discovery and transitioning to leadership connected with research question one, how do Native American women faculty think about their path to leadership in higher education. This connection can be explained according to the life map of the Diné basket and to the thinking pillar of the conceptual framework and Diné philosophy of education. This pillar began each woman's leadership journey of self-discovery and transitioning to leadership. Their narratives and stories align with their journey to leadership in higher education as represented in Figure 11.

In theme one, self-discovery and transitioning, the women discussed the subthemes: Figuring it all out, constantly adjusting and adapting, pushing ahead, building confidence and taking action. The women gave detailed accounts of their leadership development and transition from not considering themselves as leaders to humbly embracing the identity of "I am a leader" and accepting leadership roles in higher education and in the community. In theme one, the women began self-discovery and transitioning to leadership. In this pillar, the foundation was laid, and it is where the journey began for the women. The women gave their narratives of figuring out their path to leadership, adjusting and adapting along the way, preparing and planning before and during their careers, pushing ahead and working through their experiences as faculty, and building confidence to deal with personal accounts of challenges, failures, and inequities and taking action against these obstacles and adversities.

Before I began this study, my thought initially was that the women would immediately identify themselves as a leader. Through my lens as a Native woman, I perceive these women as leaders and conveyed this in the interview. The women recognized and named others as leaders, before themselves. They named colleagues (one held the same

faculty status as them), supervisors, Deb Haaland, activists, and their mother or grandparent as leaders before humbly identifying themselves as leaders. McLeod (2002) discusses how the image of Native American leaders is that of selflessness and "many Native American women do not identify themselves as leaders because they are uncomfortable when their achievements are made public and they are singled out to stand above others" (p.12). In Minthorn and Chávez (2015), University of Oklahoma assistant Professor Heather Shotten contributed a chapter of her personal narrative on leadership, and she, too, didn't feel comfortable identifying herself as a leader. Shotten says,

> I am reluctant to call myself a leader because I do not believe it is my place … it may seem contrary but I strongly believe that titles alone do not equate to leadership … I am a relatively young person and there are others who are older, wiser, and who have much greater experience as leaders so writing about my views of leadership feels a bit bold (p. 145).

Shotten speaks to her leadership as service working with Native people and communities and working to get things done. Likewise, the women in this study, are all humble and all expressed that being a leader and holding a leadership role involves serving the communities, particularly Native and Indigenous communities, and they did not equate job titles to being a leader. Native American women speak to their leadership roles "as mothers [and] activists" (Badoni, 2017, p. 76). They speak to "who they are, their identity, their empowerment, their strength, their resistance, their responsibilities, and their beauty as leaders (Badoni, 2017, p. 19), as do the women in this study. Rose speaks to her leadership role as "my responsibility to be a leader, it's as a mom." Alice adds, "my idea of leadership [is] being a mother, caring for my own children, and caring for children in the community." Alice uses her "writing as a form of justice" and referred to her work as activism in Native history.

According to Dorothy Miller (1978):

> Today, Native American women are a force in the political and spiritual life of the people, as well as in the white world. Some work in governmental agencies, in schools, in public forums, pressing Indian justice. You might call these Native American women leaders: they do not view themselves nor are they viewed by their tribes in this way. They may be respected and honored by their people, but they do not "lead" their people. They care for the people; they give to the people; they are committed to the welfare of the people. But all sit together in the scared circle and no one is greater than another (p. 30).

Theme 2

Theme two, Leading in Academia, corresponded with research question two, how did Native American women faculty prepare for a career in higher education. This connection can be explained according to the life map of the Diné basket and to the planning pillar of the conceptual framework and Diné philosophy of education. In the planning pillar the women continued their journey from self-discovery to leading in academia. Their narratives and stories align with their journey to leadership in higher education, as shown in Figure 11.

In theme two, leading in academia, the women discussed the subthemes, role as faculty and mentorship. In this theme, the women continued their path to leading in academia. Theme two connects to the Planning pillar. In this pillar, they fulfill faculty expectations, which prepared them for their role as faculty, and with gained knowledge and experience they engaged in more leadership roles, provided mentorship, and offered more insight and a little wisdom to colleagues, to mentees, to students, to aspiring leaders. The women provided their narratives of their experiences as faculty expressing the expectations to excel, navigating tenure and promotion, teaching, publishing, research, community engagement, making societal impacts, and mentorship.

Brown (2024), defines naat'áanii (word for leader in Diné) as one who's aware of planning or knows how to plan. Planning is an important aspect of a leader's journey towards leadership. Planning serves as a foundation where leadership begins to take shape. Planning

is important for guiding the women toward achieving their goals and objectives, maximizing efficiency, and adapting to constant changes. The planning pillar is where leadership roles begin. This is an important pillar as the women delve into their faculty career: teaching, researching, publishing, mentoring, and navigating the tenure process. As they embark on their leadership journey in academia these women face high expectations and significant "pressure to perform research and publish [,] exacerbated by additional service and community outreach responsibilities" (Peterson-Hickey, 1998, p. 114).

Similarly, in Peterson-Hickey's (1998) study, the respondents spoke to their research not being supported and "noted pressures to produce despite additional responsibilities being placed upon them, not publishing in the "right" publications, or not publishing the "right" type of materials and other problems" (p. 111). The pressures of publishing in time for promotion can affect one's job. In Peterson-Hickey's (1998) study, two respondents stated they "did produce research and publications [but] their efforts did not pay off at the time of promotion" (p. 112). One wrote a book but wasn't considered scientific enough and the other published in what was seen as an inferior journal. Similarly, the challenges and pressure of writing and publishing are evident amongst the women in this study. Rose's indicated, "sometimes it can be really overwhelming emotionally and physically and mentally." Alice experienced academic dismissiveness for her work when she was an undergraduate student. However, she pressed on with her passion, and it got published. Emma discussed her failures with writing and said it took her years to finish writing a book. If Alice and Emma hadn't demonstrated their persistence, their resilience and their passion, their work could have easily been disregarded. Aside from research and publishing, added responsibilities and commitments for the women in this study extends to student success, collaboration,

community engagement, and societal impact, all the while, upholding adherence to academic standards and regulations. With the multitude of expectations placed on these women, particularly the significance of publication, a requirement according to department and university guidelines, their capacity to lead is undoubtedly affected.

Mentorship

Additionally, receiving mentorship was important for each woman's success to obtain tenure, as well as, mentoring students for their success, and extending mentorship to the community to develop a successful relationship with the institution. In Keway's (1997) research study, participants spoke to mentorship and networking as being crucial to their success through received support from family and friends to mentors and network relationships, Native and non-Native, who took a personal interest helping them in their careers.

Mentorship developed as an important facet of supporting Native faculty toward leadership. Mentoring others and being mentored were important to the six faculty participants in this study. Emma indicated her role as faculty working on several projects, oral history research regarding language revitalization and reclaiming knowledge, and working with elders in the community. She has both research and administrative roles in her institution. Alice worked on oral history research in Native communities. For her writing is a form of social justice. She discussed the importance of receiving mentorship from people and that she reciprocates her mentorship by working to get funding for graduate students' research. She also works with colleagues at other institutions and scholars across the globe. Rose described her work as "you walk the talk" and that her work speaks for itself. She described the stress associated with the tenure review process and the push for publication.

Rose expressed receiving mentorship from her mother and family was vital as well as her mentoring Native women who want to become leaders. Nancy discussed her struggle with the tenure review process when her Indigenous research method was called into question. She expressed the difficulty of deciding when to speak up on certain issues and mentioned the additional challenge of being advised to remain silent until receiving tenure. Nancy expressed supportive mentors help you understand the challenges you may face, guide you through difficult decisions and empower you to reach your full potential. Veronica manages multiple research projects and she sees herself as a researcher and not the traditional classroom teacher. In her role she observes, learns, and passes knowledge on to students and the next person. She also advocates for Native people, other women, and people of color. Regarding receiving and giving mentorship, Veronica stated, "being honest and open … it's really important to create safety, a safe environment, and that includes cultural safety." In Dineena's role as faculty, she emphasized her passion for working in education and research. She, too, multitasked and juggled several projects and advocates for Indigenous researchers using Indigenous methods. She envisions a positive change in the culture of higher education by bringing Native values, supporting community over individual success, and honoring traditions and predecessors. In Dineena's role as a mentor, she inspires individuals to recognize their strengths and potential and to cultivate them, emphasizing that each person has unique qualities that can contribute diverse perspectives.

The women in this study are comparable to those in Minthorn & Shotton's (2019) study of fifteen Indigenous women leaders in education.

> The women pointed towards mentorship as key in their development as leaders and acknowledged that they had benefited from their mentors, and as a result, felt a responsibility to mentor others. Mentoring was an intentional act, and although Indigenous women did not seek out leadership roles, they actively sought to mentor

> other Indigenous people, especially other Indigenous women. This desire goes beyond giving back and is related to the responsibility of creating paths that will contribute to the greater and future good of tribal communities (p. 21).

Theme 3

Theme three, Collaborative Leaders, connected with research question three, what stories do Native American women faculty tell to describe their experiences in higher education. This connection can be explained according to the life map of the Diné basket and to the living pillar of the conceptual framework and Diné philosophy of education. In the living pillar the women continued their journey to leadership by becoming collaborative leaders. Their narratives and stories align with their journey to leadership in higher education, as shown in Figure 11.

In theme three, collaborative leaders, the women discussed the subthemes, the importance of collaboration in leadership, working together with colleagues, supporting people and communities, and most importantly working with Native American and Indigenous communities. As they accepted their leadership role as faculty, their leadership extended to collaborative leadership. Theme three connects to the living pillar. In this pillar the women shared their experiences in their leadership journey as they became collaborative leaders. The women provided their narratives of collaboration with colleagues, encouraged collaboration in teaching, research, and publishing, and encouraged professional development. The women also advocated and supported community service, working with people, being community-minded, and contributing to one's tribe/nation and other Native American and Indigenous communities. From these experiences, they built relationships, partnerships, and networks, helping them prepare for their own careers, and offering aspiring leaders advice and wisdom on the importance of working with one another, the importance of sharing vision and goals, and the importance of community service.

The women in the study expressed that commitment to the community was a vital part of one's leadership role and responsibilities. Community commitment is a major theme when it comes to Native American culture and Native women leadership. In Wise-Erickson's (2003) community-based leadership findings, "community is the foundation of the American Indian culture and leadership" (p. 86). Simms' (2000) research concurs "Native American people prefer to look at the community as a source of power and leadership. The community view is inherent in the culture" (p. 643). Minthorn adds, "as an Indigenous leader we hold ourselves to a higher degree of responsibility in caring for the organization, community, and working with those around us" (p. 34). Emma works with her tribal community when they call upon her for knowledge and skills like critical analysis of written works, writing a resolution to an issue, and helping with various tribal projects. Alice works with the Native elder community and community-based organizations focusing on Indigenous history and social justice. Rose works on projects with teams dedicated to Native people. Nancy is committed to supporting communities, advocating for Native communities, and giving back. She also worked with colleagues advocating for Native opportunities that include funding, policy changes, and improvements on and off campus. Veronica defined a leader as "somebody who's in tune with the people … is a team builder … [She] advocates for Native people, other women, people of color, people from rural areas." Dineena "thinks that in terms of [her] own values around leadership … you are there to help your community and to help other people. That's the primary value of leadership."

As can be seen from their comments, community is a key to their work as faculty and an integral part of developing joint leadership. While they engage in community projects, it is also important that they derive research questions from these projects and from input given

by their community thus closely linking their service to community with their research. While this is an important aspect, the women in this study did not discuss in detail deriving research questions from their communities or the Native communities they worked with. However, Alice did comment that she did receive mentorship from the state's policy center for research regarding the six tribal communities she was working with and meeting with them to make sure her "research was ethical and right and going through the types of questions I was asking."

Theme Four

Theme four, From Adversity to Assurance to Advocacy corresponded with research question four, reflecting on their accomplished goals, what wisdom do Native American women faculty offer to those who aspire to become leaders. This connection was observed according to the life map of the Diné basket and to the assurance pillar of the conceptual framework and Diné philosophy of education. In the assurance pillar the women continued their journey to leadership as collaborative leaders, overcoming challenges, and moving on the path from adversity to assurance to advocacy as seen in Figure 11.

In theme Four, From Adversity to Assurance to Advocacy, the women discussed the subthemes of challenges, failures, and inequities. In this theme, the women continued their path to the next, from Adversity to Assurance to Advocacy. Theme four connects to the Assurance pillar. In this pillar, there were educational setbacks, academic time demands, academic isolation, criticism, challenges in the tenure review process, finding genuine collaborators, jealousy, competitiveness, tokenism, toxic environment, microaggression, stereotypes, racism, systemic racism, misattribution of race, lateral violence, gender bias, and imposter syndrome. In their role as faculty and leaders in the community, their leadership

broadened and their wisdom evolved. The women provided their narratives of their experiences as faculty with personal stories of challenges, failures, and inequities they encountered in their life, on their path to leadership, in their career as faculty, and in their experiences in higher education. From these experiences, the women learned how to find their strength, whether that be perseverance, persistence, taking initiative, pushing the boundaries, having resilience, and having a “tough skin” as Emma expressed. With positivity, purpose, and strength of character, the women offer guidance and wisdom to aspiring leaders to take action and to change the system rather than the system changing them.

Today, Native women leaders still face the same challenges and inequities that Native women leaders faced in 1998. According to Peterson-Hickey’s (1998) dissertation, Native women faced intolerance attributed to gender, race, class, isolation, aloneness, multiple responsibilities, multiple expectations, questions of competency, feeling like a token, and the role of an Indian expert. Minthorn & Chávez (2015) state, “we are often alone in many ways as Indigenous people and leaders in higher education” (p.12). Since Peterson-Hickey’s observation, I think that twenty-six years later, times have not changed as the women in this study have spoken on the same issues. Emma expressed her challenges with writing and feeling like a failure. She dealt with stereotypes and racism in higher education. She says, “in academia, you've got to have a very tough skin.” Alice saw brutality and racism in the news, on tv, toward Native women in her community. She experienced microaggressions and toxicity in academia. She laments that “structures of white supremacy are actively trying to push you out, all the time. And it's hierarchical and it's intended to exhaust you.” She dealt with a white male advisor who wouldn’t support her and her research and directed her to

Native Studies or Ethnic Studies. She dealt with a white male graduate student colleague who made her look the lesser and himself more important. Rose reflected on her struggles, when she spoke to her experience of failing college and her lack of career aspirations. She described a work place where she did not feel empowered and there was always a threat of punishment. She also felt the challenges of publishing in academia. Nancy mentioned her challenges encountered during the tenure and promotion process regarding the Indigenous methods used in her research. She encountered microaggression that challenged her confidence leading to imposter syndrome. Veronica voiced her challenges with the tiring effects of systemic and structural racism, encountering lateral violence and harassment coming from other Native people, other women of color, saying she's not Native enough by her own people or other Native people. She also experienced tokenism and being underestimated, being told that she couldn't be a leader because she looked like a kid, or your skin is brown, and you don't look like a researcher. She says the biggest challenge is actually isolation, social and professional isolation. Dineena elaborated on receiving serious criticism regarding her research work and her experience with misattribution of race from colleagues in the field. She also spoke of colleagues romanticizing her as a romance novel character. Dineena also spoke of her family where one can clearly see colonization quickly taking its affects over the generations with systemic racism in education, in the culture, and in their lives.

Summary of Themes

The four themes discussed Native women faculty's leadership journey in higher education. The women reflected on delving into the groundwork they laid for a career as faculty. They figured out that higher education was a space they wanted to be in as faculty.

They explored their leadership experiences inside and outside of academia as they cultivated their leadership role as faculty members emphasizing the significance of both giving and receiving mentorship. working and engaging with people and communities, and then addressing the challenges, failures, and inequities.

Implications for Higher Education

This study makes a valuable contribution to Native American leadership by focusing on the unique narratives and personal experiences of Native American women and their perspectives on leadership in higher education. This study's data will contribute to the understanding of how Native American women perceive themselves as leaders in academia.

The Native faculty in this study pointed out challenges they faced in academia such as the multitude of expectations placed on them, social and academic isolation, microaggressions, etc. Therefore, higher education institutions need to revisit and prioritize addressing and meeting the needs of Native and Indigenous faculty not only in their hiring practices to ensure inclusivity, but also in committing to and fostering equitable faculty representation and retention. Strategies and policies need to be developed that recognize the unique contributions and perspectives of Native scholars within the academic community. We need to ensure their voices are heard and valued in academic spaces. A conducive academic climate where they feel a sense of belonging will help them grow into leadership positions.

Each of the women expressed the multitude of expectations placed on them as Native women faculty that non-Native faculty do not encounter. Some of their time as faculty is devoted to foster a sense of representation for Indigenous perspectives on and off campus. They are asked to represent as sponsors or event coordinators for student clubs, associations,

and organizations. Added faculty responsibilities and expectations can include serving on "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" committees for the university, search committees, and mentoring Native students and colleagues, and serving as cultural representatives and advocates in their departments and beyond. Collaboration, advocacy, and community work can be at a local level within the university but can also require extra work at a tribal, state, and national level. Oftentimes, Native scholars and faculty are one of just a few experts in their field amplifying the urgency and necessity of their responsibilities to support their communities. Emma expressed her tribal community reaching out to her for her expertise that eventually led to implementation of policies for her tribe. Nancy indicated, "other responsibilities that I have for myself in being a representative is supporting and advocating for my tribal community." Dineena adds "you have more expectations put on you the longer you're in the field. You have things that people expect after a while." Rose says "I'm now faculty. Expectations within the position are sometimes really overwhelming emotionally, physically and mentally." This can be overwhelming for these Native scholars. Nevertheless, these Native scholars approach their responsibilities with respect and acceptance, understanding the significance of advocacy and representation in their roles within academia. Mentors in higher education institutions should guide Native faculty in balancing these multitude of expectations so that they are not overwhelmed by them.

Some of the findings from this study did not align with Western leadership theory and practice which underscores the need for higher education to embrace and incorporate more Native and Indigenous leadership theories and practice, providing opportunities for Native researchers to conduct research in this area. Furthermore, given the diversity in these communities, it is evident that they hold their own unique leadership theories, models, and

approaches that deserve recognition and inclusion within the academic discourse. This study contributes, through a Diné woman's research lens, to the Native American and Diné leadership research by providing a different lens toward a holistic leadership framework and approach that includes the Diné philosophy of Education, SNBH, and the Diné ceremonial basket. So, with this study's contribution, perhaps new Native American and Indigenous leadership theories, practices, frameworks, models, and approaches will develop.

The women in this study contributed to Indigenous research in their field with oral histories, projects regarding reclaiming Indigenous knowledge, projects related to revitalizing language, or using Indigenous methods in their research. Each researcher has a unique perspective on the research and the way in which they conduct it. Often times, this is not a simple process for Native faculty and scholars who want to give back to their communities by doing research regarding their people or communities, whether that be using traditional knowledge in their research, gathering data, and publishing the research. Their research or work may face rejection from the tribe's Institutional Review Board (IRB), a process that can have lengthy delays. It's not uncommon for the IRB review process to take several months or years, which can pose a significant challenge for these Native faculty on a tenure track timeline. Furthermore, if they were to get approval from the tribal IRB they still need to get approval through the university's IRB process which can add to the delays. Each institution has its IRB guidance on research with Native communities. Research requiring such approval from both entities, tribal and the university IRB, can be daunting work in itself. Therefore, it is critical that colleagues who evaluate Native faculty for tenure and promotion understand the challenges Native faculty face and make provision for them. Implementation of faculty guidelines needs to take into account unique situations such as these. Also, Nancy expressed

that Native research is often not pursued for monetary benefits by the researcher, such as book royalties or financial rewards. Despite these challenges, it is important to prioritize research involving Native populations and communities. This emphasizes the importance of fostering collaborative relationships between researchers, tribal communities, and academic institutions to facilitate the ethical conduct of research while honoring tribal sovereignty and cultural values.

Nancy expanded on this by stating that Native faculty "can run into the challenge of your research work not getting published." She indicated that the tribal leaders change every four years in her tribe. She says, "so, you can get an approval from a tribal leader in office the year of your research and the next, a new tribal leader declining your research work. This is significant time lost for faculty research responsibilities and having to start over." There's a critical need for collaboration between researchers, faculty colleagues, administrators, and Tribal leaders so that challenges faced in obtaining approvals are not held against them during their tenure review process. Nancy also indicated that "you have to ensure your work is ethical, respectful, and that you didn't do anything you weren't supposed to because at the end of the day you have to go home and face your people and community." She expressed that you have to have that collaboration with your tribal leaders, and cultural research teams, and the community.

Nancy additionally discussed her utilization of Indigenous methodologies in her research, which her colleagues did not readily acknowledge during her tenure review. She ultimately succeeded in passing her review, but she had to advocate and provide evidence to support the validity and importance of her research methodologies. The research they conduct in communities should be valued in the tenure and promotion process.

Therefore, higher education institutions should make provision for the acceptance of collaborative research with communities and indigenous research methods in the tenure and promotion process.

Future Research

Currently, there are published works focusing on Native American and Indigenous leadership roles at tribal colleges and tribal universities, works on Native women leaders in tribal council or in tribal organizations, and works on Native student leadership in college and universities but very little research on Native women faculty in higher education at a research institution. In my research I identified a clear need for future studies focusing on the lived experiences of Indigenous leadership in higher education, particularly with regard to Indigenous women serving as faculty in higher education. Such studies will contribute to research and literature on the lived experiences of Native women in higher education. There is a pressing need for future research concerning Native women's leadership in higher education, encompassing not only their lived experiences but also their roles as catalysts for institutional change and contributors to academic discourse. As catalysts, what changes are Native women making in higher education as faculty, as a professors, and leaders? How are they making these changes? In this study, Emma works with her tribe to reclaim Indigenous knowledge and language. Alice used her writing as a form of social justice in her oral history work. Rose had to make changes in her life when she became a single parent. Nancy's advocacy for the validation of her use of Indigenous methods during her tenure process has opened the door for others. Veronica's community-based research and education initiatives positively impact the healthcare and well-being of tribal communities. Dineena's research on

mentorship has made an impact in her field and in education. Each of these areas present potential opportunities for future research.

A potential future research study could investigate the broader acceptance and integration of Indigenous methodologies in higher education research. Researchers could explore factors influencing the acceptance of Indigenous methodologies, such as institutional policies, attitudes of colleagues and administrators, and perceptions of scholarly rigor and validity. Nancy highlighted her experience of incorporating Indigenous methods as part of her research to obtain tenure and promotion which, previously, was not seen as academic work or scholarship. In essence, this acceptance by her tenure review committee created a significant shift in academia in her department and institution because Nancy has not only validated the importance of Indigenous methodologies but she has paved the way for others to follow suit. Additionally, potential research could look at the impact of incorporating Indigenous methods on research outcomes, scholarly productivity, and career advancement for Indigenous scholars, particularly in relation to tenure and promotion processes. This research could provide valuable insights into the ongoing efforts to decolonize academic research practices and promote epistemological diversity within higher education.

Another crucial area for investigating is the barriers and challenges Native women face. The women in this study expressed racism, microaggressions, isolation, imposter syndrome, and toxicity in academia. Future research could investigate the structural barriers that Native women faculty encounter and have to navigate, often times impeding their tenure review process or their promotion or hiring. Future research regarding systemic challenges could explore racism and microaggressions in the workplace. All the women in this study experienced some form of racism in their life and at the workplace. In what ways can

institutions provide inclusive and safe spaces for Native faculty and scholars regarding their scholarship, resource allocation, support systems, mentorship, networking, and community engagement?

Overcoming barriers takes strength and resilience. So, I think another crucial area for future research in Native women leadership in higher education is focusing research on their resilience, their strength, their resistance, their adaptability, their activism. These women are catalysts for change. How do Native women face and overcome challenges and adversities as they pursue a career as a professor? This focus is warranted as the women in this study articulated numerous challenges and adversities they encountered, yet somehow made it through and succeeded. If we can find out what challenges Native women face as they pursue a professional career in higher education and how they face those challenges and overcome them then maybe future Native women leaders will be prepared, know what to expect, know how to handle these challenges, and know how to overcome some of these barriers.

Some of the women indicated their traditional beliefs or spiritual beliefs guided them as they pursued their endeavors in school, college, and careers. This is a potential area to study for future research. Perhaps, this is part of their strength and resilience. How do these cultural practices influence Native women's resilience?

Further research is needed exploring how intersectionality, gender, race, class, and sexuality, shape Native women's experiences both in society and in the workplace. Veronica discussed her mother's challenges with gender in the workplace. Alice spoke to racism she saw on tv, in the news, depicting violence against Native women. Dineena encountered inappropriate and offensive comments about her appearance as a romance novel character, a sexualization of Native women. Those kinds of comments are steeped in a long history of

hypersexualization of Native women in media and society. This further perpetuates the marginalization of Indigenous women that contributes to harmful stereotypes, discrimination, and gender inequality in the workplace. Additionally, this issue extends to the serious and pervasive problem of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women.

With more research on Indigenous women leadership in higher education we can better serve and prepare future Native and Indigenous women leaders who want to pursue a professional career in higher education. We need more representation of Native women and Native people with their contributions in these areas of research. We need more voices and lived experiences to reclaim our histories, our beliefs, our culture, and our identity. This is how we can give back.

As a Native researcher, I'm contributing to Native women leadership in higher education. I'm contributing my own perspectives and the lived experiences of the women in this study. Respectfully, I include my own perspectives of my culture and my beliefs as a Diné woman and scholar. I am contributing to Indigenous research through my lens of a Diné framework for leadership. As a Diné and Native woman scholar and researcher, I encountered the intricacies of the research process and experienced firsthand the journey of a PhD student. Further research can explore the unique challenges and perspectives of Native women researchers as students navigating higher education systems regarding work-life balance, support networks, financial resources, mentorship, collaboration, community engagement, intersectionality in academia, ethical research regarding Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous data sovereignty, and cultural sensitivity. Understanding these factors can provide strategies to support the success and well-being of Native women scholars in academia.

Concluding Thoughts

According to Brown (2024), a Diné historian's, video on Navajo Traditional Teachings:

> every person has the ability to lead but they have to learn and be taught, leadership in the homes, leadership in the organizations … Important to educate yourself and learn so that you know how to be a leader. It's not easy. You have to be willing to suffer everything with the people you lead and rejoice with them when you have victory and accomplish things. Leadership is a very lonely post. You have to say something or do something that nobody agrees with you. You have to stand by your values and stand by your principles to lead people in the right direction. It takes self-discipline that has to be learned.

According to Hill & Keogh Hoss (2018), "there is no direct pathway to leadership for native women in tribal communities. Native Women leaders come to their positions through their own personal journey, as well as their cultural, educational, professional, and relational experiences … Native women often have to find their way to their own spiritual, cultural, educational and professional pathways" (p. 228). In Minthorn & Chávez (2015), Brayboy acknowledges that "leadership is much more complicated and is carried out by more than individuals" (p.50). In Minthorn & Chávez (2015), Chávez says, "leaders today have much to do to transform our institutions to serve a diversity of constituents amid complex global circumstances. We must be activists who assist others in learning deeply, developing wisdom, and finding purpose" (p.154). Corey Still provides insight to leadership as "preparing to take on that role of warrior to ensure the well-being of our Indian people. Never give up, while there will be hard times, the joys of being able to help your people are a fulfilling reward. Find those attributes that make you the leader you are" (Minthorn & Chávez, 2015, p. 203). Native American leadership is complex just as it is in the western ideology.

In this study I'm translating what I know so that other Native American women understand their journey through the lens of the Native women in this study. I'm providing a sense of validation of the trial and tribulations that Native women leaders encounter and that they are not alone going through these experiences, good or bad. Based on my findings in this study I'm hoping to advocate for institutions to support Native American and Indigenous women in their endeavors as faculty to attain professorship. Institutions need to support Indigenous researchers and their research methods to get a better understanding of Native American women's leadership in higher education, and how these women serve their own and other Native communities. I have learned so much from conducting this research and from the perspectives of the women in this study regarding leadership as a Native woman faculty.

As a Diné woman, in the field of organization, information, and learning sciences, I entered the program with the focus on research regarding Native women and integrating my culture, beliefs, values, and traditions into my academic journey. I wanted to conduct a study regarding Native American women in higher education because I have worked almost 35 years in higher education as staff. Because of my extensive career as a staff employee in higher education, I have witnessed an increase in Native representation in faculty on campus in the past decade. This led to my interest in Native women as leaders in higher education and their responsibilities in their leadership roles as faculty. Which now has extended my curiosity and my interest of Native women leaders in all areas they lead. I was curious about the journey they undertook to establish themselves as professors and professionals in academia.

I learned from these women that leadership, especially Native leadership, does not constitute one definition. It is non-linear; It is working collaboratively, supporting, and bolstering the group, communities and people; it is supporting and advocating for Indigenous people, it is being part of a collective, having common goals, shared responsibilities, working toward the common good; it is thinking about others first; it is power with not power over; it is to listen, to communicate, to engage, to have a guiding vision; it is to be humble, to admit errors, to be trustworthy, to be ethical, to be compassionate, to be nice, to be generous, to be grounded; it is bringing positive changes; it embodies family, matriarchs, motherhood; it is knowing your culture, values, beliefs, traditions; it is about giving back to your communities. I would like to end with my favorite leadership analogy from Veronica because my Diné clans are Tábąąhá (Edge of Water) and Tótsohnii (Big Water), water clans. She visualizes leadership like water "water can be a gentle stream, or it can be just a drop and it has the ability to carve things, make things very grand. Water is humble.

Although the women found it difficult to identify or visualize themselves as a leader, I understand the hesitance. I thought about myself when I began this journey, and I, too, hesitated to think of myself as a leader. Perhaps, my reluctance was shaped by a Western perspective, where I viewed myself as staff and viewed faculty as occupying higher positions within a hierarchical structure, a world with labels and titles. This perspective likely influenced my initial understanding of leadership. Through this study, I gained insight that we can create our own balance stepping into two different worlds and spaces. We step into our own Native traditions where it is not a bad thing to not call yourself a leader because everyone works as a collective in the community. But, when we step into the world with labels and titles, and in this case, higher educational spaces, that adhere to Western

paradigms, you can go against that instinct and call yourself a leader even though it feels uncomfortable.

As a Diné woman, scholar, and researcher, this was an empowering journey. My journey was sometimes a “lonely post,” as Mr. Brown stated, but I was also fortunate to have the unwavering support from my families, colleagues, friends and the people I encountered along the way. Without the support of my dissertation committee, I would not be finishing this study. Additionally, I had the privilege to conduct this study, which further enriched my experience and understanding of Native women leadership in higher education. Throughout my journey, my thoughts always go back to T’áá hó’ ajít’éego (it’s up to you to make changes) and Changing Woman. I have to make change. We have to make change, changes for hózhǫ́ (health, beauty, and wellness, spiritually and physically) for the people. With this ideal, I know who I am. I am Tábąąhá, Tótsohnii, Honágháahnii, and Táchii'nii. I continue to think, to learn, to move forward, to figure things out, to push the envelope, to create paths of opportunities for others and myself, to work with people, and to have well-being and balance. Through my experiences and my lens, I redefined my own perspective of leadership.

APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW

Native American Women Leadership in Higher Education
Informed Consent for Interview
1/30/2023

Monica Dorame, from the Organization, Information, Learning Sciences PhD program, is conducting a research project. The purpose of the research is to explore Native American women faculty's perspective of leadership in higher education, their identity as a leader, their role as a leader and what contributed to their success at a southwestern university. This study will give us an understanding of lived experiences and how it shaped them to be a scholar, a professor, and an academician. This research is important because Native American woman voices provide a better understanding of lived experiences as Native American women educational leaders in 2023. You are being asked to participate because you are identified as a Native American woman faculty at a southwest university.

Your participation will involve a one-on-one, in person or virtual zoom interview. With your permission, the interviews will be recorded. The interview should take about 60-75 minutes to complete. The interview includes questions such as Can you please describe what the word "leadership" means to you? What experiences helped you to achieve your goals for becoming a leader? What are some challenges you experienced as you sought to become a leader in higher education? How do you see yourself as a leader? Your involvement in the research is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate. You can refuse to answer any of the questions at any time. There are no names or identifying information associated with your responses (participant 1, participant 2, participant 3, etc. will be used). There are no known risks in this research, but some individuals may experience discomfort or loss of privacy when answering questions. Data will be de-identified and regarded as confidential and will be stored in a password-protected computer, secure cloud storage on One Drive, kept behind a firewall and only accessed by the researcher. Once transcriptions are complete, recordings will be deleted. Participant's work department or tribal affiliation will not be mentioned to further privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. Your information collected for this project will NOT be used or shared for future research, even if we remove the identifiable information like your name or date of birth.

The findings from this project will provide information on understanding lived experiences and how it shaped Native American women faculty to be a scholar, a professor, and an academician. The study will contribute Native American women voices to the broader scope of the community and research in the field of leadership. If published, results will be presented in summary form only.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please feel free to call Charlotte Gunawardena at (505) 277-5046. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or about what you should do in case of any harm to you, or if you want to obtain information or offer input, please contact the UNM Office of the IRB (OIRB) at (505) 277-2644 or irb.unm.edu.

By signing below, you will be agreeing to participate in the above-described research.

______________________	______________________	________
Name of Adult Participant	Signature of Adult Participant	Date
______________________	______________________	________
Name of Research Team Member	Signature of Research Team Member	Date

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Subject Line: Opportunity to Participate in Research

Dear Participant,

I am conducting a research study to explore Native American women faculty's perspective of leadership in higher education, their identity as a leader, their role as a leader and what contributed to their success at a southwestern university.

You are receiving this email because you are identified as a Native American woman faculty at a southwest university.

The purpose of this research study will give us an understanding of lived experiences and how it shaped them to be a scholar, a professor, and an academician. This research is important because Native American woman voices provide a better understanding of lived experiences as Native American women educational leaders in 2023.

If you agree to participate, this study will involve a one-on-one, in person or virtual zoom interview. With your permission, the interviews will be recorded. The interview should take about 60-75 minutes to complete. The interview includes questions such as: Can you please describe what the word "leadership" means to you? What experiences helped you to achieve your goals for becoming a leader? What are some challenges you experienced as you sought to become a leader in higher education? How do you see yourself as a leader? Your involvement in the research is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate. You can refuse to answer any of the questions at any time. There are no names or identifying information associated with your responses (participant 1, participant 2, participant 3, etc. will be used). There are no known risks in this research, but some individuals may experience discomfort or loss of privacy when answering questions. Data will be de-identified and regarded as confidential and will be stored in a password-protected computer, secure cloud storage on One Drive, kept behind a firewall and only accessed by the researcher. Once transcriptions are complete, recordings will be deleted. Participant's work department or tribal affiliation will not be mentioned to further privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. Your information collected for this project will NOT be used or shared for future research, even if we remove the identifiable information like your name or date of birth.

This study is aiming for minimal risk. However, due to the pandemic or other unforeseen circumstances, some participants may experience discomfort or stress when answering questions. If such circumstances arise, participant can stop the interview or not answer the question(s). There could be potential for loss of data and confidentiality. To help in minimizing the harm, de-identification will occur immediately when transcribing interviews. The recordings and transcripts will be stored in a password-protected computer and secure cloud storage on One Drive, kept behind a firewall and only accessed by the researcher. The recordings will be destroyed once the transcriptions are complete.

While there is no direct benefit to the participant, results may help us understand lived experiences and how it shaped Native American women faculty to be a scholar, a professor, and an academician. The study will contribute Native American women voices to the broader scope of the community and research in the field of leadership.

As a Diné researcher, it is customary in my culture to give a small offering or gift to someone who's giving or contributing to your cause or benefit. In this study, participants will be contributing and sharing their stories, knowledge, culture, and traditional ways. This will contribute to Indigenous research and aid fellow colleagues and researchers to help understand Native American women leadership. In appreciation for their time and participation, each woman faculty member will be given a small gift bag, a wellness, holistic kit, that will include Navajo herbal tea ($5.00), a sage bundle ($5.00), and soap bar ($10.00) from Nizhoni Soaps. Nizhoni Soaps was started by Kamia Begay, a thirteen-year-old Diné entrepreneur, who is a young woman leader in the community. The gift bag will be given to each participant after their interview even if participant decides to withdraw from the study.

You do not have to be in this study, your decision to be in any study is totally voluntary. Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Demographic Information questions:

1. Could you tell me your age range (20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70+)?
2. Could you tell me your highest education level?
3. Could you tell me the type of school you attended (public, boarding, parochial, private, home)?
4. Are you the first in your family to attend college?
5. Are you the oldest, middle, or youngest child?
6. Were you raised on the reservation?
7. Do you live in an urban or rural community?
8. Do you practice the spiritual traditions of your community?
9. Do you participate in your Native traditional ceremonies?
10. Are you fluent in your Native language?
11. Could you tell me how many years of experience you have in higher education?
12. Could you tell me how many years of experience you have in teaching?
13. Who was the major influence in your life?

Interview Questions

The following interview questions relate to each of the four pillars in the Diné philosophy of learning.

Pillar 1 – Thinking

Prelude: Thinking about Leadership

1. Can you please describe what the word "leadership" means to you?
2. Can you please tell me about a leader you admire?

3. Can you please describe characteristics you associate with leadership?

4. Can you please describe elements of your Native American culture and traditions that have shaped the way you think of leadership?

5. When did you begin to visualize yourself in a leadership position in higher education?

6. How did you think about developing yourself to become a leader?

Pillar 2 – Planning

7. What factors influenced your career path?

8. What experiences helped you to achieve your goals for becoming a leader?

9. In your role as a faculty member in the higher education context, in which ways do you see yourself as a leader?

Pillar 3 – Living (Experience)

10. What are some of your lived experiences as a leader in higher education?

11. What are some challenges you experienced as you sought to become a leader in higher education?

Pillar 4 – Wisdom

12. How do you see yourself as a leader?

13. What factors contributed to your success as a leader?

14. How would you mentor Native women who want to become leaders?

15. What is your vision for leadership in higher education for Native American women faculty?

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