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Utilizing K'é to Build a New Mexico Higher Education Collaborative: Supporting Native Student Success

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UTILIZING K'É TO BUILD A NEW MEXICO HIGHER EDUCATION

COLLABORATIVE: SUPPORTING NATIVE STUDENT SUCCESS

by

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DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my husband, James E. P. Montoya, who is my rock and always continues to encourage me to pursue my dreams. I love you, James! I would also like to dedicate my dissertation research to our three beautiful children, Jacob, Justin, and Callie – you inspire me every day and always. I love you!

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is centered around a need's assessment and creation of a collaborative entity in New Mexico that will support Native students in higher education institutions. There is always a need to support Indigenous students pursuing post-secondary degrees in higher education programs, because often professionals and programs function in silos. Instead, professionals and programs that support Native students would benefit from working to create supportive environments where Native students can succeed; provide encouragement; and make their environments safe and welcoming. This can best be accomplished through collaborative efforts across New Mexico. A state level higher education collaborative would provide space to share issues and challenges Native students face, share best practices, and to create possible solutions to support Indigenous students in challenges they face. A collaborative would further provide space to network, build relationships, share ideas, establish a vision and goals, and provide mutual benefits for all constituents. Through a qualitative study that includes sharing circles and individual interviews; insights were gathered to assess needs in New Mexico, look at challenges and successes of other state-wide existing collaboratives, and present the outcomes and benefits of creating a collaborative. Through the voices of

Native American professionals who work in various capacities and institutions focused

on supporting Native students in post-secondary institutions, findings will demonstrate

the need and ideas for the creation of a state-wide collaborative. Through this study, I

also looked at similar initiatives that occurred in Arizona (ATUIE) and South Dakota to

enhance this research through benchmarking to gain insight into their respective

collaboratives.

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Introduction

Native college students pursuing a degree at any level have a variety of needs while overcoming challenges they encounter along the way to reach success. To meet these needs, I believe Native higher education professionals, faculty, and administrators should come together to help in many ways, not only within any postsecondary institution like Non-Native Colleges and Universities (NNCUs) (Shotton et al., 2013) or Tribal Colleges or Universities (TCUs) (AIHEC, 2019), but also more collectively within a particular region or state to form a greater Native professional community.

Native American students pursuing post-secondary degrees need continued support to improve recruitment, access, and retention rates. In higher education institutions that serve a high percentage of Native students, many may function to some degree in a silo on their college campus within their state or geographic area. Native-based programs within higher education institutions often work independently within an institution and across institutions to a degree. For example, professionals within various Native-based programs may function more separately, at times, rather than coming together. Yet Non-Native Colleges or Universities (NNCUs), a term coined in the book, *Beyond the Asterisk* (Shotton et al., 2013), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), a term developed by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC, 2019), community colleges, or tribal higher education departments, Native administrators, faculty, and professionals often face similar issues, concerns, or challenges in working to support Native college students in their respective communities. For Native students to persist, they need supportive environments, encouragement, role modeling, and

environments that are safe and welcoming where their tribal identity is honored and they can have a sense of community on campus (Austin, 2005; Brayboy et al., 2012; Huffman, 2001; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Minthorn, 2015; Shotton et al., 2013). NNCUs, TCUs, and tribal communities could benefit from sharing insights through a collaborative network or consortium.

Collaboration and community-centered approaches are a part of Indigenous communities from ever since we can remember (Cajete, 2015). Our tribal communities have worked together and draw strength from supporting one another. Mainstream institutions of higher education are created from a Western perspective and often from a competitive and individualist way. Tribal communities within a mainstream post-secondary institution can help one another across campus and across institutions to work with tribal communities to support Native college students. There is always a need to improve recruitment and retention of Native college students no matter the type of institution whether a NNCU or TCU.

Through this qualitative research study, I focused on determining if there is a need to build a collaborative partnership across New Mexico to support Native college students and to see what ideas exist for its formation. I also examined currently existing collaborations that occur in other states between NNCUs, TCUs, and tribal entities to learn about their formation, challenges, and successes. My study also included listening to the voices of current practitioners, faculty, and administrators who work in various capacities with Native college students across New Mexico regarding their cumulative knowledge, expertise, and ideas for the creation of a state-wide collaborative to support

Native student's higher education success. I also benchmarked these ideas to currently existing collaboratives occurring in Arizona and South Dakota.

Background Statistics of Native College Students

American Indian and Alaska Native student attendance and persistence in institutions of higher education are well below the national averages. As with their access to higher education, Indigenous students' participation in higher education is shaped by multiple factors at the individual, familial, community, tribal, and national levels (Brayboy et al., 2012, p. 53).

Native Americans face many factors in relation to completing college, usually in various combinations, which compounds the effect. Some factors impacting Native college student persistence includes cultural differences, campus context, and paying for college (Brayboy et al., 2012). Many American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) college students qualify for federal grants, which means they have a higher financial need and according to the national statistics many AI/AN students are enrolled in public postsecondary institutions that grant associate's or higher degrees (de Brey et al., 2019). Nationally, AI/AN students make up around one percent of all college students (de Brey et al., 2019). According to the data, in Fall 2016, of the 16.3 million undergraduate students, 129,000 were American Indian/Alaska Native (de Brey et al., 2019). In Fall 2016, of the 2.5 million postbaccalaureate students enrolled, 14,000 were American Indian and Alaska Native. About half of AI/AN graduate students attend public colleges or universities.

For first-time, full-time bachelor's degree seeking American Indian/Alaska Native students graduate at a higher percentage of 39 percent within six years versus 23 percent in four years (de Brey et al., 2019). This data shows us that Native students have a higher

graduation percentage with more time than 4 years. The numbers of Native college students graduating with master's or doctoral degrees is less than one percent in comparison to other races or ethnicities (Brayboy et al., 2012). This data shows us that the percentage of Native students pursuing degrees beyond bachelor's degrees is quite small.

Native professionals – administrators, faculty, and staff – do their part in assisting Native college students to persist and graduate with their higher education degrees. More Native students must be recruited and retained because they are the future leaders of our Native Nations. The authors in *Postsecondary Education for American Indian and Alaska Natives* stated:

> Improving postsecondary access for Indigenous students is a critical component of nation building. Ensuring a nation's well-being requires the strengthening of political, economic, social, cultural, and spiritual processes within communities. Individuals who seek the knowledge, skills, and social capital offered by institutions of higher education can play a role in these processes. Educational success is one prerequisite for political and economic success within tribal communities, and improving postsecondary access for Indigenous students is a crucial aspect of increased educational success among tribal nations (Brayboy et al., 2012).

We understand that building community on college campuses contributes to the success in terms of increased retention and graduation rates, thus building a larger collaborative within the state can only assist in this goal. The statistics are important to contextualize the numbers of Native college students we have nationally and within New Mexico to

better understand the need that exists. Nationally our numbers may be low, however

within New Mexico, we do have a significant number of Native college students to serve.

Need for Study

My qualitative research study contributes to literature on ways to increase Native

college student retention and graduation rates. Some scholars discussed the importance of

Native identity and ways to honor Native people (Huffman, 2001; Larimore &

McClellan, 2005; Shotton et al., 2013); others looked at the need to build a connection,

have role models, and a strong Native community on college campuses (Ecklund &

Terrance, 2013; Keene, 2018; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Martin & Thunder, 2013;

Minthorn, 2015; Minthorn & Shotton, 2015; Tachine & Francis-Begay, 2013). Other

scholars looked at college preparation and improving pathways into college and helping

Native college students return to tribal communities (Francis-Begay, 2013; Guillory,

2013; Kant et al., 2014; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Lee, 2007). My study contributes

to what other scholars note in the importance of building partnerships and collaborations

within and between postsecondary institutions and tribal entities (Francis-Begay, 2013;

Guillory, 2013; Nichols & Kayongo-Male, 2003; Tachine & Francis-Begay, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The premise of my study is community-centric with the opportunity to engage the

research process itself to provide K'é (kinship, community, and our connection to our

relatives) at the state-wide level across multiple higher education institutions and tribal

communities. It allowed for the opportunity to gather insights on a possible coalition and

its process and focus – for a long-term purpose to help Native college students succeed.

Data collection methods included individual interviews and sharing circles with those in

New Mexico and individual interviews with those with an existing collaborative at their higher education institution in Arizona and South Dakota. All participants were higher education Native administrators, faculty, and professionals with expertise working with Native students attending state universities, TCUs, and community colleges. By providing space to begin discussing the development of a coalition in New Mexico, I explored the possible creation of a collaborative in the future for our state. The state-wide collaborative work would allow opportunities for sharing ideas, problem-solving to support Native college students in New Mexico, for the opportunity to learn, network, and connect. This qualitative research study looked closer through a variety of diverse perspectives to assess the need and to build ideas for the creation of a state-wide collaborative that supports Native college students with the following research questions.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. Is there a need to form a higher education state-wide collaborative in New Mexico to support Native students attending college?

2. What ideas exist among participants regarding the formulation of a higher education state-wide collaborative to support Native college students?

3. What are the potential challenges in creating a state-wide collaborative and how might they be overcome?

4. How do existing collaboratives initiatives in other states function, how were they created and how are they sustaining?

5. What are some insights, factors, and processes that would help a state-wide collaborative succeed in New Mexico?

Conceptual Framework of Study

Throughout this study, the following values and beliefs are a part of my research design, implementation of my study, and throughout the whole research process from beginning to end.

K'é. The Diné concept of K'é means kinship and that connection to our relatives (personal communication, Marie D. Lewis, June 15, 1987). It is at the basis of the relationships we have. In my home community, K'é reminds me to share my Diné clans and to recognize my relatives. I would often hear my parents as they encounter various people, they would find out what their clans were to understand their relationship to the person they were speaking with. Recognizing our clans and where we come from helps create a sense of community because it shows our connection to other Indigenous people. Our family has been taught by Shimásání (maternal grandmother) and Shinálí Asdzáán (paternal grandmother) of the importance of working together and helping one another. Lee in the chapter, "K'é and Tdayp-tday-gaw: Embodying Indigenous relationality in research methods," said, "…this concept of K'é, which is like kinship, and family and love. It's all those things, how you relate and interact with people, it's to support one another, it's to just care and love one another…" (Tsinnajinnie et al., 2019, p. 42). Lee further notes,

> K'é is a Diné term that refers to kinship and relationships in one's family and
> community. However, it can be understood as both a noun and a verb because its
> deeper meaning refers not only to your family relationships, but also to a way of
> interacting and supporting your family and community... K'é involves loving,
> supporting, providing, and sacrificing for your family, and is practiced at family

or community events, ceremonies, celebrations, and in everyday life.

(Tsinnajinnie et al., 2019, p. 49).

I incorporate this concept of K'é into my work at the university. To me, this means

creating a welcoming and home-like atmosphere for the students I work with, but also to

network and work collaboratively with my campus colleagues. In Diné bizaad (Navajo

language), Da'áhiiniitą' also represents the meaning of collaboration. Da'áhiiniitą'

translated into English means to hold one another up or uplift each other (personal

communication, William Nakai, August 2018). It is important to uplift or hold others up

in a collaborative partnership. Through K'é we can meet the needs of the tribal

communities we serve. On our college campuses, this means meeting the needs of our

students and overall Native community. Through K'é we serve Native students and

nurture their growth and development. To serve our students, we need to look at ways to

improve our processes and make them more manageable and understandable. We can

also improve or create new programs to increase recruitment, retention, and graduation

rates of our Native students. Lee (2020) describes as:

> K'é does not emphasize independence, self-reliance, and separateness; rather,
>
> people connect themselves to all entities in this world. This relation creates a bond
>
> in which the individual understands that they are not alone and have family in
>
> places. It also shows the love and peacefulness humans seek and want. Fulfillment
>
> comes from the social and affective acts and bonds, which helps the person unite
>
> and harmonize with the social universe.

I continue to utilize K'é in my life and as a researcher it framed and provided guidance in

my study. K'é informed my research design and process to think about creating a

stronger state-wide higher education Native community. I will discuss this further in Chapter 3, where I talk about my research design and how I applied K'é through my design and behavior choices.

Da'áhiiniitą'- Collaboration. Collaboration has always been a part of Indigenous communities (Cajete, 2015). Cajete notes:

> In American Indian contexts, community networks of relationship form the cornerstone of all social activities. The nature and expression of community form a primary foundation for tribal identity. Community was the context in which tribal leaders were historically formed. It is through community that American Indian people came to understand the nature of their 'personhood' and their connection to the 'communal soul' of their people. For many American Indians today, community is the place where 'forming of face (identity), heart (passion) and foundation (core values)' of the individual as one of the 'people' is most fully expressed. Community is the context in which the American Indian person comes to know the nature of relationship, responsibility, and participation in the lifeways of one's people. (Cajete, 2016, p. 366)

Community is where we connect to our relatives and build relationships and is a place for learning, sharing, and connecting. Colonialism has been based upon individualism, which can often be competitive with individual rewards. Western society is individualistic and based upon capitalism and often erases the community. Individual egos can thrive in this type of environment. Community is at the basis of our Indigenous communities and is "the medium and the message" (Cajete, 2015, p. xiii). Cajete notes that traditional Indigenous communities were reciprocal and based upon harmony and

well-being (2016). Collectively we can fix issues and problems that may arise. Through collaboration we can build mutually beneficial partnerships, which can sustain our communities. This communal approach reflects the values of relationships and responsibilities. Also, collaborative efforts help us develop a mission and vision as a community. Community learning is important to Indigenous communities both historically and in today's world and this can occur through community-based research and collaboration. I applied the Diné concept of Da'áhiiniitą' (lifting others up) to my research design, which is further discussed in Chapter 3, in the research design and the connection to incorporating K'é. For example, the individual interviews and sharing circles were opportunities to begin to build this larger Native higher education community of professionals that network, share, and connect to further support Native college students.

Hózhǫ́. Hózhǫ́ is a Diné-centered philosophy that represents beauty and balance in our lives (personal communication, Marie D. Lewis, June 15, 1986). Hózhǫ́ means maintaining well-being and balance in what we do and how we do things (personal communication, Peggy L. Nakai, June 15, 1986). Werito describes Hózhǫ́ as,

> a philosophical idea… as being central to Navajo life and integral to the philosophy of SNBH [Sa'ąh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón] and the Hózhǫ́ǫ́jí (Blessing Way) and Naayee'jí (Protection Way) teachings. SNBH is our life that we strive to live, yet it is also part of our thoughts, language, prayers, and songs and its integral to our inherent human quality for making sense of our lives and striving for harmony, peace, and justice. (Werito, 2014, p. 27).

Living with this mindset is a way to nourish our mind, body, and soul. I utilized this Diné philosophy of maintaining balance and beauty throughout my research design, with my interactions with my study participants, and with the new knowledge I gained from this study. The concept of Hózhǫ́ helped me be respectful of this process and provided me with a positive outlook about the possibility of the creation of this collaborative. For example, I utilized the concept of Hózhǫ́ in finding a balance of perspectives and views shared in this study, that there is representation from across the state and with the type of professionals included in the study. To provide balance in my research design, I reached out to participants from across the four cardinal regions of east, south, west, and north. Also, I utilized Hózhǫ́ in the sharing circle and individual interview questions, by the questions remaining open-ended, that they were not leading questions, but open for the participants to include their thoughts, views, and perspectives equally.

Hoł íłį - Respect. My parents, grandparents, and other relatives have always taught me the importance of respect – having respect of myself, respecting others, and showing respect for everything around us. Secatero (2015) describes "Respect all living things" in his section about "Environmental Well-Being (Place)," when talking about his leadership model:

> As leaders, our environment or sense of place is very important in serving our people, our communities, and the world at large. Environmental well-being is the acknowledgement of place and feeling comfortable in our sense of surrounding. Environmental well-being is also being the "care-taker" of the environment and having respect for all living things including Mother Earth and Father Sky. As for

leadership, environmental well-being plays an important role in establishing a

positive and nurturing environment for all people in a community.

Respect is connected to relationships and our relationality to others and our environment.

Shawn Wilson in his book, *Research is Ceremony* (2008), when talking about an

"Indigenous Research Paradigm," he noted, "from an epistemology and ontology based

upon relationships, an Indigenous methodology and axiology emerge" (p. 77). Wilson

(2008) further explains,

> The knowledge that the researcher interprets must be respectful of and help to
>
> build the relationships that have been established through the process of finding
>
> out information. Furthermore, the Indigenous researcher has a vested interest in
>
> the integrity of the methodology (respectful) and the usefulness of the results if
>
> they are to be of any use in the Indigenous community (reciprocity).

Minthorn (2015a) when talking about the leadership value of respect, she notes:

> Having respect for oneself and respect for others is another value that is highly
>
> regarded within our family and especially within our community. Respect means
>
> that you have respect for other people's views and perspectives and what they
>
> represent. This value is carried into the interactions we have with others.

Respect was an important value in this study in working with the participants and with

the data that I collected. I treated this process with respect from the research design,

through implementation, and in analyzing the data I gathered. I was respectful towards

my participants by being a good listener and learner. I was respectful of the participant's

time and their knowledge that they shared. Their voice was important, and I listened

carefully to make meaning based upon what they shared. Another form of respect I used

in this study was in being culturally responsive to the participants and understanding that they come from multiple tribal perspectives shared with diverse forms of practice. Currently, the state of New Mexico is quite diverse with 24 tribal nations represented and other Indigenous nations represented in the various academic institutions where this study was held.

Mode of Inquiry

Qualitative research was important to this study to make meaning of the experiences of administrators, faculty, and staff members regarding the creation of a state-wide collaborative in New Mexico to support Native college students. Interviews and the sharing circle discussions allowed for the opportunity to begin building relationships and that sense of community within our state. Observation notes after conducting an interview or sharing circle gave me the chance as a researcher to reflect on the interactions and responses. After transcribing the interviews or focus group sessions, I followed up with the participants to allow for further input. A qualitative research method provided the space for building community through this research study.

Sites of Study

Data was collected from a variety of academic institutions of higher education that support Native students. Institutions represented in this study included Non-Native Colleges and Universities (NNCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). Each post-secondary institution in this study serves Native students from various New Mexico-based tribes as well as other tribes from outside of New Mexico. I have colleague contacts at some of the institutions and to honor pre-existing relationships I requested access for my study. I sought out to connect with four-year institutions, University of

New Mexico, New Mexico State University; the following TCUs: Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, Institute of American Indian Arts, and Navajo Technical University; the following community colleges: Central New Mexico Community College, San Juan College, and UNM Gallup-Branch. I reached out to professionals that have an existing collaborative such as the *Arizona Tri-State Universities for Indian Education (ATUIE)* at the University of Arizona and the *Wokini Initiative* in South Dakota State University to further benchmark my understanding of existing collaboratives to help answer my research questions. Outreach to these areas outside of New Mexico was a separate inquiry but was important and directly tied to my topic and research questions.

Methodology/Research Philosophy

In this study, I utilized the following methodologies: social constructivist, appreciative inquiry, meaning making, and pragmatism. A social constructivist worldview allowed for deep listening and observing and gave the participants the opportunity to make meaning (Creswell, 2009). This worldview allows for questions to be open-ended as much as possible, to be community-based, and matched qualitative research methodology. Through appreciative inquiry, I appreciated the perspectives that each participant provided regarding my research questions (Creswell, 2009). I gathered meaning from each interaction from the individual interviews and sharing circles. From a pragmatic perspective, I learned what was most effective by gaining a better understanding of the challenges and successes the participants provided (Creswell, 2009).

Data was gathered from individual interviews, focus group sessions, and interviews from those with an existing collaborative. I listened for multiple perspectives through these types of approaches to find out the need and ideas for the creation of a

state-wide collaborative. I incorporated variation in position level, the location each

person represented, and the cumulative knowledge each participant had in working with

Native college students. I incorporated perspectives from participants with a variety of

tribal backgrounds and affiliations with various communities represented in NNCUs,

TCUs, community colleges, and tribal communities. The participants also varied in

gender and age.

Researcher Positionality in Relation to this Study

I have familiarity and relatability in relation to this research topic. I have worked

in the higher education field since 2004 with a background in financial aid and

scholarship work, Native student programming, and academic advising. I have worked at

the University of Notre Dame from 2004 until 2006 and at the University of New Mexico

from 2007 until the present time in 2021. My experiences in higher education having

worked with Native students shaped my views on this study. Since moving to New

Mexico in 2006, I have become more familiar with the various Pueblos and Apache

Nations. Also, as an asdzáán (woman), being a wife, a mother, a student, and professional

with my familiarity of growing up living on the Navajo Nation, attending primary and

secondary schools on the reservation and living in the city, shaped my views and

experiences, which enabled me to relate to my participants and to the Native students we

all serve. My Diné values provided guidance in my research process and analysis, which

led to my Indigenous methodology and framework that I used throughout my research

study.

Through my work experience in financial aid, scholarships, Native-based program

initiatives, and academic advising, I was able to relate to this study in understanding the

various needs of our Native students, the Native communities, especially in New Mexico.

My background in attending a four-year private college, working for a private college,

and working for a public mainstream institution also shaped my views in this study to

relate to other Native professionals who have also worked in higher education in a variety

of ways.

Key Assumptions Made in Relation to this Study

The data shows us that enrollment of Native American students nationally

increased from 2000 to 2010, but now has decreased from 2010 to 2016 (de Brey et al.,

2019). At the University of New Mexico, there have been enrollment decreases for all

student populations. The data also shows that there are 12,330 of Native college students

in New Mexico, which is around nine percent of the total enrollment in postsecondary

institutions in Fall 2016 (New Mexico Higher Education Department, 2018). In working

at the university, I have seen the need to work together to recruit, retain, and to further

assist Native students in reaching their academic and professional goals. There is a need

to increase retention and graduation rates for Native students nationally, but also locally

in New Mexico.

A key assumption made in relation to my study is that the creation of a state-wide

collaborative would increase retention and graduation rates of Native college students in

New Mexico. I assumed with my study that with the creation of a greater Native

community of Native professionals networking and partnering together across the state

would also improve Native college student persistence.

Limitations of the Study

I recognized that a limitation to this study is that I am mostly focusing on New Mexico and benchmarking only from a couple of collaborative initiatives in the United States. While searching for other collaboratives nationally, I encountered many more initiatives happening at many colleges and universities through viewing various websites, however I did not find much research written about these collaboratives specifically state-wide connecting colleges, universities, tribal colleges, and tribes. A limitation of this study was that it could not be generalized to fit all collaboratives, however it has offered insights about collaborative efforts between NNCUs, TCUs, and tribal communities.

A limitation of this study is that I am only working with institutions that reside in the state of New Mexico borders. For example, the Navajo Nation expands across Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico, but I focused on one part of the Navajo Nation – mainly the New Mexico side and parts of northeastern Arizona. The Diné Nation is a sovereign nation with pre-existing land based before statehood. For the purpose of my study, I kept the focus on New Mexico and parts of northeastern Arizona of the Navajo Nation.

Another limitation was that I only focused on higher education, whereas Indigenous education includes all levels from pre-kindergarten to doctoral level. Indigenous education discussion should encompass all levels, however due to the timeframe and the scope of this dissertation, I focused on higher education specifically.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined as indicated.

American Indian/Alaska Native, AI/AN, Native American, Native, Indigenous – refers to people of American Indian or Alaska Native decent who are Indigenous to North America. Most institutions of higher education do not require documentation to identify

as American Indian, Native American, or Native, except for tribal colleges like Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute. Documentation was not used to identify Native practitioners, faculty, or administrators in this study. Each participant self-identified their tribal affiliations.

Tribal College or University, TCU – refers to postsecondary institutions of higher education that were "created and chartered by its own tribal government for a specific purpose: to provide higher education opportunities to American Indians through programs that are locally and culturally based, holistic, and supportive. All TCUs offer associate degree programs, 14 offer baccalaureate programs; five offer master's degree programs" (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2019).

Non-Native College or University, NNCU – was defined in *Beyond an Asterisk* (Shotton et al., 2013), which refers to a non-tribally based institution of higher education. It may also be referred to as mainstream that was not founded on the basis of Indigenous values, by Native peoples or tribes, but is predominately focused from the Western perspective.

Collaborative/Coalition – refers to a gathering between NNCUs, TCUs, tribes, or with tribally-based entities in support of Native college students in a particular region or state.

K'é – a Diné philosophy centered around the concept of kinship, relatives, family, or community. "K'é refers to affectionate action in the concepts of love, compassion, kindness, friendliness, generosity, and peacefulness" (Lee, 2020).

Hózhǫ́ – a Diné philosophy coming from the Diné concept of Sa'ąh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón (SNBH), which represents beauty and balance, being in harmony with the natural world or with everything around us.

Da'áhiiniitą' – a Diné concept meaning to hold up others or uplift them.

Hoł ílį́ – a Diné concept that means respect or having respect for someone or something.

Nitsáhákees – a Diné concept meaning thinking. This is used in the Diné philosophy of living and learning and represents the east, early dawn, the eastern Navajo Sacred Mountain.

Nahat'á – a Diné thought around planning. This is used in the Diné philosophy of living and learning and represents the south, day, the southern Navajo Sacred Mountain.

Iiná – a Diné view which means living. This is used in the Diné philosophy of living and learning and represents the west, sunset, the western Navajo Sacred Mountain.

Siihasin – a Diné belief of assurance, evaluation, fulfillment. This is used in the Diné philosophy of living and learning and represents the north, night, the northern Navajo Sacred Mountain.

Professionals/practitioners – refers to staff members who work at institutions of higher education, which includes NNCUs or TCUs.

Faculty – refers to tenured track or non-tenured track faculty of various ranks that work and teach in institutions of higher education. This would include adjuncts, assistant professors, associate professors, or full professors.

Administrators – refers to those who work in post-secondary institutions that hold a leadership position. This includes managers, directors, unit administrators, vice

presidents, or those with other leadership roles in higher education NNCUs or TCUs, where they often oversee programs, departments, divisions or other special positions.

Summary

In summary, this research study focused around assessing the need and creation of a state-wide collaborative in New Mexico that would support Native students attending New Mexico higher education institutions. Native college students need support to increase retention and graduation rates. Often times, many Native-based programs face similar challenges in serving Native students. Collaborative efforts can help provide space for sharing successes, discussing issues and concerns Native practitioners, faculty, and administrators face, but also giving opportunities to think of solutions to support Native students across the state of New Mexico and to work better with the tribal communities in our state.

Through this qualitative research study with an Indigenous methodology, I provided a voice for professional, faculty, and administrators who work in various capacities across many higher education institutions in New Mexico who support Native students in their respective areas. With this study I also examined what other collaborative initiatives have done, how they started, and how they are sustaining. This study explored how a state-wide collaborative would help increase recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of Native students in higher education in New Mexico as well as how these collaboratives work in other states and might work in New Mexico.

Chapter two presents statistical data on Native college students to better understand the Native college students in New Mexico. It also provides a deeper understanding of the existing literature around Native college student success and on the

topic of cross-institutional collaborative initiatives. The literature review also looks at

collaborative efforts and what they can mean for a collaborative between colleges,

universities, tribal colleges, community colleges, and tribal communities. Chapter three

explains the research methodology for this study. Chapter four emphasizes people and

place and introduces the Diné framework used throughout the data analysis, the findings,

discussion, and recommendations. Chapter five provides the findings of this research

study, which is organized with the Diné framework. Chapter six offers a discussion,

responses to the five research questions, presents a model based on the Diné framework

with recommendations for creating a collaborative entity. Overall, this study explored the

need for the creation of a state-wide collaborative in New Mexico and some insights and

challenges for this process.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

In this chapter, I will share my review of the background of this study in two parts. In Part I, I am presenting the statistics on Native students in higher education to provide a foundational background about the numbers of Native college students in Non-Native Colleges or Universities (NNCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). Statistics of Native college student enrollment, graduation rates at the national and state levels are shown in this chapter to emphasize the importance of every Native college student in any post-secondary institution. When comparing Native college student statistics to other ethnicities, the data shows that we have a significant number of Native college students that we serve in New Mexico higher education institutions and to show the significance of the need for this study to help Native higher education professionals collaboratively work together for greater Native student success.

In Part II of this chapter, I provided more detail on existing literature around ways other Native scholars indicated are ways to improve retention and graduation rates of Native students in higher education. In the second part of this chapter, I presented various themes that arose through reviewing the existing research around this topic as well as in my search for research on building collaborative partnerships statewide across multiple entities connected to Native student success in higher education.

Part I - Statistics

Important Statistics of Native American College Students

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 2019 Report, *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2018*, the total national

college enrollment rate in 2016 for American Indian and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) was around one percent of all college students. From the full-time, full-year undergraduate students, 87 percent of AI/AN students received financial aid grants in the 2015-2016 year. The six-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate students who pursued a bachelor's degree at a four-year degree-granting institution in Fall 2010 was 39 percent for AI/AN students (de Brey et al., 2019). In Fall 2016, the percentage of American Indian and Alaska Native undergraduate students enrolled in degree granting institutions includes 81 percent in public, 12 percent in private nonprofit, and seven percent in private for-profit institutions. Of the AI/AN college students enrolled in degree-granting institutions that grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs, shows a significant number of Native college students have a high financial need and qualify for federal grants and are mostly enrolled in public institutions nationally (de Brey et al., 2019).

National college participation rates for 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled for American Indian and Alaska Natives was 16 percent in 2000, 18 percent in 2003, 41 percent in 2010, and 19 percent in 2016 (de Brey et al., 2019). Enrollment of American Indian and Alaska Native students increased by 29 percent between the years 2000 and 2010, in which the enrollment went from 139,000 to 179,000. Then from 2010 to 2016, enrollment decreased by 28 percent from 179,000 to 129,000 (de Brey et al., 2019).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report (de Brey et al., 2019), those they counted enrolled in postbaccalaureate degree programs included master's, doctoral, and specialized programs such as law, medicine, and dentistry. Enrollment of postbaccalaureate American Indian and Alaska Native students increased

by 36 percent from the years 2000 to 2010, which was from 13,000 to 17,000 students. Then from the year 2010 to 2016, there was a decrease of American Indian and Alaska Native graduate level students by 20 percent, which is from 17,000 to 14,000 (de Brey et al., 2019). The breakdown of graduate level American Indian and Alaska Native students attending a public higher education institution was 50 percent, while 35 percent attended private nonprofit, and 15 percent attended private for-profit institutions (de Brey et al., 2019). The national statistics show that about half of the number Native graduate students attend public institutions.

National Graduation Rates for Native Students. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report (de Brey et al., 2019), notes graduation rates for first-time, full-time bachelor's degree seeking students from four-year postsecondary institutions across all races and ethnicities for those entering college in 2010. The postsecondary graduation rates for American Indian and Alaska Native students to finish in four years is 23 percent. To complete a bachelor's degree in five years, the graduation rate for American Indian and Alaska Native students is 35 percent. For American Indian and Alaska Native students to complete a bachelor's degree in six years, it is 39 percent (de Brey et al., 2019). The national statistics show that more Native college students graduate in 6 years than a typical four-year span.

The 2019 NCES report also notes graduation rates within six years for completing a bachelor's degree for first-time attended, full-time undergraduate students enrolled at a four-year postsecondary institution. For those students who entered college in 2010, the graduation rate for American Indian and Alaska Native students from a public institution was 36 percent. American Indian and Alaska Natives who graduated in six years from a

private nonprofit institution was 49 percent graduation rate. The graduation rate of American Indian and Alaska Native students finishing their degree in six years from a for-profit private institution, was 20 percent (de Brey et al., 2019). In the book, *Postsecondary Education for American Indian and Alaskan Natives*, the authors state,

> We know that many Indigenous students who pursue postsecondary education often do so over a number of years, with breaks for various reasons, and by attending multiple institutions before completing a single degree. As long as success along the pipeline continues to be defined as completing a single institution, Indigenous students will continue to be framed as failures in higher education. (Brayboy et al., 2012, p. 2).

The authors further note, "any time an Indigenous student completes college, it is a victory not only for the individual, but for their communities as well" (Brayboy et al., 2012, p. 107). It is important for Native students to complete their undergraduate degrees no matter the timeframe or transferring between institutions.

The total number of bachelor's degrees awarded to American Indian and Alaska Native students increased from 9,000 in 2000-2001 school year to 9,700 in 2015-2016 school year (de Brey et al., 2019, p. 146). The total number of master's degrees awarded to AI/AN has increased by 42 percent from 2,500 in 2000-2001 to 3,500 in 2015-2016 school year. For doctoral degrees awarded, it increased by 15 percent for AI/AN from 710-810 in the same respective school years (de Brey et al., 2019, p. 148). Native college students at any level need continued support to help increase the number of graduates of higher education degree programs.

Native College Student Enrollment in New Mexico. The following New Mexico statistics show the percentages of Native American student enrollment in the various New Mexico postsecondary institutions. According to the 2018 Annual Report for New Mexico Higher Education, there was about nine percent Native American students in the Independent Community Colleges in AY17 of the 46,445 total enrollment of students attending Clovis Community College, Central New Mexico Community College, Luna Community College, Mesalands Community College, New Mexico Junior College, New Mexico Military Institute, San Juan College, and Santa Fe Community College in Table 1 (New Mexico Higher Education Department, 2018).

Table 1

Percentage of Native American Enrollment in New Mexico Community Colleges

Community College	City	% of Native American Enrollment	Total Headcount All Ethnicities
Central New Mexico CC	Albuquerque	6.5%	24,480
Clovis CC	Clovis	0.5%	3,426
Luna CC	Las Vegas	0.4%	1,375
Mesalands CC	Tucumcari	2.4%	1,005
New Mexico Military Institute	Roswell	2.6%	493
New Mexico Junior College	Hobbs	1.0%	2,459
San Juan College	Farmington	31.5%	7,363
Santa Fe CC	Santa Fe	5.3%	5,844

Note. The data in this table reflects Native American student enrollment from Fall 2018 in New Mexico community colleges and shows a significant number of Native college students attending San Juan College with 31.5% enrollment.

Branch Community College total enrollment in AY17 is 11.26 percent for Native American students of the total 23,086 enrollment of all New Mexico Branch Community

Colleges from Eastern New Mexico University (ENMU), New Mexico State University (NMSU), and the University of New Mexico (UNM) according to the New Mexico Higher Education Department 2018 Annual Report in Table 2.

Table 2

Percentage of Native American Enrollment in New Mexico Branch Community Colleges in AY17

Branch Community College	City	% of Native American Enrollment	Total Headcount All Ethnicities
ENMU – Roswell	Roswell	1.6%	2,682
ENMU – Ruidoso	Ruidoso	18.7%	638
NMSU – Alamogordo	Alamogordo	3.7%	1,729
NMSU – Carlsbad	Carlsbad	1.3%	2,054
NMSU – Dona Ana	Las Cruces	1.2%	7,951
NMSU – Grants	Grants	32.7%	1,042
UNM – Gallup	Gallup	74.1%	2,221
UNM – Los Alamos	Los Alamos	5.3%	958
UNM – Taos	Taos	4.8%	1,512
UNM – Valencia	Valencia	6.0%	2,290

Note. There is a significant number of Native American students at UNM Gallup with 74% of the total student population.

Table 3

Percentages of Native American Enrollment in New Mexico Comprehensive Universities and Colleges in AY17

University or College	City	% of Native American Enrollment	Total Headcount All Ethnicities
Eastern New Mexico University	Portales	3.0%	6,161
New Mexico Highlands University	Las Vegas	7.9%	3,363
Northern New Mexico College	Espanola	9.1%	1,115
Western New Mexico University	Silver City	3.3%	3,088

Table 4

Percentages of Native American Enrollment in New Mexico Research Universities in AY17

Research University	City	% of Native American Enrollment	Total Headcount All Ethnicities
New Mexico Tech	Socorro	3.3%	2,005
New Mexico State University	Las Cruces	1.7%	14,445
University of New Mexico	Albuquerque	5.2%	26,140
University of New Mexico Health Science Center	Albuquerque	2.6%	421

The tribal college enrollment of Native American students in New Mexico in Fall 2016 total was 2,726 students. Diné College had 412 Native American students, Institute of American Indian Arts had 365, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute had 367, and Navajo Technical University had 1,582 students enrolled by the census date in Fall 2016 (New Mexico Higher Education Department, 2018).

According to the enrollment in Fall 2016, the institutions with the highest numbers of Native American students includes 2,430 at San Juan College, 1,855 at the University of New Mexico – Gallup Branch, 1,588 at Central New Mexico Community College, 1,582 at Navajo Technical University, and 1,418 at the University of New Mexico. The next highest enrollment of Native American students in Fall 2016 were 412 at Diné College, 367 at Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, 365 at the Institute for American Indian Arts, 353 at New Mexico State University-Grants Branch, 265 at New Mexico Highlands University, and 264 at New Mexico State University (New Mexico Higher Education Department, 2018). These state statistics show where there are high

numbers of Native college students in various post-secondary institutions within New Mexico.

      Awarded Degrees for Native Students in New Mexico. According to the New Mexico Higher Education Department for New Mexico's Postsecondary AY 2016-2017 degree production by ethnicity, the total number of degrees awarded to American Indian students was 2,200, which is about seven percent of the total 29,549 total degrees awarded for all ethnicities. American Indian students in New Mexico received 954 certificates, 798 associates degrees, 337 bachelor's degrees, 83 master's degrees, and ten post master's certificates. The data did not note the number of degrees awarded if the number was less than ten degrees, which was the case for graduate certificates, doctorate, or professional degrees. Overall, we can see the numbers of Native American students at the national and state levels to better understand the population of Native American students attending postsecondary education institutions. While looking at the national data in comparison to data on Native college students in New Mexico, we can see that New Mexico has a significant number of Native college students who need support and services across our various post-secondary institutions and tribal communities.

      As you can see that statistically, there are not many Native American college students that make-up the student body as other ethnicities. Lopez (2017) in his chapter talks about the many factors that contribute to accessibility of higher education for Native students and how important it is for postsecondary institutions to have a multifaceted approach based on Tribal Critical Theory (Brayboy, 2005). This is why it is more critical to assist and support every Native college student who is striving to graduate with their college degrees. Also, when looking at the data, there is a significant number of Native

students in the various postsecondary institutions across New Mexico, which is a noteworthy reason for this study in New Mexico.

Tribal Colleges & Universities

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) are an important part of Indigenous education because their missions are to serve local tribal communities and to support Native identity and culture. TCUs provide culturally relevant programs that increase Native student's academic success (Martin, 2005). TCUs offer important services to local communities with access to libraries, health care, economic development, and programs that preserve Native cultures (Brayboy et al., 2012). There are 37 TCUs across the United States mostly located on tribal reservations with roots that began from the Self-Determination movement of the 1960s (AIHEC Website). Most TCUs are administered by tribal nations with the exception of three TCUs who are operated by Native people but through the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), which are Haskell Indian Nations University, Institute of American Indian Arts, and the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (Brayboy et al., 2012). All TCUs offer certificate and two-year degrees, while 16 offer bachelor's degrees, and five offer Master of Arts degrees (AICF, 2019). "As of 2017, 37 TCUs nationwide served over 15,000 students, with 13,000 students identifying as American Indian or Alaska Natives" (American Indian College Fund, 2019, p. 1). TCUs collaborate with local colleges and universities through distance learning and articulation agreements and these opportunities connect TCU students with more courses and higher degrees (Brayboy et al., 2012). It is often noted that Native students are retained and graduate at higher rates in TCUs than in Non-Native Colleges or Universities (NNCUs) (Martin, 2005; Brayboy et al., 2012; AIHEC Website). NNCUs

can learn from TCUs by institutions who are committed to serving Native students, who can provide culturally relevant programs and support services, and include Native student perspectives in their planning (Martin, 2005). Also, NNCUs must collaborate and partner with TCUs, with each other, and with tribal nations for the benefit of Native student success to provide more equal access to educational opportunities (Martin, 2005; Guillory, 2013; Sanders & Makomenaw, 2018; Bryan, 2019).

Summary of Statistics of Native College Students in New Mexico

In New Mexico, there are 2,095,428 people with 10.9 percent being American Indian and Alaska Native alone (United States Census Bureau). Because of our high populations of Native people and that there are 24 tribal nations in New Mexico, we also see similar numbers of enrollment in our institutions of higher education. According to the 2018 Annual Report for New Mexico Higher Education, about nine percent of the 46,445 total enrolled students attending Independent Community Colleges in academic year 2017 are Native American. Of all of the Independent Community Colleges in New Mexico, the highest percentage of Native American enrollment was 31.5% of 7,363 enrolled at San Juan College in northern New Mexico. The next highest number of Native student enrollment in the same report, noted 6.5% of 24,480 students attending Central New Mexico Community College. When you put all branch community colleges together across New Mexico, there is a total of 11.26 percent of the 23,086 students that are Native American. The highest percentage of Native American student enrollment were at the following New Mexico Branch Community Colleges: 74.1% of 2,221 students at the University of New Mexico-Gallup Branch, 32.7% of 1,042 students at NMSU-Grants campus, and 18.7% of 638 students attending Eastern New Mexico

University-Ruidoso. When looking at New Mexico research universities, there are 5.2%

of 26,140 students enrolled who are Native American at the University of New Mexico;

3.3% of 2,005 students are Native American at New Mexico Tech; 2.6% of 421 students

at UNM Health Science Center are Native; and 1.7% of 14,445 students are Native

American at New Mexico State University (New Mexico Higher Education Department

2018 Annual Report). For TCUs in the Fall of 2016 there were 1,582 Native students at

Navajo Technical University, 412 at Diné College, 367 at Southwestern Indian

Polytechnic Institute, and 365 at the Institute for American Indian Arts. Overall, there are

many Native American students attending New Mexico postsecondary institutions who

need support to persist and graduate.

Part II – Existing Literature

Summary of Emerging Themes in Literature Review

There are a variety of scholars who have written about various aspects of what is

needed to improve retention and graduation rates for Native American college students.

Some important highlights include honoring Native American people and supporting

students' tribal identities; building relationships and community on campus; college

preparation; providing pathways and improving a pathway for Native students to giving

back to Native communities; and providing family support and role models. Native

students need space for recognizing and honoring their tribal identities, having a sense of

community on campus, and the chance to give back to tribal communities.

As Native staff, faculty, and administrators at the various NNCUs or TCUs, we

continue to provide support in any way possible to help our students persist and graduate

with their degrees. We help empower them by connecting them to resources, teaching

them, and mentoring them. Often, we function in a silo within our respective units or college campuses. How much more powerful could we be by creating a larger collaborative community to help one another, which in turn would help our Native college students?

Through the literature I reviewed, I explored reasons why a collaborative is needed and how to create a state-wide collaborative in New Mexico. One of the main themes I found in the literature provided ideas about ways to improve Native American student retention and graduation rates. The other main theme I came across discussed important parts of collaboration. In my literature review I encountered four emerging themes: 1) the importance of tribal identity; 2) the importance of building community on college campuses through role models (Keene, 2018), connecting with Native American faculty and staff, and providing a family-like support (Ecklund & Terrance, 2013; Heavyrunner & DeCelles, 2002; Shotton et al., 2013); 3) the need to provide pathways with multiple entry points into college (Lee, 2007), establishing stronger relationships with tribes through Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), and with articulation agreements (Francis-Begay, 2013; Guillory, 2013); and 4) the need to build partnerships and collaborations between postsecondary institutions and tribal communities (Francis-Begay, 2013; Guillory, 2013; Lee, 2009; Tachine & Francis-Begay, 2013). These four emerging themes helped demonstrate a need to build community within a college campus as well as across institutions to support Native college students.

Importance of Tribal Identity. One of the most important aspects of helping Native American college students succeed is connection to their tribal identity (Huffman, 2001; Larimore & McClellan, 2005). When Native students have a strong cultural

identity, it helps them persist in college (Davidson, 2014; Huffman, 2001; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Shotton et al., 2013). Non-Native colleges and universities (NNCUs) can honor Native American people and their identities in a variety of ways (Shotton et al., 2013). NNCUs can honor and facilitate Native students' cultures and languages by including their traditional languages as second language requirements and providing opportunities for students to learn their Native languages. NNCUs should recognize Native student's needs to feel welcomed into the campus community and the role of honoring tribal identity to feel welcome. College campuses must include Native American views (Austin, 2005; Davidson, 2014; Minthorn & Marsh, 2016). NNCUs can learn from Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) methods of infusing Native culture and values into the institution and through engaging Indigenous knowledge systems (Brayboy et al., 2012; Fox et al., 2005). A state-wide collaborative would help support the importance of Native students' tribal identities, especially if they can see the connection across institutions and the greater Native community network of higher education support.

Native college students need their own spaces on college campuses that support their tribal identity (Martin & Thunder, 2013; Minthorn & Marsh, 2016). This could be in a form of a cultural space, Native center, or living environment like a house or a wing within residence life where Native college students can feel welcomed and a part of a Native community on campus (Ecklund & Terrance, 2013; Minthorn & Marsh, 2016). Having a specific space shows the Non-Native college or university's commitment to the larger Native community on campus (Martin & Thunder, 2013). Indigenous space on college campuses provides great learning opportunities and are powerful places.

Community is highly valued, especially one that values Native culture and traditions

(Ecklund & Terrance, 2013; Waterman, 2012).

Importance of Building Native Community on Campus. Building a strong

Native community on campus is important for Native student persistence. Native

American administrators, faculty, and staff members affirm students' tribal identities

(Larimore & McClellan, 2005). They can serve as role models to Native college students

(Keene, 2018). Native American faculty and staff members provide an important role in

the success of Native college students (Shotton et al., 2013). Native American

administrators, faculty, and staff members support Native students' unique needs

(Brayboy et al., 2012; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Shotton et al., 2013). Lopez (2018)

found that family support, institutional support, tribal support, and academic support help

a Native student persist in higher education. The first-year support is highly needed,

especially to build community and connect Native students to a home away from home

(Tachine & Francis-Begay, 2013; Tachine et al., 2016a; Francis-Begay, 2016). It is

important for Native students to build community on college campuses (Minthorn, 2015;

Minthorn & Shotton, 2015a; Minthorn & Shotton, 2015; Tachine & Francis-Begay, 2013;

Windchief & Joseph, 2015). There is a need to build community on campus as well as

across the state that serves similar tribal students. A state-wide collaborative can provide

the space to build community.

The first-year experience is the first time some students are away from home. For

Native college students, there must be space where their tribal culture is welcomed,

embraced, and valued; where a family-like atmosphere is available; and where a sense of

community is valued and promoted (Heavyrunner & DeCelles, 2002; Tachine & Francis-

Begay, 2013; Joseph & Windchief, 2015). Programs like the First-Year Scholars Program (FYSP) at the University of Arizona (Tachine & Francis-Begay, 2013) or the American Indian Summer Bridge (AISB) program (http://aisb.unm.edu) at the University of New Mexico provide Native college students with a living and learning community where students live together and take similar courses, have a study hall, and have cultural programming. This approach of a first-year program for Native students is holistic, where it supports Native students socially, academically, and culturally, and includes partnerships between offices and departments within the university (Tachine & Francis-Begay, 2013). Not only is there a need to build partnerships across programs with multiple investments across the university but is important to also build relationships with tribes and across colleges and universities. The support network for Native college students must be multifaceted.

Need to Provide Pathways, MOUs, & Articulations. Native students need pathways into college and through college to persist (Kant et al., 2014; Lee, 2007). The path must have multiple entry points along the way. Memorandums of understanding (MOU) between tribes and colleges are recommended by some authors to help create pathways for college students (Inglebret, 2005; Makomenaw, 2012). Memorandums of understanding can establish the government-to-government relationship between NNCUs and tribes, where "students [can see] their tribal leaders treated with respect and their status as members of sovereign tribal nations honored" (Inglebret, 2005, p. 20). Through this relationship, NNCUs can provide ways for Native students to give back to tribal communities through research, clinical practicums, or internships, which helps Native students succeed (Inglebret, 2005; Lee, 2009). Native students need the opportunities to

give back to their tribal communities (Makomenaw, 2014; Salis Reyes & Shotton, 2018).

A state-wide collaborative would help create better pathways through a stronger network

of professionals serving Native college students.

When Tribal Colleges and Universities were founded, many created partnerships

with Non-Native Colleges and Universities to offer courses and to accept transfer credits

(Guillory, 2013). Many currently offer not only 2-year degrees, but also bachelor and

master's degrees (Guillory, 2013). Guillory (2013) also notes that there are many Native

college students who start at a TCU and plan to transfer to a NNCU to complete their

degrees (Brown, 2003). Makomenaw (2014) through his research found four main

themes that led to successful transfers of Native students from TCUs to NNCUs: having

personal goals and dreams, acceptance and support from their families, being a member

of an American Indian community where there is support, but also a strong sense to give

back. Pathways with multiple entry points can assist these students to successfully

transfer. Factors that often lead to a successful transfer include: financial security;

academic preparation; and personal, cultural, and social support (Lee, 2007). TCUs

provide culturally meaningful curriculum and a strong sense of community, which must

exist in NNCUs to help them have continued success.

Native college students benefit from pathways to reintegrate and rebuild

relationships to their home communities (Guillory, 2003; Keene, 2018; Makomenaw,

2014). Non-Native College and Universities (NNCUs) need to build strong connections

with tribal communities (Keene, 2018). This connection can help provide Native college

students with opportunities to engage with the community with the college experience

they acquired through internship or job opportunities. Native college students can also

engage through coursework assignments, volunteering, or through other events based upon these collaborations.

Collaboration between Institutions & Tribal Entities. A way some NNCUs show commitment to tribes is to become a partner in a collaborative (Guillory, 2013; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Nichols & Kayongo-Male, 2003). Collaboration is more effective when it is cooperative and provides mutual benefits (Austin, 2005; Inglebret, 2005; Francis-Begay, 2013; Guillory, 2013; Nichols & Kayongo-Male, 2003). A collaborative would provide empowerment and could be based upon motivation, individual, and organizational factors (Nichols & Kayongo-Male, 2003). Collaboration between NNCUs and tribal entities would also benefit from thinking about longevity and how to keep the partnership sustainable (Nichols & Kayongo-Male, 2003; Thomas et al., 2009). A state-wide collaborative could build multiple partnerships across NNCUs, TCUs, and tribal entities to ultimately benefit Native college student success.

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) provide culturally relevant teaching and learning that benefit tribal communities and provides nation building (Guillory, 2013; Crazy Bull & Guillory, 2018). When Non-Native Colleges and Universities partner with TCUs there are many benefits, such as sharing resources, increasing student access, sharing best practices, and increasing opportunities for research (Guillory, 2013). Recommendations for successful partnerships between NNCUs and TCUs includes: determining the appropriate fit with common interests; develop relationships through formal agreements; have clear communication; be flexible; be open to building trust; include the right people or personnel to be involved as liaisons; and keep students as the primary priority (Guillory, 2013).

Karen Francis-Begay (2013) discusses the importance of building partnerships between the university and with tribes through the role of Special Advisor to the President on Native American Affairs. She suggests further that initiatives must be mutually beneficial with mutual goals. Francis-Begay (2013) writes that consultation and collaboration are essential when dealing with tribal relationships, which also requires communication, respect, knowledge, and sensitivity. Relationship building is important for these collaborations as well as having formal agreements in place (Francis-Begay, 2013). Francis-Begay notes,

> We need to continue to find ways to improve educational opportunities for Native students so they can be the leaders of tomorrow. Tribal nations cannot operate in isolation; partnerships are key to their future and success. The highest levels of university leadership must demonstrate a commitment to improving access and success for Native students. Without this commitment, we go nowhere. (Francis-Begay, 2013, p. 92).

Native college students need multiple levels of support to succeed in higher education degree programs and collaborations of many kinds are encouraged in the literature.

How Literature Informs this Study

While looking for literature around my topic of study, I primarily found studies or articles around existing collaborations between NNCUs with a TCU or with a tribal community. I did not find literature on the creation or formation of a collaboration, rather I found literature that studied collaborations that have existed for a while. Also, I did not find literature specifically on a state-wide collaboration. One close study was conducted on student leadership development through the creation of a state-wide student leadership

conference (Minthorn et al., 2013). This study found an emerging theme on the importance of community building, where students could network across the state, find others going through similar struggles or situations. They could also share ideas and support one another through this organization. Student participants also talked about how this gathering allowed them a voice to share their concerns or issues, but also for empowerment too (Minthorn et al., 2013). Another close study collected data from constituents from NNCUs: South Dakota State University, North Dakota State University, University of Minnesota, and Iowa State University; and from tribal colleges in South Dakota and North Dakota (Nichols & Kayongo-Male, 2003). I found this article helpful to think about success factors for a partnership to between a NNCU and TCU. Other literature on collaborations centered around a particular topic area or showed what factors or components helped them succeed.

Another main area I looked at showed ways to support Native colleges students in terms of increasing persistence and graduation. Through this group of literature, I found that tribal identity is important to helping students succeed in higher education institutions as well as building community on college campuses. I also found that institutions should create pathways, create memorandums of understanding (MOUs), and articulation agreements with other institutions to support Native college students. To support Native college students, institutions must work together and create partnerships with other institutions, which builds community within a region. Building community within a college campus or between institutions supports tribal identity by connecting Native people to a greater college tribal community.

Gaps in the Literature

One of the major gaps I saw in the literature was in studies on collaboratives between NNCUs and TCUs or with other tribal entities lacking centering from an Indigenous perspective. Authors came from a non-Native view based on Western models. In the Nichols & Kayongo-Male study (2003) for example, they based their study on the "Exchange Theory" to understand why people participate in a collaborative partnership and how collaboration can lead to empowerment. Another study that acknowledged Indigenous tribal contributions looked at how to build a lasting collaboration with trust, respect, clarifying expectations, assessment methods, flexibility, and commitment (Thomas et al., 2009). This study used community-based participatory research (CBPR) and tribal participatory research (TPR) yet was not centered from an Indigenous perspective. In another study (Kant et al., 2014), the researchers built a collaborative partnership between a TCU, tribal community, and two NNCUs and received assistance from the tribal communities involved yet also came from a non-Native perspective.

My research gathered interest and ideas for the formation of a state-wide collaborative and is centered through my Diné-based conceptual framework that helped me understand and study the concept of K'é, building community, Da'áhiiniitą', uplifting and collaborative efforts, remaining balanced with Hózhǫ́, and Hoł ílį́, respect. I incorporated Indigenous voices from Native administrators, faculty, and staff members that work with Native college students in various post-secondary institutions across the state of New Mexico. As an Indigenous researcher, I utilized my Indigenous-based framework to study this topic and provide uniquely Indigenous perspectives and voices to inform collaborative efforts across institutions to support Native American college student success.

Places & Background

New Mexico postsecondary institutions spread throughout the state include four-year public colleges and universities, two-year colleges and universities, as well as Tribal Colleges and Universities (New Mexico Higher Education Department, 2018). There are three main research postsecondary institutions in New Mexico: New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (New Mexico Tech), New Mexico State University – Main Campus (NMSU), and the University of New Mexico – Main Campus (UNM). There are four comprehensive colleges and universities that includes Eastern New Mexico University – Main Campus (ENMU), New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU), Northern New Mexico College (NNMC), and Western New Mexico University (WNMU). There are ten two-year branch community colleges in New Mexico: ENMU – Roswell and Ruidoso, NMSU – Alamogordo, Carlsbad, Dona Ana, and Grants, and UNM – Gallup, Los Alamos, Taos, and Valencia. There are also seven two-year independent community colleges: Central New Mexico Community College (CNM), Clovis CC, Mesalands CC, New Mexico Junior College, San Juan College, Santa Fe CC, and Luna CC. Tribal Colleges and Universities in New Mexico include Diné College – Shiprock, Institute of American Indian Arts, Navajo Technical University, and the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute. Overall, there are 28 four-year and two-year colleges and universities in New Mexico with a range of enrolled Native American college students that represent the 24 tribal nations in the state and from tribes outside of the state.

The NNCU postsecondary institution with the highest number of enrolled Native American students in the academic year 2017 (AY17) is San Juan College, which is

located in northwestern New Mexico in Farmington with an enrolled 2,319 Native

college students. The second highest number of enrolled Native college students at a

NNCU is 1,645 at UNM-Gallup Branch located in western New Mexico. The third

highest number of enrolled Native college students is at Central New Mexico Community

College with 1,591 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The fourth highest enrollment in

AY17 for a NNCU is at the University of New Mexico - Main Campus with 1,359 Native

college students. The TCU with the highest enrollment of Native college students was

Navajo Technical University with 1,582 in Fall 2016 (New Mexico Higher Education

Department, 2018). With a significant number of enrolled college students representing

various tribal communities, Native administrators, faculty, and staff members may face

similar issues or concerns in helping support these students to persist and graduate from

their respective postsecondary institutions.

Other Institutions with Collaborative Partnerships

While searching for other collaborations between NNCUs, TCUs, and tribal

entities, two main partnerships stood out. The Arizona Tri-state Universities for Indian

Education (ATUIE) is a "state-wide coalition comprised of faculty and staff members

who work to promote educational opportunities and guide the state universities, tribal,

and community colleges in improving academic and student services for American

Indian, Alaska Natives, and other Indigenous students" (ATUIE website, 2019). AUTIE

was formed in 2000 around three main tenants: student services, self-sufficiency, and

policy development and advocacy (Francis-Begay, 2013). This collaboration information

is housed on the Office of the Secretary of the University page on the University of

Arizona's website. Their website lists student initiatives and policy and advocacy

initiatives, where the various NNCUs, TCUs, and tribal communities partner together for strategic planning, meeting tribal needs, and for building stronger relationships for the benefit of Native college students.

Another collaboration I included in this research study is in South Dakota called the Wokini Initiative. This collective:

> offers programming and support to enrolled members of the nine tribal nations in South Dakota interested in gaining access to educational and advancement opportunities at South Dakota State University. The initiative will also enhance research and outreach collaborations and programs with tribes, tribal colleges, and other tribal organizations in the state. (Wokini Initiative, 2019).

Through this initiative, they created an American Indian Student Center at the South Dakota State University, provided scholarship support, promoted wellness, and created a collaborative that is mutually beneficial through research and improving economic development.

Summary

In Part I, the statistics showed the importance of Native students entering, persisting, and graduating from post-secondary institutions. The statistics also showed the significant numbers of enrolled Native college students in New Mexico at various higher education institutions. The statistics laid the foundation of the location of this study and who to invite to participate as well.

Also, through the review of existing literature on my research topic in Part II, I found other studies that shared the importance of a Native student's tribal identity in helping them persist in higher education programs. If a Native student becomes

connected to a community on their college campus, they will persist. Native

administrators, faculty, and staff members support tribal identity and community

building. A sense of community must also exist between departments and programs on a

college campus, but also across institutions to support Native college students.

Collaborative partnerships between postsecondary institutions and tribal communities

only continue to support Native college students to persist and graduate from their

respective institutions.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to determine the need and to gather ideas around the formation of a state-wide collaborative that would support Native college students. This collaborative would include constituents from across the state of New Mexico that serve Native college students whether that be from a Non-Native College or University (NNCU) or a Tribal College or University (TCU) or from a tribal community. The research questions that guide this study include the following:

1. Is there a need to form a higher education state-wide collaborative in New Mexico to support Native students attending college?

2. What ideas exist among participants regarding the formulation of a higher education state-wide collaborative to support Native college students?

3. What are the potential challenges in creating a state-wide collaborative and how might they be overcome?

4. How do existing collaboratives initiatives in other states function, how were they created and how are they sustaining?

5. What are some insights, factors, and processes that would help a state-wide collaborative succeed in New Mexico?

In this chapter I further discuss the research design and methodology for this qualitative study with a Diné conceptual framework based upon Diné philosophy, which is further described in Chapter 4.

Mode of Inquiry: Qualitative

In my research, I used a qualitative methods design. Qualitative research focuses on the everyday lives of people, where there may be a need to improve a practice or is based on gaining a better understanding to make a difference (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Using a qualitative mode of inquiry assisted me in deeply exploring and to make meaning of the experiences, insights, and suggestions made by Native professionals - administrators, faculty, or staff members that work to support Native college students across the state of New Mexico in the development of a state-wide higher education collaborative.

Qualitative research was best selected and utilized because as the researcher, I was the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The benefits of being a human instrument is the ability to get immediate responses and also being adaptive to the respondents during the individual interviews and sharing circle sessions. Another benefit was the opportunity to clarify and summarize the responses during and after interactions. Through qualitative research I checked for accuracy and interpretation based upon what the respondents shared. Qualitative research also allowed for the chance to explore unanticipated responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

A qualitative study provided space to apply my Diné-based conceptual framework centered around K'é, Hózhǫ́, Da'áhiiniitą', and Hoł ílį. Through a qualitative study, I Indigenized my mode of inquiry with my Diné philosophies throughout my study from my approach with my thoughts, design, process, my interactions with my participants, and with my overall study.

Research Philosophy/Paradigm

At the center of my qualitative study, I utilized the Diné concepts of K'é, which is kinship, community, relationships, and coming together respectfully; Hózhǫ́, which is beauty and balance, peace and harmony; Da'áhiiniitą', by uplifting others to build community; and Hoł ílį́, having and giving respect. Cajete (2015) talked about the importance of community and how it has always been a part of Indigenous lifeways. Not only is it important to build community on college campuses, but it is also important to build a larger sense of community that expands across the state. Community is at the center of supporting Native college students and helping them succeed in postsecondary education institutions. Building, growing, and maintaining relationships is important for Native college students' success.

A research philosophy I utilized is a social construction worldview. The social constructivist paradigm is a way to better understand the current world through meaning making of people's experiences (Creswell, 2009). This paradigm includes the researcher using open-ended questioning with careful listening and observing (Creswell, 2009). Interpretation will be based upon the researcher's experiences and background (Creswell, 2009).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) talk about epistemological perspectives and my research study would be categorized as "interpretive/constructivist" because of the purpose being to "describe, understand, interpret" based upon multiple realities and context. My qualitative research helped me understand what factors are needed to form a state-wide collaborative between NNCUs, TCUs, and tribal communities.

Methodology – Partial Phenomenology & Ethnography

I incorporated a partially phenomenological study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) through the sharing circles and individual interview sessions. My research is phenomenological since I looked at understanding the experiences of Native professional's work with Native college students. The research questions that my study was based upon were used to assess the need and to find out what factors would help form a collaborative in New Mexico. My research encompassed various Native professionals from many different communities across the state, where there may be high numbers of Native college students being served.

My research was also partially an ethnographic study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) because through focus group sessions that I called a "sharing circle," (see Methods section) it helped me gain a better understanding of the experiences of the Native professionals who work with Native college student's culture. I drew my research from the participants drawn from this culture of Native practitioners, faculty, and administrators who focus on higher education for Native people. I went to various locations in New Mexico and met with potential collaborators who do this type of work. A focus on culture and time spent in place made my study partially ethnographic although I did not reach the level of immersion into a culture usually associated with ethnography.

The Indigenous framework I used in this study is centered around K'é, relationality, community and building community by creating a greater network of Native professionals, faculty, and administrators that work with Native college students from around the state of New Mexico. K'é would help bring people together to connect across institutions, across regions, and across tribal communities.

Applying My Research Philosophy to Study Design

I Indigenized my research by beginning each of my sessions with an introduction of who I am in my Diné language that I shared each of my participants. I viewed this process as ceremonial in the way of approaching my research with Hózhǫ́, K'é, and a respectful and collaborative spirit. I introduced myself to my participants, so they would know who I am and where I come from as well as a chance to give them background knowledge into why I am interested in this research. I incorporated Shawn Wilson's *Research is Ceremony* (2008) concepts of approaching my work with the 3 R's of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility. My research paradigm was relational and required accountability where I provided respect and reciprocity to my participants. Wilson explains:

> While forming all of these relationships, you can understand the responsibility that comes with bringing a new idea into being (or articulating/making visible an existing one). The new relationship has to respect all of the other relationships around it. Forming and strengthening these connections gives power to and helps the knot between to grow larger and stronger. We must ensure that both sides in the relationship are sharing the power going into these new connections. Without this reciprocity, one side of the relationship may gain power and substance at the expense of the other (Wilson, 2008, p. 79).

I approached my research from my Diné perspective, which is based upon our Diné Fundamental Law that we are "identifiable by our Diné name, our clans, our language, our lifeway, our shadow, and our footprints" (Diné Bi Beenahaz'áanii, 2002). I introduced myself with my Diné clans and let the participants know where I come from,

what communities I represent, and where I currently work, and my connection to my

research topic. I asked my participants to also introduce themselves to create that

relationality, K'é, so we can begin to connect as a larger community of Native

practitioners, faculty, and administrators who work for Native college student success.

Positionality

As an Indigenous scholar, I approached my research from my Diné perspectives

of K'é, Hózhǫ́, Da'áhiiniitą', and Hoł ílį́. I have familiarity with my research topic based

upon my work in higher education since 2004. I have been a Native professional with

experience working in two NNCUs, one that was private with a small number of Native

college students of less than ten and the other experience from working in a large public

university that serves a significant number of Native college students close to about

1,500. I have background primarily in student services where I worked in financial aid,

tribal scholarships, Native student programming, and academic advising. In my work in

financial aid, I became the tribal liaison for the University of New Mexico while I was a

financial aid officer and often interacted with the various tribal higher education

departments and Native scholarship entities across New Mexico as well as outside of our

state. Through this position, I worked with other scholarship organizations that provided

financial support to Native college students attending the University of New Mexico.

My employment background also includes working within a Native based

program on our college campus, where I led various program initiatives to support Native

college students who were entering the university as a first-year student, transferring into

the university, or at all the other levels of college and earning their degrees. I have a

background of advising where I have met with Native college students to help them

throughout their degree programs and career exploration. Through my employment experience I could relate to the participants who are also Native practitioners, faculty, and administrators who serve and support Native college students.

I began living in New Mexico in 2006, and also have close ties to some New Mexico Native communities through my family or through my husband's family. During my employment and living in Albuquerque, I have become more familiar with the various Pueblos and Apache Nations through my work with my students, my own academic work, or through family. As an asdzáán, being a wife, a mother, a student, and professional, and with my familiarity of growing up on the Navajo Nation, attending school on the reservation and now living in the city, these perspectives shaped my views and experiences that were relatable to my participants and to the Native students we all work with. My Diné values shaped and guided my research process, interactions, analysis, and my overall study.

Methods of Data Collection & Sampling

I used two methods of data collection in my study – individual interviews and sharing circles (Tachine et al., 2016), an Indigenized form of focus groups. Both were conducted with a diversity of Native professionals, faculty, and administrators from across New Mexico institutions of higher education and from South Dakota and Arizona as well. The details are as follows:

Sharing Circles. In this study, I utilized four sharing circles that took place in different regions of New Mexico for two purposes – to collect insights, suggestions, experiences, possible barriers to the idea of cross-institutional collaborative community of Native professionals in New Mexico and to facilitate opportunities for relationship

building within these groups toward this possibility (Tachine et al., 2016a). I conducted a

sharing circle within three of the four regions of New Mexico. The sharing circles session

did help build community. Each sharing circle consisted of 3-5 participants. I invited

Native administrators, faculty, and staff members who work in a NNCU or TCU. I

looked for key participants who met the criteria of being Native administrators, faculty,

or staff. I initially invited Native practitioners, faculty, and administrators who were

personal contacts I knew, who then invited others they thought may be interested in

participating or recommended others that I reached out to through snowball sampling

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I made the sharing circle sessions interactive where

participants shared their views, heard views from others, and refined their own views

based upon what they heard during the discussion (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I began each session with my own introduction in my Diné language and provided

the participants with background information about my study. Then I asked participants

to begin by introducing themselves and to indicate their tribal affiliations, employment

titles, and the organizations they represented. As the researcher, I was the

moderator/interviewer during the sharing circle sessions. During the sharing circle, I took

audio recordings of the sessions and let each participant know that they had the option to

remain anonymous or they could share their real names and tribal affiliations through the

consent forms. The focus group session questions helped me provide some leading

questions to pose to the group for group discussion and sharing (see sharing circle

questions in Appendix B). I hosted four sharing circle sessions in three areas in New

Mexico: two in Albuquerque, one in Las Cruces, and a final one in Gallup.

Unfortunately, the session I hoped to host in the northern region of the state did not come

to fruition although I attempted to reach out by email and phone to different higher

education institutions. I would say, through the sessions held, there was still quite some

diversity of representation of tribal affiliations, tribal community regions, their work

titles, institutions, and years of experience.

Sharing circles provided space where we acknowledged the rich tribal heritages,

cultures, and languages we all came from through various tribal communities in and

outside of our state. The sharing circle was a space where we came together to talk about

hearing the participant's views and for sharing ideas. This sharing circle was a form of a

"talking circle" (Chilisa, 2012), where we formed somewhat of a circle to speak and

share our thoughts and ideas. Within each sharing circle I encouraged participants to

respect each other's ideas and gather us together as a group in a way that was "continuous

and unending", where each participant could feel included – "the circle also symbolizes

equality of members in the circle" (Chilisa, 2012, p. 213). The opportunity to share in a

group set the foundation of collaborating.

Individual Interviews. Individual interviews in this study helped me more deeply

understand the experiences of Native professionals, faculty, and administrators who work

with Native college students in our state and in other places such as Arizona and South

Dakota. Individual interviews were used to capture thoughts, feelings, and the intentions

of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). There were some participants who

participated in both an individual interview and a focus group session. I invited

participants through my own personal contacts, but also through snowball sampling by

asking for recommendations of who to reach out to next. Sometimes I made an invitation

and did not hear back right away, so I would move forward and ask other people, which

led to many more saying yes than I originally planned. That was a good outcome because

I heard from 21 individuals from New Mexico, then four participants with existing

collaborations at their universities from Arizona and South Dakota (see Chapter 4 for

sampling and participant details). Through the individual interviews I went into depth in

understanding their perspectives, experiences, and ideas about supporting Native college

students and the formation of a state-wide collaborative in New Mexico.

The individual interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions (see

Appendix A) around my research topic. Sometimes during the individual interviews, I

asked probing questions to clarify or to better understand what the participant was

sharing. I was adaptive in my individual interviews based upon what the participant was

sharing.

Researcher Reflection. After conducting the individual interviews and sharing

circles, I took time to reflect on the experience. I noted details I remembered about the

space and location. I also reflected on what salient themes or ideas are presented during

the focus group session or interviews. I took the time to reflect on any unanticipated

themes or ideas that came up during the discussions. I took note of how many participants

attended each focus group session and interviews to help me strategize on who to invite

next or how to plan for the next session. I reflected on the energy felt during the group

discussions and the behaviors of the participants.

Sites of the Study

I conducted 21 individual interviews, four sharing circle sessions, and four

interviews with those with existing collaboratives. The individual interview and sharing

circle participants represented areas in the New Mexico with high numbers of Native

college students. The participants from each region varied based upon gender, tribal

affiliations, tribal communities represented, professional types, and institution types. I

incorporated K'é, Hózhǫ́, Da'áhiiniitą', and Hoł íłį́ in each interview and sharing circle

session.

In my study the eastern region was represented by the Albuquerque area, where I

invited participants from the University of New Mexico (UNM), Central New Mexico

Community College (CNM), Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI), with

representation from New Mexico tribes such as Cochiti Pueblo, Laguna Pueblo, Taos

Pueblo, Zuni Pueblo, Jicarilla Apache, and Navajo Nation. Some participants represented

tribes from outside of New Mexico such as Cherokee and the Confederated Salish and

Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation.

I hosted a sharing circle and individual interviews in the southern region of New

Mexico in Las Cruces. In these sessions I had participants from New Mexico State

University (NMSU). The participants in the southern area represented New Mexico tribes

of Laguna Pueblo and Navajo Nation, but also represented tribes outside of New Mexico,

which includes Blackfeet, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Red Lake Chippewa, and

Tsalagi (Cherokee Nation Citizen).

In the western region of New Mexico, I invited participants from the University of

New Mexico-Gallup Branch and Navajo Technical University. The participants from the

sharing circle and the individual interviews represented the Navajo Nation and the

Rosebud Sioux Tribe.

Even though there was no sharing circle session in the northern region, there were

still participants who represented the northern part of our state. They represented the

tribal communities of the Navajo Nation, Taos Pueblo, and Jicarilla Apache. One participant came from San Juan College as well, which is in northwestern New Mexico in Farmington.

Research Process

I created consent forms for my participants. This form provided the participants with some background information about the study, but also provided them the opportunity to decide if they wanted to remain anonymous or if they wished to share their real names and tribal affiliations. I used an audio recording device to collect the data, which was with a hand-held recorder. I would transfer the audio file to my password-secured laptop to begin transcribing. I created semi-structured interview questions for the individual interviews and sharing circles as well. I ran a couple pilot tests to make sure my questions made sense then made the necessary edits. My interview and sharing circle questions came from my research questions and from the literature I reviewed. I used a combination of both purposeful and snowball sampling in my study. First, I determine who I could initially request to participate in my research study based upon my current relationships with other Native higher education professionals, faculty, and administrators. Second, I honored my previous relationships built to lead to snowball sampling, where my contacts would suggest others who may be interested in participating.

Data Collection Protocol. In the process of data collection and honoring my Diné values I upheld the confidentiality of the participants in this study. The tools I used to capture the words of each participant was audio recordings during the sharing circles and during the individual interview sessions. I asked the participants to create a

pseudonym for themselves or the option to use their real names and tribal affiliations. To remain accountable and I uphold a researcher's ethic, I kept the audio recordings and transcriptions from the sharing circles and individual interviews on a password-locked laptop that only I had access to keep my files during my research process.

Data Analysis

The findings of this qualitative research study were derived from data in the form of themes, categories, or concepts I encountered from the transcribed sharing circles and individual interviews. I used Member Checking in my research and offered the participants an opportunity to look at what they noted after it was transcribed so they could offer feedback and additional input or edits. I offered my email address, where participants could send additional comments they wanted to add.

Once I heard back from those participants who had edits, I finalized the transcripts. For each finalized transcript, I moved the data into a table, where each row was based upon each question I had asked the participants. The columns of the table included the transcript corresponding to each question, then the second column I used In Vivo Coding (Saldaña, 2013), where I could pull direct quotes or words or bold important words or phrases from the transcript that I saw representing themes of each response. In the third column, I used Descriptive Coding (Saldaña, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), where I could summarize ideas, create bullet points, or descriptions of what was discussed in that row. I continued to analyze each transcript from every individual interview and sharing circle session.

The next step in my analysis, I created a larger table to analyze the data groups: individual interviews from those across New Mexico, sharing circle sessions from

participants in New Mexico, and individual interviews with those who had existing

collaboratives in Arizona and South Dakota. In this larger table, each row consisted of the

individual participant with the columns corresponding to each question from the

interviews or focus groups. This larger table helped me organize themes and important

words or phrases that I could see across the data group and it helped me locate quotes.

Separately I noted themes I saw to begin categorizing the responses from each

question. This visualization allowed me to see what themes were most prevalent or highly

noted versus those rarely mentioned or discussed. Through this process I could see how

important certain topics or responses were for each question, which helped me organize

my writing around each topic and subtopic. This part of the process also helped me think

about important quotes to showcase the prevalent themes that rose to the surface.

Research Integrity – Research Design Credibility

For my research, it was important for accountability and reciprocity to give back

to the communities represented in this study. I will provide an electronic copy of my

dissertation back to each of the participants of the sharing circles and individual

interviews.

Another aspect of my research integrity is to keep my participants anonymous for

those who requested anonymity. Their information and identifiers were held

confidentially and in encrypted form in a password-protected, laptop. The participants

had the option to choose their own pseudonyms, if they wished, unless they selected to

use their own names and tribal affiliations. If they choose a pseudonym, then they would

not be identifiable by their names or the organizations they represent. I held their

confidentiality with the utmost respect and responsibility.

Summary

In summary, I used a qualitative research methods approach because it allowed for storytelling and a narrative ability, which is more consistent with and supportive of Indigenous epistemologies of life. A qualitative method provided a purposeful study on the topic of assessing the need and idea formation of a state-wide collaborative.

I utilized Indigenous research methods and paradigms based upon Indigenous knowledge systems and values, which provided strength and guidance to my study (Minthorn & Shotton, 2018). I approached my research from the Diné values of K'é, Hózhǫ́, Da'áhiiniitą', and Hoł ílį. I was more culturally responsive by incorporating my Indigenous beliefs, values, and customs into this research process (Wilson, 2008). I also welcomed the Indigenous beliefs, values, and customs from the Native professionals, faculty and administrators I worked with during this research process. In the following chapter I further discuss the importance of place and people and will share more details about my Diné framework that I utilized in my research study.

Chapter 4

Situating Place & People

Diné Philosophy Framework

The grounding of my research process has a strong connection to place. Place was important to how I approached my research, but also to ensuring representation and to the analysis and evaluation of my research study. I often look to the mountains for strength and did so for this dissertation. In my Diné philosophy of Sa'ąh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón, I was taught about our Four Sacred Mountains and four cardinal directions and how each one has representation:

Specifically, the Diné philosophy is associated with and orientated to the four cardinal directions, starting with the east direction; the four seasons, starting with spring; and the four parts of the day, beginning with early dawn and moving around in a clockwise direction with the path of the sun. This is commonly referred to as the T'áá shá bik'ehgona'nitin, or the Sun Wise Path Teachings. So in relation to human life, this process of orientation for living and learning guides how an individual lives and develops respect and/or reverence for self, his or her relatives, and the natural world. These four aspects of the Diné philosophy of learning and living are Nitsáhákees (Thinking), Nahat'á (Planning), Iiná (Living), and Siihasin (Assurance), in respective order. These four aspects of Diné philosophy are understood to represent life principles that guide our process of thinking or conceptualization, planning or self-actualization, doing by establishing relationships with others, and reflecting or being self-reflective and aware of others and the natural spiritual world (Werito, 2014).

Figure 1

Diné Philosophy of Living and Learning

(Werito, 2014)
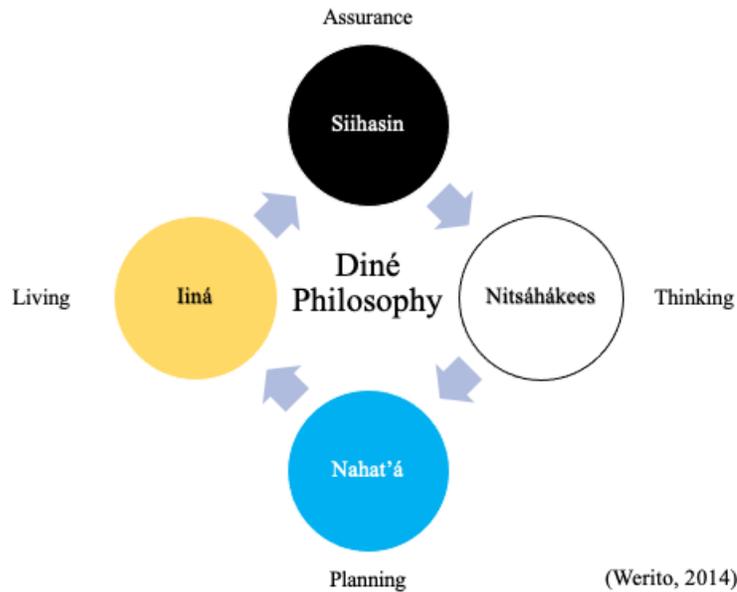
Note. This figure represents the Diné Philosophy of Living and Learning, which are represented in the four directions, four seasons, and the Diné Four Sacred Mountains. In regard to my research, I thought about this Diné philosophy as a framework to how I viewed the process and how I looked at the need for a collaborative, how I approached and conducted my research, then how I looked at my findings, implications of my study, and determined my conclusion of this research study.

When thinking of Sisnaajiní, the Navajo eastern sacred mountain, it represents Nitsáhákees, which means thinking and assessing. The eastern mountain is adorned with white shell, which is represented by the white circle in Figure 1 above. For my research this would relate to understanding the purpose, what has been done in previous research, but also understanding previous higher education programs and ways of supporting

Native student success, scholarly research through the literature review, finding statistical

data, but more specifically around the need for the collaborative to exist. Nitsáhákees

relates to my research question 1) is there a need to form a higher education state-wide

collaborative in New Mexico to support Native students attending college? In this study I

collected demographic information from the participants of the individual interviews and

focus group sessions to better understand their background and representation from their

places of work and the Indigenous communities they represent. Also, I asked the

interview and focus group participants to think about how they define Native college

student success, what they determine are the needs of Native college students to succeed,

consider what ways they contribute to Native student success, and ways their respective

departments contribute to or support Native student success.

Nahat'á comes from Tsoodził, the southern Navajo sacred mountain, which

represents planning. The southern sacred mountain is adorned in turquoise, thus

represented by the blue circle in Figure 1 above. In relation to this study, this aspect

connects to my research question 2) what ideas exist among the interview and focus

group participants about the formation of a higher education state-wide collaborative to

support Native college students? Through this research question, I asked the participants

to consider what this collaborative would look like, what components would help it

succeed, what potential challenges may exist, and ideas around how to connect people

through this collaborative. This part of the process in my research connects to the

planning phase, where we gather our thoughts about the creation of this collaborative.

The third aspect of Diné philosophy of learning and living is Iiná, which

represents living and implementation. Iiná comes from the Navajo western sacred

mountain, Dook'o'oosłííd, which is adorned with abalone shell and is represented by the yellow circle in Figure 1. In regard to this study, this part of the framework is represented in my research questions 3, 4, and 5:

- 3) What are the potential challenges in creating a state-wide collaborative and how might they be overcome?

- 4) What are existing collaborative initiatives in other states like in what they do, how they started, and how they are sustaining?

- 5) What are some insights, factors, and processes that would help this state-wide collaborative succeed in reaching its goals?

These questions were mainly directed towards those with existing collaboratives. I asked the participants who have an existing collaboration at their higher education institution to also define Native student success, discuss what contributes to Native college student success, and to share how their institutions collaborate with tribally based programs, departments, or institutions. I also asked them to discuss the structure of those collaborations, share challenges they faced, the benefits and challenges of collaborative work, and what advice they offer in developing a state-wide higher education collaborative.

The fourth aspect of Diné philosophy is Siihasin, which represents fulfillment and evaluation. Siihasin comes from our northern sacred mountain, Dibé Nitsaa, which is adorned with black jet. Siihasin is represented by the black circle in Figure 1 above. I think of how this aspect of Diné philosophy of learning and living relates to the outcomes and findings of this research, considering what the future could hold, and what recommendations would help this collaborative form in New Mexico.

Participants

When initially planning who I would invite to participate in this research study, I was looking for Native American professionals, faculty, and administrators who worked in higher education institutions across New Mexico with special attention to those with high numbers of Native college students at their respective institutions. From Fall 2018 enrollment according to the New Mexico Higher Education Department 2018 Annual Report, the following table represents the institutions of higher education with the highest number of American Indian student enrollment:

Table 5 *New Mexico Higher Education Institutions with High Enrollment of American Indian Students*	
New Mexico Higher Education Institution	American Indian Enrollment Fall 2018
San Juan College	2,189
UNM Gallup Branch	1,532
Central New Mexico Community College	1,413
Navajo Technical University	1,267
UNM Main Campus, Albuquerque	1,262

Participants in this study worked in those higher education institutions in New Mexico listed above from the top five institutions with the highest numbers of American Indian students enrolled, and also included those from the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) that had 367 American Indian students enrolled Fall 2018 and New Mexico State University (NMSU) with 303 American Indian students enrolled Fall 2018.

Below is a table representing the demographic information of the participants of the individual interviews:

Table 6
Demographic Information on New Mexico Individual Interview Participants

Tribal Affiliations	Where from	Higher Education Positions	Institutions Represented	Years worked in higher education
Jicarilla Apache	Northern NM	Administrator	TCU	5
Diné	Northern NM	Staff	Community College	1.5
Cochiti Pueblo	NM	Administrator	Community College	15
Diné	Northeastern AZ	Staff	Community College	23
Bitter Root Salish/Cochiti Pueblo	NM	Administrator	NNCU	19
Diné	Northern NM	Administrator	NNCU	8
Taos Pueblo/Diné	Northern NM	Professor	NNCU	20
Diné	Northern AZ	Staff	NNCU	4
Diné	Northern NM	Staff	NNCU	19
Diné	Northwestern NM	Professor	NNCU	15
Diné	NM	Professor	NNCU	17
Diné	Northeastern AZ	Staff	NNCU	10
Diné	Northeastern AZ	Staff	NNCU	4
Diné/Zuni Pueblo	Northeastern AZ	Administrator	NNCU with NASNTI distinction	10
Diné	AZ	Faculty	NNCU	15
Blackfeet	MT	Faculty	NNCU	30
Choctaw Nation	OK	Faculty	NNCU	21
Pueblo of Laguna/Red Lake Chippewa	NM	Administrator	NNCU	20
Diné	NM	Staff	TCU	9
Rosebud Sioux Tribe	SD	Administrator	Two-year NNCU	14
Diné	Western NM	Administrator	Two-year NNCU	11

As you can see there are a range of tribal affiliations, type of institutions of higher

education, and years the participants worked in higher education represented in this

study. The individual interviews came from Native staff, administrators, and faculty from

their respective institutions. In total, I conducted 21 individual interviews from across

New Mexico primarily in-person and one by phone.

For those who participated in the focus group sessions, the following table

represents their demographic information:

Table 7
Demographic Information of New Mexico Focus Group Participants

Tribal Affiliations	Where from	Higher Education Positions	Institutions Represented	Years worked in higher education
Diné	NM	Administrator	NNCU	.
Diné	Northeastern AZ	Staff	Community College	23
Salish/Cochiti Pueblo	NM	Administrator	NNCU	19
Diné	NM	Staff	Community College	7
Cherokee Nation	OK	Professor	Community College	5
Laguna Pueblo	NM	Professor	TCU	6
Diné	Northern NM	Staff	NNCU	5
Tsalagi (Cherokee Nation)		Professor	NNCU	.
Choctaw Nation	OK	Professor	NNCU	21
Pueblo of Laguna/Red Lake Chippewa	NM	Administrator	NNCU	20
Diné	Western NM	Administrator	Two-year NNCU	11
Rosebud Sioux Tribe		Administrator	Two-year NNCU	14
Diné	NM	Staff	TCU	9
Diné	NM	Staff	Two-year NNCU	.
Diné	NM	Staff	Two-year NNCU	.

As you can see there were a range of participant tribal affiliations, positions, institutions

represented, and years of working with Native students. Two of the focus group sessions took place in Albuquerque, while one session was held in southern New Mexico and one session was held in western New Mexico. All four of the focus group sessions were held in-person in their respective regions of the state. In total there were 15 participants in the focus group sessions.

In my approach of finding participants for my study, I thought about the possibility of building a collaborative later and reached out to many professionals and faculty across New Mexico. I started with those I knew and asked who they might recommend I also reach out to – purposeful and snowball sampling processes. I also researched potential contacts through various campus websites, looking for potential Native faculty and staff members who might be interested in participating. I did my best to approach the regions in a clockwise, sunwise motion from Albuquerque representing the east, to Las Cruces representing the south, to Gallup representing the west, and reaching out to those in the northern part of the state as well. I was looking for those representing various tribal communities within New Mexico but was also very happy to meet many others from Indigenous communities outside New Mexico. Everyone's perspectives were equally valued.

There were four interview participants who came from institutions with existing collaboratives with the following tribal affiliations: Diné, Eastern Band Cherokee, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, and Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Nation. These participants came from Arizona and South Dakota. Their positions represented practitioners and administrators in higher education institutions with existing collaborations. All of the participants with existing collaboratives work at 4-year universities that are Non-Native

College or University. Their years of experience varied from 2, 7, 11, to 29 years

working with Native students. All four of these participant interviews were conducted by

phone.

In my approach with each participant, I made sure to introduce myself utilizing

my teachings of K'é and share who I am in Diné bizaad (my Navajo language). To

establish kinship, I asked each participant to tell me their name, tribal affiliations, and

where they were from. In being a good relative, I approached each participant with the

concept of K'é in mind and respected each person's perspectives and cultural

backgrounds. Wherever possible, especially with the group gatherings I offered food and

my hospitality. I met each relative wherever they felt comfortable to meet and offered

each person the opportunity to be identified with their name and tribal affiliations or to

remain anonymous and to select a pseudonym. I appreciated and respected each

participant's input, thoughts, and words. Through each meeting, I was able to grow my

network of Indigenous professionals and faculty who like myself work to support Native

college students, where we all shared a common goal of wanting to help our students

succeed.

Summary

In utilizing the Diné concept of Hózhǫ́, I followed the "sun-wise" path and clock-

like motion from Nitsáhákees (thinking), Nahat'á (planning), Iiná (implementing), and

Siihasin (reflecting). I used this process when meeting with each participant by thinking,

Nitsáhákees, about who I could reach out to and planning how I would go about that

process of meeting with each participant, then reflecting on each meeting. I took my

participants on this path of Hózhǫ́ through the design of the questions by asking them to

think about their definition of Native student success, or what they think are the needs of

Native college students to help them succeed, or to think about what relationships,

techniques, programs, or services they find helpful to Native student success. For

planning, Nahat'á, I asked the participants to talk about how they personally or their

departments support Native student success. In regard to implementation, Iiná, I asked

the participants to consider ways they would envision a collaborative entity providing

benefits to them and to their work with Native students, to think about what they would

want to share with a collaborative, what they may see as possible challenges, and what

motivating factors would help participation. For the reflection part of the process,

Siihasin, I asked the participants if they had anything additional, they wanted to add. I

would end each session by thanking them for their time and for sharing their thoughts

with me.

The overall intent while meeting with each Native professional was to begin

building community and start the seeds of collaboration, which is the focus of my

research study. The Diné conceptual framework of K'é, Hózhǫ́, Da'áhiiniitą', and Hoł ílį́

is important to this research study and to the value of community, hózhǫ́ǫgo da'iiná.

Chapter 5

Findings

In this chapter, I discuss the findings from the collection of voices gathered through individual interviews and sharing circles. Data will also be shared from those interviewed with existing collaboratives at their institutions. The broader themes that are discussed in this chapter are discussed through the Diné Philosophy of the sunwise path from east to south to west. The northern aspect will follow in Chapter 6. The themes in this chapter are categorized as White Shell, referencing Nitsáhákees, which is related to the eastern Navajo sacred mountain of thinking and assessing. The next category is Turquoise, Nahat'á, which relates to the planning aspect related to the southern Navajo sacred mountain. The third category is Abalone Shell, Iiná, which is connected to living and implementation. All three broader categories are used to understand and process the findings in relation to hearing from each of the participants on their thoughts on the need and purpose for building a state-wide collaborative, ideas for the creation of a New Mexico state-wide collaborative, and considering the challenges and successes of collaborative efforts. The following thoughts and voices shared were collected in the Fall of 2019 from October to December 2019, prior to the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The following are voices from around New Mexico as well as those with existing collaboratives in Arizona and South Dakota.

White Shell: Many Agreed

So, if we were to all get together and make ways where we create a path of excellence, a path of success, and not just a path of least resistance, that we can

hopefully help as a larger state, come together, and do a lot more good. (Michael,

Pueblo of Laguna/Red Lake Chippewa, Director, university)

Everyone I spoke with during my study agreed that there is a need to create a

state-wide higher education collaborative to come together and support the work

everyone does to promote Native student success at the various institutions of higher

education across New Mexico. Mostly everyone from the individual interviews and focus

group sessions expressed interest in seeing a collaborative form and were excited about

the possibility of its creation. The participants talked about how this collaborative is

exciting and innovative, space for kinship building and networking to share knowledge.

Jacquelyn (Cochiti Pueblo), who is a student services manager at a community college

said,

It will be great to see if something comes to fruition after your research and see

what's there. I really wish that as a higher ed. institution or higher ed. in general in

New Mexico that we were able to bring the knowledge and the skills of the

learning environment at the campus to where Native folks are. So, I feel like... I

don't know how you go about doing that. But that's one thing that I wish to see in

the future in general, is that there's more classes being taught or there's more

trainings or programming that's taught by the colleges in the tribal communities.

And if that's concerning conversations, grassroots conversations about it with

partners, I think that's great. But ultimately, that's what I'd like to see.

Dee (Diné), a professional staff from a community college noted, "also, I think it's really

important that we're going to be working on something like this too. I'm excited about it.

I would love to be a motivator to individuals that would be a part of the partnership." A

university faculty member, Glenabah (Taos Pueblo/Diné) shared, "I think I would really like to join an organization like this because of the networking. I think that it's really nice when we see Native faculty from across the state." Another university professor, Lloyd (Diné), said, "Yeah. I would definitely be interested in joining a statewide higher-education collaborative." Another participant, Michaela (Diné), a university professional staff noted:

> And so, I think for sure I would join a statewide higher education collaborative, and the benefits I would receive from it would, of course, be the relationship, the kinship-building aspect of it, and the ability to network with other programs and other faculty, and, of course, even for our students.

Micaela further remarked:

> If we are going to be the first state in the United States to put forward this as an initiative, that's a motivator for sure, for me, because it's groundbreaking, trailblazing work, and it's innovative in a sense that we're allowed to dream again in a different kind of space for more successful Native graduates to happen.

This collaborative would be the first of its kind for New Mexico, however there are other collectives occurring in other states as shared in the Abalone Shell section later in this chapter. Overall, everyone felt the need to come together and build partnerships together as a greater Native community of Native professionals, faculty, administrators, tribal leaders, and tribal communities. We all share a similar goal of Native student success in higher education.

To continue to review the data, I started with the Diné philosophy of Nitsáhákees, which is connected to Sisnaajiní, the Navajo eastern sacred mountain, which is

represented by white shell. Nitsáhákees means thinking and assessing. In relation to my study, I reviewed my research question 1) is there a need to form a higher education state-wide collaborative in New Mexico to support Native students attending college? In connection to my Research Question 1 around defining purpose, I asked the participants of my study to first think about how they define Native student success, what do they determine are the needs of Native college students in achieving success, to think about how they personally contribute to Native student success and how their departments also contribute to supporting Native student success.

White Shell: Defining Native Student Success

Success is Different for Everyone. Native student success was defined in many different ways by the participants. Donald (Blackfeet) a university faculty member shared,

> I have a bit of difficulty looking at what we want to call success. Because coming from a tribal college, and that's part of my teaching and learning personal educational philosophy. In our community college, students would go in and out, and to me, that's okay because learning is lifelong and it's a process, and if someone comes into a classroom and gets what they need to go out in the world, whether it's the world of work.

Some said that it is different for everyone and cannot be defined by one thing. Jodi (Laguna Pueblo) a tribal college faculty defined Native student success as being "a complex process" when "trying to figure out what would help the students be successful." Jenna (pseudonym), Lakota, remarked, "I think that the definition of success for students is personal." Jenna further noted that it is different for each student with different goals,

"But I think if students can reach their goals and be healthy, emotionally and mentally."

Lynn (pseudonym), a community college administrator recalled,

> Well, that was always challenging for me because success looks very different for
> different people. It's defined in various ways, and it really is a personal definition
> for a lot of people. I know for me, being successful means something totally
> different than maybe another person I might have a discussion with. So, in order
> to find out what it means for our Native American students, a lot of times, I have
> to sit down and talk with them. I think if I were to generalize and to really kind of
> pinpoint something, I might say that they find meaning in their life and kind of
> their educational pathway in a sense, and that can look like a variety of different
> things.

Anna (pseudonym), a higher education faculty, said that it is difficult to define especially

because non-Native standards are always imposed on Native students. Anna further

shared,

> We celebrate milestones - laughing, walking, puberty, graduating high school.
> And if you go to college, great and if you get a masters, great, if you go beyond
> that, that's great. There are all these milestones of success that we have. Others
> define success in other ways like degrees, salaries, or lucrative jobs. And I can't
> define success for them. I can't impose what I think is successful on Native
> students, because it's different for us. I think successful is defined however that
> Native student wants to define their success. And as Native, we don't define it
> individually. We take our family, community, Nation into account. It's this
> collective idea of success.

Some agreed that students define it for themselves, which are influenced by tribal and familial values and much more, and we, as professionals or faculty, need to work with each one individually to figure out what that is and how we can support them. For example, Alexandra, who works with Native college students, stated, "I don't have a definition of how a Native student succeeds because each Native student has a different goal based on… what they feel is success." Leola (Filipino/Diné), an Assistant Professor noted, "I would say it's them, made of students, defining success by their own terms and achieving whatever those terms might be." Each of these participants described how success is defined different for everyone. Some talked about learning being lifelong, success is defined personally, individually, defined for themselves and cannot be defined or imposed by anyone else. The individuality of this definition shows us as professionals that we must work with each student individually and find out we can support the way they define reaching success.

Successful When Connected to Family or Community. Some participants said success was personal where it was connected to their family or their tribal community. Jenna (Lakota) a university professional said she wanted to see students have a good, positive experience in a supportive environment, because "our Native students, like most Native students, they have additional barriers as far as racism and that tight knit tiospaye that they have left and being away from family and ceremony and things like that." Jenna further explained,

> But they have to have a good experience, because I know a lot of our students
> don't have good experiences, and even though they may graduate, but their time in

higher education left scars. It was painful. And I don't see that as being successful. And that's not the student's fault, that's the institution's fault.

The way Jenna explained her definition of Native student success shows a division between family and community and one's higher education experience. Sophia (Diné) a community college professional staff explained her definition of Native student success, where it bridges between family and higher education,

I think for some of our students, it could mean crossing that barrier of the unknown, kind of being like first gen. And then finding their way and navigating through it. And then by the time they accomplished their goals, then taking back what they learn and teaching the other people in their family on how to work towards their goals. The program that I'm working with, I have parents that actually start with the program and then they bring in their children and we help the whole family.

MC (pseudonym) who works in a higher education institution explained,

For Native students, I think there's more of a holistic approach that we need to ensure that supports Native students throughout coming here and graduating… and providing that sense of community because they already come with that to the university… and missing home and… families are a huge part of why students go back and fall out of college and they come back later.

Byron (Diné/Zuni Pueblo), a Director at a community college with a significant number of Native college students, emphasized the importance of Native students having a sense of family or community while in college,

> I focus a lot on sense of place and place-space sensibility, and place-space identity
> when it comes to Native students, and in particular Native students' success. The
> reason why I do is, from a more critical approach of knowing that systems of
> higher education are systems that are often very rigid, and not really denying and
> created for Native student identity and Native culture.

Byron (Diné/Zuni) further clarified,

> So, when I think about Native students being successful, I understand success as
> them finding a sense of purpose and a sense of place in higher education
> institutions. So, for our Native students to be successful, they need to feel like
> they belong in college, as well as in our colleges and universities.

This holistic view also included the need for support, belonging, and success being
defined by the collective not the individual. For example, Jacquelyn, Cochiti Pueblo, a
community college administrator, described,

> I think when the student's family is proud of them. We have some students who
> stop out for whatever reason, and if their family is proud that they went to college
> and they attempted it or they moved away from home or whatever it may be, then
> I think that that is also a success, even if it wasn't the actual piece of paper that
> shows that they have the degree.

For Native college students, success may be defined by their community, how one
represents their community, making their community proud. Karen (Diné), a university
administrator shared,

I think for every student that graduates, it's a huge success. It's a huge success for

them, for the institution, for their family, for their community. So, I would say

those are the major points of measuring success of Native students in higher ed.

Michaela (Diné) a professional staff member at a university, shared, "we are all

motivated to pursue our respective careers and the paths we take in order to help our

communities back at home. I think that's a successful Native graduate, is when they can

actually live out their dreams." Brian (Cherokee Nation) a community college faculty

shared similar ideas about Native student success:

> …learning about Native Studies helps them think about connecting back to their
>
> communities… And so, I think success in terms of Native college students in
>
> particular, is being able to encourage them to connect back to those communities
>
> when the colonial forces were the reason that they are disconnected most likely in
>
> the first place.

Native college student success gauged in correlation to family and community was

important as explained by these participants. Success was defined in this way whether as

providing a supportive environment, being in a space where Native students can find a

sense of community or belonging, how success is shaped by their family or community

the students represent, or how Native students can return to their home communities. As

higher education professionals we cannot forget to recognize Native student's significant

connection to family and community.

Success is Connected to Personal Growth. Other definitions of success were

personal in a student's own development, personal growth, pushing their boundaries,

learning to be self-resilient, self-sustaining, independent, advocating for themselves,

growing in maturity and confidence. Jeanette (Cherokee Nation Citizen) a university faculty member described her concept of Native student success,

> …that they are able to develop themselves and not totally be changed or have to assimilate, so that their identity is maintained, and that's part of their success. That they have a space in their studies to develop themselves, and have their voice, and also know when to ask questions… to figure out the system.

Heather (Navajo Nation) who is a professional staff member at a TCU explained,

> I define a Native student succeeding by their ability to be independent, confident, and really know who they are. To me that's the foundation or the underlining of what keeps them standing tall in whatever career that they choose, or whatever educational path they choose.

Lloyd (Diné), a university Associate Professor emphasized,

> I think it's a multi-layered definition for me. Of course, the top of that would be graduating from the college or graduating from the university, but I also would say it includes starting and coming to the university. Having interests in various different topics and various different areas of knowledge that they may be curious about, they want to know more about, or learn more about.

Lloyd further noted,

> And so, they're going to explore and find something that is of interest to them. And so that may take a little time and that's okay. And then some students, issues come up, situations come up and so they may stop out and go do what they need to do for a time and then come back and finish. To me, that's a success as well.

So, to me it's multi-layered and that it's really for the student wanting to learn the topic or interest that they're in, but also growing in terms of their maturity and identity.

Dawn (Bitter Root Salish and Cochiti Pueblo) a university student services director said, However, if I want to go straight with student development or professional growth, I think a student succeeding also means being able to be self-resilient on their own outside of the parent, providing income, and being self-sustaining and successfully living in that style.

The NNCU (Non-Native College or University) Advisor (pseudonym) who works at a community college described Native student success in relation to self-advocacy, "I think as an advisor, seen student success is of course seeing them graduate. One of the things I like to see is them being able to self-advocate." The NNCU Advisor further described how many students coming into their office are first generation college students and will come in with their parents or grandparents who will speak for them. The NNCU Advisor further stated,

So I think letting the students know that they need to get to a point where they need to speak up and speak out for themselves on what they feel comfortable and what their interests are and what they really want to do for themselves… So just seeing them be successful in doing the things that they want to do, what makes them happy, I think will be a better result when they do go home and try to be there for their family and be in their community.

Sophia (Diné) a community college professional staff also works with first generation students and described what she sees in her work,

…there is that growth that you see while working with them each and every

semester or even through the semester, and you'll see them overcome the minor

challenges. And then at the end of the two years, or maybe three years, you'll see

them more confident in themselves. Because they've went through quite a bit of

challenge from… especially if they're first gen., they've been through the same

challenges here as a student before. And seeing them at the end, they learn how to

wear that hat differently. They become more accustomed to speaking for

themselves and not be so, I guess broken down if they don't pass that first class.

But they learn to overcome more challenges and you see a much stronger student

by the end of the second or third year.

These participants shared the importance of student's personal growth during their time

in college and how we as Native professionals providing support to Native student's

personal growth leads to their success, especially by providing options and opportunities.

Achieving Goals is Success. Some participants defined success when a student

achieves the goals they set out to accomplish, where a student can live out their dreams,

or when a student finds their purpose in education or potential careers, or when they can

create a meaningful life for themselves. For example, Jacquelyn (Cochiti Pueblo), an

administrator who works in a community college setting, explained:

I think success for Native students comes when they reach whatever goal they set

out to reach. I had a difficult time when I first came from a four year to a two

year, understanding and realizing that not every student's goal is to achieve an

actual degree. And so, that was a different way of thinking when it came to the

two year. Sometimes people have different motivations and reasons to be in

college. And so, being able to meet the student where they're at and support them

along their journey, whatever their goal is.

Leola (Filipino/Diné), Assistant Professor at a minority-serving university shared,

> For me, I would say it's a student... Technically, they're still in college, they're
>
> graduating, whatever their goals are academically, personally, and culturally, they
>
> feel like they have a good balance and they're achieving them, and they feel
>
> healthy, they feel well and they're always moving forward. I think that's kind of
>
> the thing that they're always moving forward because we go in a whole bunch of
>
> different directions that might not be a straight line, but they're always moving
>
> forward.

Success is seen as helping Native students reach their goals, whatever that might be. As

Jacquelyn pointed out, the way we define success can be quite different between four-

year and two-year institutions. As Leola stated, Native student goals can be academic,

personal, or cultural, but to really help students move forward.

Balancing Two Paradigms is Success. Some defined success in a cultural sense

when a student is critically informed of Western and Traditional ways, when they can

find a balance between the two paradigms and form their identity, or their identity is

strengthened. Precilla (Diné) a university professional staff described Native student

success as,

> The ability to adapt to progress while they're going to school and to learn and
>
> basically maintain their culture while being able to adapt to the society that they'll
>
> be working with. As far as [the university] is concerned or any college that

they're with they must maintain their status, but the student still maintains their

roots.

Byron (Diné/Zuni Pueblo), a director at a highly populated two-year community college

said:

> But really, I think it's a balance between those types of expectations or markers
>
> for success, with cultural views around being successful. So, for instance, are
>
> students being successful academically in their classes, but also are they receiving
>
> the cultural sustenance necessary to be successful in classes?

Byron went on further to note that,

> …it's a shared responsibility, rather, because Native student success is not
>
> primarily the job of our Native students alone, a lot of folks play a role in that,
>
> what role are family members playing? What role are professors playing? What
>
> role are student affairs personnel playing in Native student success?

Native professionals and higher education institutions must also play a part in helping

Native students connect to their cultural selves to help them maintain their tribal identity.

Ashton (Diné) a community college professional staff noted, "if they're grounded in their

cultural or traditional knowledge," that is part of their success. Glenabah (Taos Pueblo

and Diné) an Associate Professor at a university, said that an educated Native person is,

"someone who has the ability to navigate two forms of knowledge systems if they have

two knowledge systems." She further notes,

> But there's some Native students that we have who have a very… again it's on a
>
> spectrum, but we have some Native students who have a really strong foundation
>
> in their cultural and linguistic background and for me, the ultimate… and so they

continue to participate in the ceremonial life. They speak their Native language

fluently or they understand it and they're working towards fluency. People in their

communities back home recognize them as community members. So, they're

known. And so, to me… they… the ideal educated higher Native student who

goes through higher education, whether it's an undergraduate, graduate, or

professional level, will be somebody who's able to navigate and see the

distinctiveness in between the two bodies of knowledge and culture and language

and discourse in all of the cultural protocols attached to that. But they are also

finding ways in which they're strong in one and that one kind of guides how they

make their decisions.

These participants described Native student success occurring when students develop or

strengthen their identity by balancing between two paradigms of the Western and

Traditional sense. As higher education professionals, we must also be aware of this

important dynamic for some Native students.

Success Means Academic, Communal, & Other Measures. Others thought of

success in an academic sense, when a student gets their degree, has completion of an

academic program. Kevin (Diné) a university professional staff member stated,

And then there is another definition of Native college students of succeeding in

higher education and that specifically relates to them being critically informed

and aware scholar, which means they understand their information resources

around them, process that, and articulate that, whether in an essay, a formal

presentation, or in their own professional development, or personal development

too.

Donald (Blackfeet) a university faculty member remarked, "…we know in this Western system that success is tied to retention and completion. So that's what the system demands." Donald further noted,

> If they get what they needed and moved on, I seen that as success for them. But then when we look at tribal college, since we're credited by the same accrediting associations, we have to look at that kind of data of how many people are graduating, completing and that kind of thing… that's the reality of the structures that we're working in."

Lambert (pseudonym), Diné, who works with Native college students explained,

> A Native student succeeding in higher education. I would define it as a student that matriculates through the university, freshmen all the way to whenever they want to stop as far as they… earn their bachelor's, their master's, or even a professional or doctoral degree while still building professional skill sets, such as getting the most out of their student life.

Lambert (Diné) shared that a Native student succeeding also means that they join student organizations that "enhances and enrich their college experience, their student life here at the college level. If you can do that, I believe, that and also having some sense of giving back." Lambert further noted,

> Because I feel like the road has been paved for them to succeed here, not only by their advisors, their different support centers, their mentors. But, I believe, coming from a Native community that they instill some sort of helping others, helping their community, some sort of ways of giving back to their fellow students, their fellow tribal members, their siblings. So, if the students can start off at a college

level, go through that while getting that college, the student life experience, and be able to give back, I believe that kind of we've kind of molded a successful student.

Dawn (Bitter Root Salish/Cochiti Pueblo) a university administrator recalled, "If I go straight with statistical data, the success level to me would be the student earning their bachelor's degree minimum." Douglas (Diné) Unit Administrator at a university, relayed, "I would say the overall success of any student graduating from the university is a great success." Douglas further noted, "And I would think anyone that's probably able to gain access to higher education in general, even if they are unable to complete, is also a success in itself as well." Some thought of success as having access to higher education, going as far as they want educationally, but without any timeframe attached to their academics. John (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma) who is an Associate Professor at a university described,

> I would define a Native... Well, I define all students as succeeding in education if they successfully complete the program that they had set out to complete. I do not have a timeframe on it. I don't say, "Oh, they have to complete it in four or five or six years." It's, "Are you able to complete the program that you have elected to be part of?"

Kimimila (Rosebud Sioux Tribe) who is a Director at a two-year college with a majority number of Native students said, "That's pretty difficult but I would say overall is somebody who is graduating in their degree that they're wanting to go for, and that could change many times, while maintaining their identity."

Some of the participants talked about reaching goals or higher education being a step into "something bigger." Donovan (Diné) a professional staff at a community college shared his definition of Native student success from a more communal perspective,

> …success is having that foundation with their family to having that background for themselves. Because a lot of times what they're going to school for is much bigger than themselves. They want to provide for their family. They want a better life for their family. But it all starts at home and having that support too as well. That's what helps them contribute to their success.

Donovan further explained that as Native professionals, "we're just there to help them along the way. Help them reach their goals and whatever they want to do with their life."

The participants revealed that the Western definition of success often points to graduation, academic achievement, academic merit, and is linear, however for some Native students it may not be linear. M (pseudonym), Eastern Band Cherokee, stated, "a very Euro typical idea of what success looks like in college, that a student comes in and then graduate in a prescribed certain amount of time, usually that four to five-year mark." M further noted,

> And I think in my experience, I think you can define success in a lot of different ways, and I think that that graduation piece is just one. It's just one part of that. So, we have a lot of students who sometimes it's not that they necessarily may not complete their program, but it doesn't mean that they're not going out and doing great things. And some of the times those things start here at or start when they're

in school. Of course, we really want to see them graduate, but we're hoping that, at the very least, this is a jumping off point for them for something bigger.

Jenna (Lakota) a higher education professional mentioned,

> Again, a lot of our Native students don't have that liner progression. Some don't go to college right away. Or maybe they try college, they weren't ready, it wasn't the right time. They go back home, work, possibly start at their tribal college and then find their way back to a four-year public institution.

Jeanette (Cherokee Nation Citizen) a university faculty member stated her definition from a continuance perspective,

> …we can look at success in different ways. Some people choose not to come to college, but for those who do that that development, ultimately, whether they're in college or not, that it comes back to Nation building and cultural continuance. It's not just an in and of itself for the individual. It's developing, but it's for a larger purpose of community is how I think about Native college success and networking.

When Jeanette (Cherokee Nation Citizen) talked about networking, she was referring to her time in college and how at her university there was a very strong Native student association, who are now her closest friends today:

> It was a network, and we share information or talk about, "at my Nation, this is happening. We're doing this. This is what's happening here." It was a network. I see that as another element of success for students, that networking that happens through long-term relationships.

These participants shared how their definition of Native student success can be framed in academic terms that may not be linear, it could be communal leading to something bigger than themselves or can be determined in connection to Nation building.

Overall, there were many definitions about how we define Native college students succeeding in institutions of higher education. Often times higher education success is defined by retention and graduation rates or how a student performs academically, but as we can see from the participants defining Native student success is more than data or Western measures. The definition could be personal where success is connected to their own development, growth, or maturity or whether they achieved their personal goals and created a meaningful life. Success was also connected to one's Native culture and identity and growth in this way. Success also included earning academic degrees or completion of a program they set out to finish.

White Shell: Needs of Native Students for Success

Not only was it important to assess how the participants defined Native student success in college, but also it was important to look at what we thought were the needs of Native college students to help them achieve success. Participants said how important social needs are for Native college students and this includes space, place, mentorship, support, connectedness, kinship, and community. Another significant need is financial, which includes the need for scholarships, housing, as well as transportation, tuition, books, childcare, food, and supplies. Other needs are around identity, culture, spirituality, emotional support, and Indigenous critical consciousness. There's a need from the university to respect, appreciate, and show commitment to Native students and to tribes, understanding the diversity and strengths of our Native students, and language barriers.

Academic needs include services, programs, advising, tutoring, and navigating the system.

Social Needs of Native College Students. Participants talked about how important social needs are for Native students to reach success in college. Social needs include having a gathering space on college campuses like a Native American student center where services and programs exist to support Native college students and where they can find each other and professionals who understand and support who they are. Kevin (Diné) a Program Specialist said Native students need "culturally safe learning spaces – meaning a space that is designed for them." Lloyd (Diné) an Associate Professor emphasized,

> The student services part, it would be great if there's a Native or an American Indian Student Services, because then they can congregate there and they can get the necessary support that they need to succeed in their classes. Whether it's tutoring, whether it's computer lab, whether it's printing, whether it's study groups. Whether it's just wanting to go to a place where there are other Native people, and just feel empowered being in that location with other Native people.

Dee (Diné), staff member at a community college, noted "I found that working at a community college that space and place is important. We do need to have some mentorship programs so that the students will be able to be involved with extracurricular activities, like student organizations." Kimimila (Rosebud Sioux Tribe) a student services director at a two-year institution emphasized, "Things that they need – clubs, sororities, fraternities. They also need to be involved in other networks and they definitely need to have mentors in the programs that they're wanting to go into for their degree." This place

would also need to recognize student's cultural identities and provide them a home away

from home or a community away from their home communities. Alexandra, who works

with Native college students, explained, "trying to find a space and identity at the tribal

college itself. Maybe they grew up real traditional or with that kinship, that strong

support of family at home and now they may not have that at school." Dawn (Bitter Root

Salish/Cochiti Pueblo) a Director at a university described the need this way:

> When we're working with students one of my questions to them is always, like,
>
> "so do you live, you know, in the city? Or are you living in the dorms? Are you
>
> coming straight from one of the villages like local Pueblos to come to school?"
>
> The reason I ask that is because we can ask the student to ask their families for
>
> moral support or mental support if they're coming to college. If they're living on
>
> their own in the city or living in the dorms. Then I already know they've distanced
>
> themselves from home. And possibly the activities are going on year-round, the
>
> different ceremonies, the customs, traditions. If they're living in the dorms, it
>
> would be a little bit harder to do that, not impossible, but it just distance-wise it's
>
> a little harder. If I know the students are in the dorms, you know, I talked to them
>
> about going home, remaining connected, help them feel at home here. I also share
>
> my own personal stories of coming to college and what it took for me and it's
>
> always making sure they have someone to lean on and share that they're not alone.
>
> But I think the big need is the connectedness to custom, to home. And sometimes
>
> we come across students are totally Urban Natives and they don't have that sense
>
> of community as when you're growing up on the Rez. So, when I'm working with
>
> students and I find out they're Native, I try to get a little bit about their

background. I don't want to assume either that they are extra needy, but I just

want to make sure that I have a better understanding of their background.

Dawn further continued that she would encourage Native students to get connected to the

Native student center because, "It's really about forming bonds in that community sense

somewhere on campus. But the easiest way is to kind of aim the students towards student

programming or activities that involve Native American students." Social needs also

include the need for mentorship, the need for support, the need for connectedness,

kinship, and community. Douglas (Navajo) an administrator who works in a university

remarked,

> I think a support structure probably begins probably at home with family to make
>
> sure that they have that kind of support at home. And then trying to find some
>
> kind of support mechanism once they get to the college university atmosphere.
>
> So, they aren't felt left alone once they get here.

It is a space where Native students have access to resources, a computer lab, and study

space. The gathering space is also where they can build partnerships and a strong network

of community support, especially from Native staff, faculty, and administrators.

Glenabah (Taos Pueblo/Diné) an Associate Professor said, "they need some type of

support whether that's peer support or support from people at a Native student center or

their professors, advisors, I think that's important." Jodi (Laguna Pueblo), a TCU faculty

member similarly noted when describing the community component,

> And I think having instructors that are able to help the students along the way, I
>
> think that's one of the primary ways of helping Native students as they acquire
>
> student success… And so just to help the student along. And I think it's really

important for the classroom educators to know what they can actually do in those

different settings.

Native faculty play an important role in helping meet the needs of Native college students

in achieving success. Social needs also include their Native peers, so they can develop

strong relationships with others like themselves that they can connect with and build

community with. As Native professionals it is important to help Native students get

connected to a community on campus to meet their social needs.

Financial Needs of Native College Students. Native college students often have

significant financial needs. Donald (Blackfeet) a university faculty member shared that

financial was the biggest need for Native students and when it comes to BIA funding, it

has "never funded things at the level of needs." Glenabah (Taos Pueblo/Diné) an

Associate Professor revealed, "Well, there's different levels. I think the most primary

level is funding. They need funding support. They need financial support to meet their

needs." Lloyd (Diné) an Associate Professor stated,

> The resources for them to go to a university or to a college because it is quite
>
> expensive. And even if the tuition is pretty minimal, you're basically living on
>
> your own, and so you're going to need the resources to live on your own.

Jacquelyn (Cochiti Pueblo) who is a community college administrator said, "I think one

of the needs for a lot of students in general is the need for resources that impact their

financial stability." Financial needs can relate to housing, tuition, books, transportation,

childcare, food, internet access, or supplies. Douglas (Navajo) a university administrator

shared, "And then there's always the financial aspect of it too, just trying to figure out

how they're going to fund themselves through school for tuition, for fees for books,

housing, food, and those types of things." When talking about some Native student needs, Ashton (Diné), a Recruitment Specialist, detailed, "they don't have a physical address they can use because they're staying with a relative or staying with a friend of some sort." Jacquelyn (Cochiti Pueblo), when talking about needs emphasized,

> So, for one could even be childcare. So, we have a lot of students at our
> community college that are parents - Native students and non-Native students. I
> think that's one area that we could do better to support students is to provide some
> sort of drop-in service or some sort of facility or some sort of students that are in
> our programs for early childhood to utilize that. I think a lot of our students,
> single parents, a lot of the times they struggle with being able to afford or have
> childcare available.

Jacquelyn (Cochiti Pueblo) further noted another need as,

> …being able to make it here. So, transportation is one. So, we work with students
> in Jemez that'll do dual credit, and sometimes they're not able to get a ride that
> day. It's hard for them to commute. It's not as far as some of the other tribes in the
> state, but locally we have plenty of resources and campuses available. But if
> you're outside of the Rio Rancho, Albuquerque area, you have to do the commute.
> And so, if you don't have reliable transportation, then it's more challenging to get
> to school.

Financial needs also connect to the need for scholarship resources. Dee (Diné) a staff member at a Native-serving community college emphasized, "helping them with scholarships and grants, especially the application portion of it, and exposing them to

internships and leadership opportunities that can really help with retention and graduation endeavors."

These participants emphasized the importance of the financial needs of Native college students. Their tribal scholarship is often not enough to meet their full costs while attending college and they encounter many expenses to not only go towards tuition, fees, books and supplies, but money for housing, food, transportation, and many other costs. It is important as Native professionals to help connect Native students to financial and scholarship resources and opportunities to help lessen the stresses they encounter.

Institutions Commitment to Native College Students. Participants make it clear that colleges and universities need to meet the needs of Native college students by appreciating, respecting, recognizing their strengths, and showing commitment to Native students and tribal communities. Participants also include students' strengths in how they work with Native students by using their ways of learning in their teaching as well as through how they advise. Lloyd (Diné) an Associate Professor explained,

> And then I think overall, the university and college have to be appreciative of them being there and showing the respect to them. And what I mean by that is that the students feel comfortable being at that university. They enjoy coming to that university, enjoy the classes. They enjoy the friends that they've made, and they feel safe, and that they don't feel like they're on edge all the time or they feel like they're being bombarded because of their identity or because of their status as Native people.

Lloyd further stated, "The university as a whole has to create an environment where that's respected and acknowledged." He talked about how higher education institutions need to

> respect them or appreciates them or creates the environment that is needed for
>
> them to succeed. So, I think on the universities part they have to do that, and they
>
> have to demonstrate respect, appreciation and commitment to them, to their
>
> families, to the Native communities that they're coming from. That to me is really
>
> an important part of what they need.

Glenabah (Taos Pueblo/Diné) a university Associate Professor referenced Yosso (2005) in her response about Native students coming with "community cultural wealth," which includes "knowledges, skills, abilities, and networks." Glenabah gave examples of aspirational, resistance capital, linguistic capital, familial capital in relation to Native college students. She stated that aspirational capital "if you grew up with maybe adverse childhood experiences (ACE), you're able to… to be resilient because somewhere you found a way to be… to aspire. Someone has told you, 'you can be… you can change your situation here.'" Glenabah recognized linguistic capital when you can speak two or more languages. She further talked about familial capital that Native students have and detailed:

> And that might be where you have at least one or two family members who
>
> believe in you and they may not be educated in a sense of the Western style, but
>
> they believe in you. They pray for you. They burn cedar for you when you leave
>
> home. They ask you how things are going… they give you $5 when you're getting
>
> on the… going to leave… when you're saying good-bye. You know – it's that.

Glenabah explained that resistance capital

is probably the strongest idea that as Indigenous peoples, we know our history, where we have a history of oppression and resistance and there's this very rich history and knowing that history you have a strong historical consciousness and that's what moves you forward. You just say, "you know what, things don't have to be like this." So, they take on education as more than themselves. It's a larger than them. It's not them, it's about an entire history - it's about an entire people. And I think those students who recognize their education, Indigenous students, or any student who has been marginalized historically or oppressed historically or, you know, those negativities or whatever - colonized. I think those students who recognize that… that's what gets them going. They see that… they see their education as a political project.

Glenabah recognized how our Native students come to higher education with their "community cultural wealth" and as institutions of higher education, those types of capital must be acknowledged. Higher education institutions need to recognize the diversity of our Native students, where they come from, and the diversity of the tribal communities they represent and incorporate their strengths and ways of being into how we do things in higher education. Donald (Blackfeet) a university faculty member shared an example:

…there are a group of students who come in here that live their cultural ways… that they're like resistors. They come in here knowing this is not a Native American place. This is not home. These people are going to try to change me into something, but I'm here to get what I need, and so it's a small group of students who are really traditional oriented are making it through college. To me,

that's something we need to look at. I think that's about those cultural strengths…

Not only is it about family and home, but it's about our culture and it's about our

spirituality, our own cultural strengths helping us to get through this place.

As part of this commitment to Native college students, there must be better representation

of Native faculty, staff, and administrators to have a voice and help meet the needs of

students and tribal communities, especially for those with limited manpower. Native

students come with cultural capital and higher education institutions must make a

commitment to recognize Native students' cultural strengths.

      Meeting Personal Needs of Native College Students. Participant shared insights

shared that meeting the personal needs of Native college students includes supporting

their identity, culture, spirituality, and emotional needs. Kevin (Diné) a Program

Specialist at a university remarked,

      The other needs I think is also their spiritual and cultural needs also and it's

      basically reinforcement of their Indigeneity. So that reinforcement comes in line

      with perhaps, what I call feeding their cultural soul. Meaning…being around their

      peers, like minded peers, or Indigenous peers. Having faculty ready and able to

      support them in that capacity and programs like my own program and other

      programs at [Name of University] campus helping them find that sense of

      community on campus because it is an isolating experience.

This also includes support from students' families, Native faculty and staff members who

can encourage them, be there for them, be accessible, and understand them. Michael

(Pueblo of Laguna/Red Lake Chippewa) gave another perspective:

One that comes to ... Some of the needs that also students need is sometimes that support from their family. We still often see students who are coming down and still have a huge responsibility to their family when it comes to "You need to come back home, because you need to watch your cousin this weekend." "You need to come back home, because grandma fell." "You need to send money home, because we're down to a quarter of propane, and it's getting cold now." These are things that students need to have lifted from them. I know this is a very difficult thing, because I still deal with this today with family members asking sometimes, "Hey, can you send us some money? Because we need to pay this." We hear it from others when it comes to "Can you come watch your cousins? Because I want to go to this, or I want to go to ..."

What Michael described is important to note because often times Native students are faced with decisions where family is the main priority as taught by many Native communities or to let academics be the main priority. This juxtaposition is challenging for many Native students to be put in a place where they must choose. Michael further notes the importance of

Giving them an opportunity to do what they've been asked for this four years, five years, however many degrees that they're going to be getting, because ultimately, we look at the short term versus long term gains when it comes to this. Yeah, the short-term gain may be that the student's there to help out their family with this, but the long-term benefit may be lost when it comes to that student is no longer going to be able to be in that degree completion cycle or get to whatever level that they're wanting to get to.

Personal needs also include reaching an Indigenous critical consciousness through "students' critical thinking skills" in "reclaiming Indigenous education" (Pewewardy et al., 2018). Kevin (Diné) a university Program Specialist said that Native college students need,

> …is navigating all of the information around them in a critically conscious way. They can do it in their own Indigenous critical consciousness self or their own academic area of expertise and navigating that and applying it in their own research area.

Kevin further remarked that Native students are "balancing their Indigenous identity with all of the studies that they're learning." He referenced Martin Nakata's (2002) "Cultural Interface;" Kevin interprets in his own words,

> …he suggests that cultural interface is Indigenous people and their program of studies in the western academic environment, meaning their Indigenous knowledge and then their academic knowledge are balancing each other in a mutually exclusive way, but also in a mutually informed and non-destructive way where one is not dismantling the other. One is not tearing the other system down and I believe in that balanced approach of applying or using your cultural knowledge that you're coming from whether it's from your Indigenous community and balancing that out with all of the academic knowledge after learning.

Native student needs also mean supporting them in advocating for themselves, handling stress, transitioning from home, or succeeding in life. Lambert (Diné) who works with Native college students said it is important to help students keep in mind their mental

health, "because the added stress of not knowing how to pay for it, taking out loans, all these different little entities can add up to lots of big amounts of stress that can be hard to bear."

The participants noted how meeting a Native student's personal needs through supporting their cultural, spiritual well-being, identity, emotional needs are important to helping a Native student succeed in higher education. Support means reinforcing their Indigeneity, showing the importance of family and community, providing encouragement, and helping students handle stress, meanwhile providing academic support.

Supporting Academic Needs of Native College Students. The academic needs of Native college students include services and programs geared towards them, access to online programs, advising and academic planning, and tutoring. Dee (Diné) a community college Native staff professional shared,

With all the years that I've been in post-secondary education. I see a lot of

students transitioning from high school into college. So, I think college prep

courses - preparation is very important. They do need a lot of academic support.

Academic support must start early as Dee pointed out. There is a need to support online programs. Jacquelyn (Cochiti Pueblo) who is a community college administrator talked about how their community college was going to start offering their first online courses in Fall 2020, but that it's only starting with a few programs. Most likely the shift to online courses happened even earlier due to the pandemic, yet my data collection was completed prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, so I am not completely sure. Jacquelyn also noted that most of their academic programs could not be completed fully online, so many students

had to commute to campus. This, however, may be much different due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, there has been some hesitancy to do more online academic work, but with the pandemic everything moved virtual very quickly.

When speaking of academic support, John (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma), an Associate Professor stated,

> We need to support them in how to negotiate the bureaucracy that is higher
>
> education, be that financial aid, advising, making use and being aware of all of the
>
> resources that are available, how to use the library, all of those things.

To support the academic needs of Native college students, it also includes helping Native students traverse the higher education system. The participants indicated the importance of Native support services and programs, starting early, supporting online learning, and helping students navigate the college system to meet the academic needs of Native college students.

White Shell: Personally Supporting Native Student Success

Native professionals, faculty, and administrators help Native college students succeed in many different ways. Many of the participants talked about the significance of mentorship, building relationships with the students by asking about their families and classes and understanding where the students are coming from or how they are doing to advocate for them when it comes to policies and procedures. Michael (Pueblo of Laguna/Red Lake Chippewa) when talking about building relationships with students, especially for letters of recommendation, said,

> So, creating that relationship, I believe, is one of those keys of getting to know
>
> where the student is going and how we can help those students with…We talk

about roadblocks that eventually come on, the detours. We'd also help them with

the shortcuts that we know are available due to the social capital that we hold

from being around others.

Lloyd (Diné) an Associate Professor shared some of the ways he purposefully supports

Native students,

Another way is being a mentor and an advisor to them whether they're taking my

classes or not. And just coming in and finding out how things are going and

whatever you wanted to talk about, maybe some of the challenges here at the

university.

Byron (Navajo/Zuni Pueblo) who is a Director at a community college with a significant

number of Native students emphasized the importance of support along the full college

journey,

We play a huge role in advising and supporting Native students along their

success. Being respectful of their timing, and being respectful of their

experiences, but also understanding that there is a responsibility larger that will

ultimately support them throughout their entire higher education pathway, like

through financial aid and other things like that.

Native faculty especially talked about connecting with Native students by being

accessible and relatable. Anna, a Native faculty member, explained,

It's support, it's encouragement, it's someone being there for them. It's support on

multiple levels. It could be that academic support, it could be the encouragement,

reaching out, or just being here. I have students who just come in my office to

visit and I really think a lot of that has to do with having someone that resembles them, having faculty member that's brown, that's accessible too.

Many of the participants spoke about helping Native students find scholarships, showing them how to apply and eligibility, but also for financial literacy. Michaela (Diné) a Program Specialist at a university mentioned,

> The good thing about our school, too, is should a student ever need a quick loan or something to pay the rent, that's available. I know about it because I had to get that, too. And so, I think a lot of the ... how would you say ... ensuring successful Native students is having to put myself in their shoes, because I was there at one point.

> Many participants spoke about being a resource for Native students from when they first enter college and throughout their higher education experience, connecting students to others in their network. MC talked about being a resource and utilizing a network:

> So… keeping those connections… And I've always told people, you meet a lot of people and not… those people have expertise in certain fields and if you can keep that mental file, you can actually go back and put people in touch with one another. In order to help them along the way or… you might even need their help later on. Not one person's going to be the all-knowing and experts. You need to collect a lot of mentors and a lot of people who have the knowledge in their field. That is all very helpful.

Jacquelyn (Cochiti Pueblo), a community college administrator acknowledged something similar,

> Yeah, I think for me, just serving as a resource. Having had my experiences as an
> academic advisor in the past and different kinds of programming, having the four-
> year college experience and then the two-year college experience. I think serving
> as a resource in whatever students need is helpful, and I really enjoy that about
> my job now.

Participants also talked about providing student services like workshops and Native-based events, but also providing guidance when Native students have cultural obligations, if they need support with technology, or in navigating the higher education system including transferring or planning for graduate degrees. Heather (Navajo Nation) who is a staff member at a tribal university said that she uses her program to provide stability, where she offers tutoring, but also mentoring:

> So, I think one of the things that's unique to the program that I established here, in
> terms of helping students succeed is, that I'd not only help out with the academics
> portion with tutoring, but also the professional development.

Heather further shared how she gives students an opportunity to present their research in Navajo or English at the chapter house to give them the chance to present in front of the public.

> Some participants spoke about providing physical space, which can give students
stability, where they can provide "Indigenous hospitality" and be the "community away from their home community." Kevin (Diné) who works at a Native-serving university relayed,

> For me, running this program, I kind of see it holistically in terms of what I can
> do for them and that relationship level is, one, acknowledging their relationship to

you and you to them. Not my program title, not my program duties, but from an

Indigenous-to-Indigenous level and that's probably coming from my Diné

background of using K'é which is based on relationality. Using that to, one,

respect their Indigeneity and their Indigenous personhood, but it's also applying

what I call Indigenous hospitality in that which is using whatever means you have

to make that person or that student as comfortable as possible. And the hospitality

sense that you see in a lot of Indigenous communities.

Dee (Diné) staff professional at a Native-serving community college shared, "ways to

assist Native American students in succeeding in a college atmosphere is to have a

presence, meaning that we have to have a place to congregate." Some participants talked

about helping empower Native students, reminding them of what they are capable of

doing, providing space for their voices to be heard, teaching them self-advocacy and

ownership over their education. Leola (Filipino/Diné) an Assistant Professor detailed

how she helps students utilize their values to take personal responsibility of their

education,

I would say I have a good sense of the whole picture or helping students to see

their whole picture and situate themselves in terms of where they've come from,

what's informed their values and making sure they understand how their values

align with their personal goals and what they need to do to get there and being

ready for challenges and also offering that sense of familiarity for they come

from, but also that sense of personal responsibility that they're not necessarily

going to be completely let off the hook for this and that, that they still have to

meet themselves at a certain point to be able to navigate the system.

Dawn (Bitter Root Salish/Cochiti Pueblo) a Director at a Native-serving university said, "I think some of the ways that I help them succeed, again, is validating who they are. The continuous encouragement of talking with them about their future goals."

Alexandra, who works with Native college students described, "Inviting them to the table or the meeting or being part of the process. I've witnessed and found that allowing our Native college students to have a voice… and listening to that voice is important." She further noted, "It does take time to let them come around and start feeling that they're just as important as the staff as the administration and if not, their voice is more important because they're the ones that we're serving." Lynn (Diné), an administrator at a Native-serving community college remarked,

> We are their voice. We're their advocates, and so anytime there's student issues or topics at hand at a meeting where it's usually administrators and faculty driven, I from the staff side, I'll go, and I see myself as the voice of the students simply because we interact with them on a daily basis. We know their issues. We know their concerns. We know their challenges. So, I feel like when I go to those meetings, I have to be their voice because there's never students at the table ever.

Some of the participants also talked about providing encouragement to Native students to pursue extracurricular activities, to fill their resumes, in supporting Native student organizations. Participants also spoke about the importance of offering Native-centered courses, teaching Native students about Indigenous research, and showing the value of Native American Studies. Donald (Blackfeet) a university faculty member relayed, "Living in a state with 10% Natives, sometimes they know little about who Pueblos, Navajos are, and so that's why we have Native studies by the way, raise their

consciousness, everybody's consciousness." Donald further noted, "I really believe in Native American Studies, and my vision and philosophy, my vision is raising the consciousness of all people to learn about the Native American situation." Lloyd (Diné) an Associate Professor shared his view about the value of offering Native American Studies courses,

> The courses that I teach are Native-centric. The courses that I teach also focus on the contribution of Native people to life and humanity and I think students appreciate that. I think they want to go to classes that talk about Native peoples and their ways and their histories. And the challenges that they're dealing with now and the work that they're doing for the continuation of the people and the sustainability of their nations and communities.

Others also talked about the importance of helping Native students work with tribal communities or with Native-based organizations, and the need to mobilize Native communities.

Native professionals are offering many ways to transform how we work with and design for Native students. Native professionals, faculty, and administrators offer Native students mentorship, build relationships with them, advocate for them, are resourceful, provide services, validate who they are as a Native person, provide physical space, give them a voice, and connect them back to working with Native communities. It is imperative to think of the many ways Native professionals personally support Native student success.

White Shell: Departments Supporting Native Student Success

The participants shared many ways that their departments or programs support Native student success. Alexandra, who works with Native college students said that when they advocate for funding, they include students to give them leadership development opportunities. Many mentioned connecting students to services like advising or tutoring and providing resources such as funding for scholarships or emergency funds. Lambert (Diné) who works with Native college students explained:

> The academic advisement component, where students get to see a person that looks like them, get advice from them. We have advisors that are well-rounded, well-sounded with the different advisement protocols. And instead of having to wait in a long line and see someone they don't really know, they can come to our office and see someone that knows who they are, where they're from, their goals, on a more individual level.

Departments must also work together across colleges and universities to work more effectively with Native students and to transform processes and practices to be more flexible and consistent with differing cultural ways, being, and realties. Kevin (Diné) a Program Specialist at a Native-serving university explained, "but like I said, coming to back to the Indigenous hospitality, since you take care of that person as a whole rather than as that transactional person, I still want to help that student find financial aid resources." Dawn (Bitter Root Salish/Cochiti Pueblo) a Director at a Native-serving university detailed how their department goes beyond academic advising,

> And then when I say advisement are advisors act a little different in terms of, we're not like the advisors at the colleges. Our advisors cover financial aid, the FASFA, housing, transportation, dorms, self-advocacy in classrooms with

instructors, food insecurities. Our team asks a lot of those other questions to make

sure that the students can focus on school.

Participants talked about providing academic literacy, Native-based curriculum through

Native American Studies courses, or other academic support. Lloyd (Diné) an Associate

Professor shared how important the role students played in the creation of his department

showcasing how through leadership and partnership with Native students, faculty could

push to transform the university system:

> Our department has had a long history working with Native college students and
>
> assisting them. The creation of Native American studies came about because of
>
> the students. Back in the late 1960s, they wanted to take course in Native
>
> American Studies. They wanted Native American faculty and they approached the
>
> administration. They approached the university saying, "This is what we want."
>
> They helped create Native American studies back in 1970 when it opened.

Lloyd (Diné) further noted,

> Since that time, I think there have been various different ways the department and
>
> program has assisted students providing resources, providing curriculum.
>
> Providing assistantships with the challenges of going to a university. Academic
>
> support, tutoring, advisement. Hosting Native people. Native speakers coming
>
> onto campus. Supporting the students and their activism and their education
>
> experience.

Participants talked about offering events and workshops for graduate school preparations, relieving stress, financial literacy, and finding scholarships. Dee (Diné) a staff professional at a Native-serving community college emphasized,

> I believe that quarterly workshops for scholarships, FAFSA, employability skills, and leadership development are important. We need to offer assistance and guide our Native American students through college processes. This can be overwhelming for any student, especially our first-generation students.

Many departments and programs also provide opportunities for leadership development through volunteer or internship experiences and by helping students find ways to give back to tribal communities. Douglas (Navajo) a university administrator said,

> So, we have a program where we allow... Where we try to find a company that's willing to take these students or maybe their target is a Native American student. And then for us to provide funding for that student to be housed at that job for a number of weeks to gain that kind of experience. And then beyond that... And that could happen either within the company or could happen like in a research lab here at the university just so long as the student gains that kind of experience.

It is important to promote various forms of Indigenous leadership among students whether through work and internship experiences or through student leadership opportunities. Lambert (Diné) who works with Native college students stated,

> Other programs that our department uses is our mentorship program, where a student identifies whether they want to be a mentor or mentee. And we pair them up and they work and they kind of fosters relationships with one another, help build that support, that mentorship, that guidance.

Some participants also talked about providing cultural awareness through special events like a powwow, round dance, shoe game, or smudging. Many spoke about advocating for Native students or for the importance of their programs or departments for funding or resources.

It is important to note the various aspects of white shell, Nitsáhákees, thinking and assessing before moving into the next phase of turquoise, Nahat'á, planning. Through gathering my research and hearing from each of the participants from the individual interviews, the sharing circles, or the interviews with those who have an existing collaborative entity, I was interested in understanding their thoughts when it came to their assessment of Native student success, through their definitions and their support in various forms of success from the professionals personally, through their departments, or their institutions of higher education. Many participants agreed and were excited about building kinship statewide through partnerships, developing k'é, and saw the need to create a greater Native community through a collaborative. The base of this collaborative is centered around Native college student success, how it is defined, how it is developed, supported, and sustained individually, through the participants' departments and higher education institutions.

Turquoise: Nahat'á – Planning

The next aspect of Diné Philosophy of Learning and Living is Nahat'á, which is connected to the Navajo southern sacred mountain, Tsoodził. This mountain adorned with turquoise and represents planning, Nahat'á. In my study, Nahat'á relates to my Research Question 2) what ideas exist among the interview and focus group participants about the formation of a higher education state-wide collaborative to support Native

college students? In this part of the study, I asked participants to consider what benefits

they hope to receive through participation, what they hope to share from their work with

Native students, what types of support would they want from a collaborative entity, and

to think about motivators and deterrence to participate. This planning part gave

participants the chance to think about the possibilities of what this collaborative could

look like, what would help it succeed, and possible challenges that we may need to

prepare for.

Turquoise: Benefits Hoping to Receive

Part of the planning process is to find out what the participants thought about

possible benefits they hope to receive through a collaborative state-wide entity. A

majority of the participants talked about how we could create a state-wide Native

community, through a greater sense of family through relationship and kinship building.

They spoke about how this collaborative could be the connector for all of us, a way to

have a greater network of Native professionals, practitioners, faculty, and administrators

who serve Native college students and support their success. Byron (Navajo/Zuni Pueblo)

a student services director at a two-year college described,

> Honestly, I think that having a strong network. Knowing that you are supported
>
> by other folks, other practitioners, other college administrators, even tribal leaders
>
> and tribal members. If it is a higher education collaborative for Indigenous
>
> education, it needs to involve people from Native communities.

Donald (Blackfeet) a university faculty member stated, "Well, for me I think this would

be a good thing, because I would like to learn from others on these campuses and the

things they're doing." The collaborative would help us connect better together across the

state and to our tribal communities throughout. Brian (Cherokee Nation) a community college faculty shared his ideas on an ideal collaborative,

> I would like to see not only a physical meeting, to be able to get to know people across these institutions, to be able to network with them and feel comfortable coming and talking to their class and vice versa, but I'd like to see some type of online presence too, whether that'd be password protected or whatever, though, that people can continue that type of dialogue even before and after the conference, I think conferences are great. They're great slides for invention, but a lot of this work for this collaborative will need to exist beyond the conference. And I think a digital space would go a long way for that.

The NNCU Advisor (pseudonym) agreed with Brian,

> Yeah, I think that would be ideal… just having a space in a location just to talk about our challenges, talk about some of our ideas, talk about maybe what am I missing here? Or do you think you can back me up on this or advocate for this? I think that would be something idea that we could do sometime maybe twice a month or once a month or every two months, something along that line to where we can just come in and just talk about what we are going through.

They suggest we come together for one purpose and focus – to create greater success for Indigenous education in New Mexico. They hope the collaborations could increase enrollment, create better pathways for students, and increase graduation.

One example that came up during one of the focus group discussions was the idea around creating a Native community event where institutions could come in and share opportunities from their schools, but to provide something that was multi-leveled to

include parents, elementary, middle school, and high school aged Native students to garner interest in higher education, but also to specifically help the high school students complete their FAFSA's as well. This idea would include inviting tribal higher education offices as well so they can have a platform to also share how they support college students. In a similar event, Precilla (Diné) described her experience,

> We were able to help them get their foot started at least with the financial aid part of it, with all of the schools and stuff. We gave them options for applying. We gave them applications. We gave them information about scholarships and stuff like that… Do we want to start going to the students when they're in their eighth and ninth grades? Say, "You know what, you need to start thinking about your college, what do you want to go to school for? This is what you're going to have to achieve when you go to college. You need to fill out this kind of thing. This is what we need from you when you come out." Make the students more aware within the elementary schools and the middle schools to make them understand what's going to be coming.

Precilla (Diné) and Dawn (Bitter Root Salish) liked the idea of connecting it to the Yazzie-Martinez court case as an initiative to work with K-12 level students specifically for Native students to help them think about going to college. This idea would also provide space for the tribal higher education offices to connect earlier with younger Native students and families.

Another idea that came out of another focus group session was around developing a "communal education day" (Kevin, Diné) offered after hearing Jodi (Laguna Pueblo) a TCU faculty talk about how challenging it can be for students to make connections across

institutions when they are ready to transfer and not finding people to connect with, "And so I think for the people that are there at the other institutions to know how they can provide and to build that bridge of communication between the different schools." Kevin (Diné) a university professional staff suggested creating a "communal education day between all of us, all of our institutions are present there and turning that on its head and making a professional conference for the students." Kevin (Diné) further explained,

> One thing I always enjoyed with getting students ready for is giving those professional experiences for them whether it's writing a short paper or presenting at a conference or something like that, but would it be nice if we had institutions from CNM, SIPI, IAIA, and UNM to have a professional conference just about Native studies across our institutions for us just to collaborate and organize with these ideas and then having our students participate in that. I mean that would be cool.

Brian (Cherokee Nation) a community college faculty liked the idea of allowing Native college students the opportunity to participate in a conference,

> the opportunity for them to see what an academic conference was and to participate in that conference, I think was really helpful for them… I think if we build something that would expect undergraduate students to participate, then I think that would be ideal.

This idea would be a great way to bridge communication across institutions and bring our Native college students together in an academic setting that has multiple benefits of supporting one another professionally, coming together, and building relationships to help our Native students connect.

Participants talked about sharing ideas, challenges, issues we face, information, perspectives, best practices to inspire each other, strengthen our efforts, discuss possible resolutions, and learn together. When working with tribal communities, participants spoke about the collaborative being the space to provide updates, communicate better with tribal leaders and community members, to share a network contact list for recruitment, outreach, and referrals. Donald (Blackfeet) a university faculty member explained that if the collaborative gave us access to tribes and access to legislators, it would be an "opportunity to actually meet with tribes too to get their perspectives on these things, so we can get some input, and so they can know that sometimes we may have some information that could help them."

Participants hope that a collaborative could garner institutional support, building accountability of institutions to tribal nations because of the shared responsibility to Native student success. Participants also talked about the need for financial support from institutions and the state to support activities, scholarships, and collaborative work. Other benefits would be the possibility to create a consortium with specialized degrees, where curriculum can be shared across the state for different levels of degrees, from certificates, Bachelor's degree, M.A. degree, or even Ph.D. programs, where our institutions can work together and allow students to move across institutions from TCUs to NNCUs. Another way to work together would be in data collection of our Native students in our respective institutions, then we could create white papers or other literature collectively to serve as a platform to request funding or to share our concerns. Dee (Diné) a community college professional staff offered her idea,

I think that advocates from each institution should formulate a report based on the

institutions they work for and provide some data, maybe do some research to help

formulate this particular collaboration because we all know that data speaks very

well, and the stories that we have about our students will possibly open the eyes to

our partners, and it would show that type of information.

Dawn (Bitter Root Salish/Cochiti Pueblo) a university professional shared her ideas of

using the collaborative as a means to share data and research,

One of the things I think coming from the academic side that's pretty powerful is

when we're working in this collaborative, if we could work with different tribal

higher education offices and share with them the academic papers of what

theories or what processes have been proven successful.

Another idea was the possibility of a state-level position of someone who is a tribal

liaison who could work between tribes and higher education institutions. This position

could help advocate on behalf of concerns brought from the collaborative.

Turquoise: Hope to Share with Collaborative

When asking the participants to think about what they would share from their own

work with Native college students, many talked about the various aspects of their work

and were thoughtful in their responses. Participants spoke about being intentional,

leaving a legacy, and sharing our passion of our work. When thinking of the Native

students, participants also emphasized how we can inspire our students to become

educators, show them the cycle of giving back, and providing guest speakers to talk about

the importance of our Native students to speak to them and to us during a conference.

Participants also emphasized the importance of encouraging our Native students to share

their stories, and to talk about how they help their families and communities. In building

this collaborative many said how crucial it is to keep Native students as our main focus,

inspire them, involve them as participants, for leadership development, and involve

student organizations.

Many participants also spoke about the need to inspire each other and to be a

resource to the collaborative. We can meet to plan goals, share our thoughts, but also to

offer our knowledge, expertise, skills, and specialties to the group. This collaborative is

needed to build better partnerships and give us opportunities for teamwork. We can tap

into this network for ourselves if we need mentorship and support, but also for our Native

students to help them navigate the system of higher education, and for our tribal

communities as well. Through the collaborative we can share our unique programs for

tutoring, mentoring, internships, and transitioning from high school to college. We can

also share our Native-based curriculum, Indigenous scholarship and research. Brian

(Cherokee Nation), a community college faculty stated,

> …anything that a consortium like this does is readily accessible to the
>
> community… So, the idea is that if something is created, it should be open and
>
> accessible to everyone. I think that is something that would be a very
>
> foundational, it should be a foundational principle for any collective like this.

The collaborations must be mutually beneficial and is also an opportunity to share our

voice through meetings with legislators, tribal leaders, and tribal communities.

Turquoise: Support from Collaborative

When I asked the participants to think about what kind of support they would find

helpful from a state-wide higher education collaborative, there were various responses,

but many similarities. Many participants said the collaborative would provide space to build community, coordinate state-wide efforts, and to create better partnerships. The collaborative could be space to share resources, experiences, our expertise through various workshops during a conference. Kimimila (Rosebud Sioux Tribe) a director at a two-year college would share "the experiences that we've had with Native students." Kimimila continued,

> I would probably want to do maybe workshops on tutoring or mentoring or something that I have experience in… Because I'm sure a lot of other programs and colleges have sort of the same issues with retention, students who are first generation, and faced with similar problems and issues.

Building community could be virtual to connect through a website, where we could house a state-wide directory listing Native professionals, faculty, administrators, but also to list our Native-based programs for students and everyone to find. Precilla (Diné) suggested using Google or Sharepoint or another type of shared drive to house information, share documents and forms, but to be sure that only one person be responsible to maintain the site, so it does not get confusing. The website could also be useful to list internship opportunities and jobs available. Sophia (Diné) a community college professional staff emphasized the importance of not keeping the information only to one institution, "but also open a wider net of other students wanting and knowing about these other opportunities that are out there." The virtual site could also host the New Mexico data repository for Native American college student data, which could help us see the challenges, gaps, where we are succeeding, where we need support, but to help us create possible solutions. The website could also highlight Native students across the state,

where they could write about themselves and their successes. The website could also be space to share events, read articles, and also critique and unify our voices over important issues. The collaborative could be space to be a unified voice and be collective knowledge of Indigenous educators.

Participants also talked about having a voice internally in our institutions and also externally outside our institutions. Internally we could hold higher education institutions more accountable to Native communities and people. Where there is not already tribal input, we could show the need for tribal liaisons or a Native American Advisor to the President or Vice President of Tribal Relations. Byron (Navajo/Zuni Pueblo) student services director at a two-year college described,

Another thing that I've just observed is, Arizona has this commitment to designating someone to work in tribal affairs, or to work in Native affairs specifically. So, they have someone who would engage in tribal nation building, as well as engaging tribal leaders…

When looking at New Mexico, Byron further noted,

I don't really see a lot of these positions exist, and I think, why not? Why can't our institutions commit to perhaps having a tribal liaison, or a Native advisor to the president, or to the college administration, or even in some cases a vice president of tribal affairs or tribal relations.

We could request ambassadors from each institution. Externally, we could work more closely with tribes to check on our Native students more and to further support their completion and graduation. The collaborative could help with community development and work to increase relationships with tribal communities. Jeanette (Cherokee Nation

Citizen), a university faculty member stated how tribes could benefit from a statewide higher education collaborative,

> I'm thinking that if they're funding students to go to universities, that their
>
> students are retained, and served, and then ultimately have the capacity to get the
>
> degree. I'm looking at that, that it would be perhaps the tribal nations getting
>
> something from this and in terms of their citizens being take care of as students.
>
> Also, a relationship, an actual relationship, with higher ed., a real relationship.

John (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma) a university faculty member shared,

> I think it would also give the tribes access to a brain trust that they might be able
>
> to bring issues to… but if they have questions, there's a brain trust that they can
>
> come to ask their questions and get answers that are not going to be necessarily
>
> serving one viewpoint or another. It would also give them entry into working
>
> with all of these institutions, if the state is working on it, and if these other groups.
>
> I think it would be a great networking communication area just between tribes,
>
> and between tribes and other entities.

Kevin (Diné) a university professional staff noted,

> …one thing I think having a statewide consortium would definitely be a huge
>
> political entity to advocate for specific tribal communities for funding, for
>
> curriculum development. I'm thinking of the Yazzie vs. Martinez. If there was a
>
> more concerted group to do research on specific things related to curriculum
>
> development and petitioning the state government to think of Indigenous
>
> knowledge and Native American curriculum. Other thing too is advocating more I

guess, a more tribally or Indigenous led K-12 curriculum package that will help

students as they transition through their program.

This collaborative entity could also work better with the state and inform state legislators,

but also request a line-item appropriation for funding to support the collaborative. For

example, Dawn (Bitter Root Salish/Cochiti Pueblo) suggested that the collaborative could

be,

> Lack of a better term, a watchdog on higher ed policies affecting our students at
>
> the higher education level. Right now I think our watchdogs are maybe our
>
> senators, Even our state reps with our state districts, but we don't have a
>
> centralized person or group that does that for us… the watchdog there, to watch
>
> policies, to help build policies, maybe to deconstruct and build back up, and
>
> getting the word out and on stuff that is affecting everyone, to say, "Hey, in Santa
>
> Fe they're creating this new thing and it's going to help us or hinder us," but it
>
> lets everybody know on the listserv network. Right now, we hear it from the
>
> news, or we don't hear it at all. We don't have that communication connection. I
>
> think if that hub offers that type of communication, that'd be priceless.

Some participants wondered if the collaborative would need to have membership fees or

annual fees or for the need to create a grant-making arm. This connection to the state

could help the collaborative lobby for resources and allocations for our various programs.

Overall, there were many ideas to improve our communication and collaborative work.

Turquoise: Motivation & Deterrence to Avoid

When talking with the participants about their ideas on what will motivate or

deter people from participating in the collaborative, there were more motivators than

deterrents. What might deter someone from participating that we should avoid is if someone looks only from an individualistic manner – only wanting to gain for themselves, feel competitive, looking to make money, if they feel territorial and create domain or they exclude others. Another deterrent would be when the focus moves away from Native students, if there are conflicting views or personalities, if there is lateral violence where people talk bad about each other or criticize one another or are judgmental. Other deterrents would be having no plan, no agenda, no theme, or being only surface level. Some shared that money can be an issue, especially for smaller departments who may not have much to give to participate as Jodi (Laguna Pueblo) describes,

> And so that is definitely one of the pieces that I think can potentially hold people back. And I think on a department level, it makes people not want to step out and make things happen for fear of not necessarily knowing whether or not this program will actually happen, if there's enough money.

Other areas to avoid is letting the work fall on one person's shoulders, if people feel there's too much work, not enough time, or if they feel overcommitted.

On the positive side, many participants felt that we already have many great motivators and already share a common goal, purpose that is centered around Native student success. As Indigenous educators we all care about Native students and Native people. We are passionate about what we do and care deeply in our hearts. Other motivators included creating a strong mission, bylaws, establishing goals, then implementing and taking action on those goals. Dee (Diné) a community college professional staff suggested,

I think it is important that we have some type of vision, a mission, indicators of why you want this collaboration to occur. Indicators, meaning basically our students to be successful and how are we going to impact those successes as advocates for our students in the different capacities and roles that we have at our institutions.

With a strong plan, it would include short-term and long-term goals and goals that are community based or regionally based. Kimimila (Rosebud Sioux Tribe) a director at a two-year college suggested, "evenly spread out the work and everybody has a specific duty that they had to do and if it was a short-term duty, then they might be more inclined to become involved." We do not need to get bogged down by the finances, since we can fundraise and create stability. We all want to serve the greater good, keep it positive, empower and uplift each other, have good intent, influence change and have impact.

The opportunity to make more connections, build our partnerships, and network will help us build a reciprocal relationship where we can appreciate everyone's time, efforts, and commitment. The collaborative must be accessible, offer connections through technology, respect everyone's input, making sure to be fair, equitable, learn from the past, and focus on the future. We must make sure the collaborative "has a home with a place to live." The collaborative should emphasize the personal benefits such as professional development opportunities or the big benefits for our students – increase enrollment, completion, and educational attainment. We can talk about the benefits to get buy-in from our supervisors, employers, higher education institutions, and the state – to show the importance of this collaborative for our students, for our institutions, and for New Mexico overall – it's a shared responsibility.

To continue on the sunwise path from east to south, to west, then north, it was important to hear from participants on their ideas of Nahat'á, planning, which was represented by turquoise. The participants shared their ideas to create a collaborative by communicating what benefits they would hope to receive through participation, what types of support they would find helpful from a collaborative entity, and to consider what may deter or motivate someone in joining a statewide coalition. The overall remarks from the participants were positive and showed the encouraging possibilities of creating K'é, a greater Native community, state-wide. Now we can move into the next phase of abalone shell, Iiná, living and implementing.

In this final section I will share the perspectives that came from those experts who had existing collaborative efforts occurring at their universities, where they have been able to connect to Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), with other Non-Native Colleges and Universities (NNCUs), with high schools, Indigenous students, and with tribal communities.

Abalone Shell: Iiná – Living & Implementation

The third aspect of Diné philosophy of learning and living is Iiná that is represented by the Navajo western sacred mountain, Dook'o'oosłííd, which is adorned with abalone shell. This aspect if represented by the yellow circle in Figure 1. Iiná means living and implementation. In relation to this study, it connects to my Research Questions 3, 4, and 5:

- 3) What are the potential challenges in creating a state-wide collaborative and how might they be overcome?

- 4) What are existing collaborative initiatives in other states like in what they do, how they started, and how they are sustaining?

- 5) What are some insights, factors, and processes that would help this state-wide collaborative succeed in reaching its goals?

Through these research questions I met with four Native practitioners and administrators who have an existing collaborative at their universities in Arizona and South Dakota to find out how these collaborations live and exist. I asked the participants with collaborations at their institutions how their collaborative contributes to student success, to share what their collaborations look like, what are the benefits and challenges of collaborative efforts, and what advice they have for the development of a New Mexico higher education collaborative.

Abalone Shell: Involvement & Structures of Existing Collaboratives

Four participants with existing collaborations occurring at their higher education institutions talked about ways that they and their institutions have collaborated with tribally based programs, departments, or other higher education institutions. Those with existing collaborative entities came from Arizona and South Dakota. They discussed their involvement, the origins of those collaborations, and shared the structures of cross-institutional collaborations. A major part of the collaborations was to connect people such as tribal governments, tribal leaders, Tribal Colleges or Universities (TCUs), Non-Native Colleges or Universities (NNCUs), tribal higher education departments, university leaders, administrators, faculty, staff, and students from high school and college level. Karen (Diné) a university administrator shared, "I think for the ATUIE [Arizona Tri-Universities for Indian Education] network, what I can say is that we basically use the

organization as an opportunity for networking and professional development." Karen said

their ATUIE meetings have,

> people that come from the community colleges, from tribal colleges, tribal ed
>
> departments, the universities, and we've even gotten a good support base from
>
> some New Mexico institutions. So Western New Mexico University are part of
>
> our coalition, Navajo Technical University, and UNM-Gallup branch.

The participants stated that through these collaborations they have become more

connected to tribal communities with mutual benefits for collaborators, tribal

communities, and Native students. Participants shared examples of how the collaborative

was a facilitator, a connector, and space to share ideas and learning opportunities.

The participants revealed various learning opportunities occurring through these

collaborations. M (pseudonym), Eastern Band Cherokee, a professional staff, when

describing what has been helpful from collaborations stated:

> I think just finding others and being involved with others who might be
>
> experiencing some of the same challenges that I'm experiencing in my work. I
>
> think that really is more probably related to working with other higher education
>
> professionals. But I feel like that's been a very strong piece of that is knowing and
>
> having others who I can consult with, who have experienced or are experiencing
>
> some of the same challenges that I do.

Not only can learning occur between individuals, but learning can also include the

collective. Karen (Diné) a university administrator explained how the collaborative is

great for networking,

And so again, I think the value is the networking. People know who's who, who's

doing what, how they can connect with these people and collaborate on different

projects… our meetings are focused on specific subjects, or we can kind of form

and provide learning opportunities for the network and the people who come. So

we might have a session on health careers and have some folks from our health

sciences coming to presentations. One might be on mentoring. The next meeting

might be on mentoring, so we'll bring people into the meeting who have best

practices on mentorship, coordinated students.

Karen (Diné) further shared her collaborative's connection to the state level:

Lately we've been doing a lot of bringing people in from the state, at the state

level who do college access work or higher ed advocacy work, because we want

them to know about our network and that they can call on us if there's questions

or maybe an opportunity where we can advance something at the state level for

Native students.

Some learning opportunities were geared more between the university and tribal

communities or between universities, TCUs, and tribal communities. One example

included a gardening program where collaborators had a community garden, which

provided space to talk about the health benefits and traditional views on planting and

harvesting with cooking classes. Another example was centered around researching

buffalo. Amber (Pokegnek Bodewadmik) described,

…a program out in the Rosebud Reservation, where we're actually researching

the buffalo. That way, we can bring back these traditional foods, and studying

these animals, but also, not only studying them, but going towards Indigenous

methodologies of research. So being able to, for the community, to teach the

researchers here, how to respect the animals and to do things in that right way,

offering tobacco and things of that nature. So that way, not only are we growing

as a research institution, but we're also growing to be more culturally respective in

those means.

Karen (Diné) a university administrator detailed another example,

I mean, we just recently signed a memorandum of agreement with the Navajo

Nation to provide the Navajo law fellowship program, which is a very similar

program that UNM [University of New Mexico] does as well as Arizona State

University. So now University of Arizona is part of that fellowship initiative, and

so hopefully that will draw more Navajo students to pursue law school at the U of

A [University of Arizona] because it's full funding. It's full funding for the cost

of their time that they're in law school.

Some partnerships were between a high school, TCU, and the university. Amber

(Pokegnek Bodewadmik) a South Dakota university professional staff stated,

With the Wokini Initiative, with departments and institutions, so we have actually

partnered with a couple of high schools. We actually have memorandums of

agreements, where we have scholarships that are available to students that

specifically come through the Wokini scholarships that come through those

programs. Then, as a part of that, we provide high school education to some of

those students. So, we'll actually go out there specifically to talk to those students,

not just about coming to SDSU, but coming to college in general. And then, we

also have students that go out to those schools too, that are alumni, that talk to

students about their experience here.

The participants talked about research opportunities as outcomes of the collaborations

with benefits for tribal communities and the university initiatives. The types of

collaborative projects and programs were quite extensive and many through grant

funding, especially from the federal government.

Overall, the participants involved in existing higher education Native American

networks spoke about the importance of the collaborative structure being a connector for

people from various entities. These existing collaboratives also serves as spaces for

learning opportunities through a variety of programs, and projects ultimately benefitting

Native student success.

Abalone Shell: Benefits & Challenges of Collaborative Work

The experienced participants from Arizona and South Dakota shared the benefits

and challenges of their collaborative work in higher education networks within their

states. They described factors that have been useful in sustaining a collaboration between

their higher education institutions and other colleges, universities, tribes, or nations.

Factors to sustain a collaborative included having great communication, valuing

relationship building, having the same goal, having university leadership initiative and

support, and consistent funding. Karen (Diné) a university administrator emphasized,

"one big thing is you got to have two-way communication. I think that's one of the

pitfalls of any collaborative project not working." Karen further detailed communication

needing to be transparent, used in sharing facts, follow-up, and for documenting. Karen

(Diné) further talked about the importance of valuing relationship building:

…really appreciating all the key people that come together and want to make a

contribution…And the collaboration might not go very far, but I think to even just

thank people who were willing to come and offer some kind of support. So, I

think just thanking people for coming to the table…Because the other thing I

notice is when you do that, it makes people feel good, makes them feel valued…

valuing your relationships. This work is relational. You've got to value people

who bring something to the table, and you got to demonstrate that in different

ways.

Karen's example showed how imperative appreciation is in relationship building, which

helps in fostering more contributions and future collaborative work.

The participants talked about some of the challenges the collaborative

encountered and shared how those challenges were overcome. The participants shared

challenges of breaking new ground, gaining support, mistrust of tribal communities with

skepticism, time constraints, and people with different personalities, agendas, and their

own way of doing things. Karen (Diné) emphasized patience, "one is that you have to be

very patient because sometimes the collaboration is not going to launch based on your

timeline." Karen also shared that sometimes it is essential to plant a seed early, then

continue to build the relationship as collaborative efforts grow. Karen further described

how universities often come from a rushed perspective perhaps due to a grant or funding

opportunity, but you have to navigate the collaborative work carefully because you do not

want to make anyone feel like they are being pushed to make a quick decision. M

(Eastern Band Cherokee) noted,

…it's all a learning process. And I think that's something that we often forget is

when you're trying to accomplish such big thing, because it's a big thing when

you're trying to accomplish that, you have to give yourself a little bit of grace

around some of those things, because it's all a learning process.

Amber (Pokegnek Bodewadmik) a university practitioner stated,

Sometimes it can feel like there's too many cooks in the kitchen. But that's great,

to be able to hear so many different voices, because that means that these people

are coming from a place of caring, that they want to make sure that all their voices

are heard, and that we are doing the best possible practices, to be able to provide

these services and opportunities for their kids.

The participants also talked about the benefits of being in a collaboration as well

as drawbacks they have encountered. Benefits of collaborative efforts included the

network, being stronger together, sharing knowledge and resources, learning from each

other, diversity, university support, and working with tribal communities. Karen (Diné) a

university administrator reflected,

I think a big benefit is you learn from each other. Everyone's strengths hopefully

are recognized and utilized for the greater good. I think, in terms of resources, you

all bring not only knowledge resources, but possibly financial resources to address

a bigger problem, where if you'd tackled it on your own, it would be very, very

difficult. But you also each bring in a network.

A collaborative helps professionals expand their network, to learn from others, and create

a stronger support network. Amber (Pokegnek Bodewadmik) a university practitioner

added another benefit of working with tribes: "You're really serving a community that's specific to the students that you're serving." Amber further noted,

> You are getting feedback from the community members who are actually sending their children to you, because, in our communities, our children are our most valued resource. So being able to have that input, for tribes to be able to have that input, I think is very important, but also for universities to actually listen to that input, and being able to make those adjustments that are specific to the needs of the community members that we're serving.

When speaking about their collaborative, Amber (Pokegnek Bodewadmik) further relayed,

> But I also think that it is ... I think that's what makes this program so unique, because it's not generalized. It's not a one size fit all. It's very specific, very intentional, very vision forward, focused to what these students need.

The participants also shared what support has been helpful from a collaborative effort occurring from their universities. Jenna (Lakota), a university practitioner, described,

> I love collaboration, because the saying, two heads are better than one, but when you get all these different dynamic, intelligent, passionate people together. I mean, a group of people can do more working together than a single person. We are strong together, we are stronger united, in our advocacy, in our voice, in what we're doing. And then we each then can be that voice for either our community or our departments or our staff and faculty and carry that message in either that education or that collaborative frame of mind onward.

Jenna further noted,

> And so, it really, I would say, there's part grass roots efforts, there's part, because
> it's the President's initiative, there's support from the top down and the bottom up.
> And so, that part of collaboration... And we all have great ideas, but we all come
> with our own perspective, our own personal experiences, and then when we share
> them that really can ignite more creativity and more ideas, and just better
> programs, better projects, better plans, goals and objectives. I love being a part of
> that. It's just so fun to see, again, that willingness to collaborate and that
> willingness to learn.

Overall, the participants detailed many examples of the benefits of collaborative work
and how to sustain those relationships built along the way through effective
communication, appreciation, respect, patience, and having an open mind and heart. To
overcome challenges they encountered, the participants talked about the key ingredients
of building trust, fostering relationships, bringing awareness or understanding about
different needs that will be fulfilled with collaborative work. Many benefits outweighed
the challenges with important outcomes for higher education including visibility, sharing
resources, partnering with tribes, recruitment opportunities, cultural programming,
retention efforts, and financial support.

Abalone Shell: Advice to New Mexico

The participants with existing collaborative efforts occurring at their universities
had special advice to provide to the development of a state-wide higher education
collaborative in New Mexico that supports Native college student success. The

participants with existing higher education collaboratives spoke about the people in the

collaborative, making sure there is representation from each institution and from each

tribal community, that people make a commitment with support from each other, the

higher education institutions, and from the tribal communities. Amber (Pokegnek

Bodewadmik) emphasized the importance of "making sure that every tribal community is

represented in the initial building of this collaborative." Jenna (Lakota) a university

administrator stated, "I think having one person appointed from each institution is key.

You always need that point person. And then you really need a commitment from

everybody." Jenna further suggested,

> …if there's somebody from some institution that can step up and take the lead on
>
> that, that's key. Because you need, number one, that point person from each
>
> institution. But then you need that chair of the whole collaborative. And then it
>
> would be nice to share in that. So, getting some bylaws as far as, one person is
>
> going to chair it for two or three years and then another person needs to take that
>
> initiative and take that responsibility. So, that responsibility is shared amongst the
>
> collaborative.

Karen (Diné) a university administrator suggested starting with a small coalition, then to

make a plan for it to grow to include Tribal College or Universities (TCUs), community

colleges, and tribal higher education departments.

> I think too, by what I mean by start small, is maybe you kind of start with a small
>
> coalition and grow, and that's what we did. We just started with the three state
>
> universities and then realized that the student experience is about a pathway. They
>
> go into community colleges, maybe tribal colleges. We thought, "Okay, let's add

the tribal colleges in the network. Let's add the community colleges in the

network." Then we realized, well, our tribal communities are important, so tribal

education directors should be part of the network, so we started adding them in to

the group and inviting them to come to the meetings. Then after that, it just sort of

became everyone else who had an invested interest in American Indian Higher

Ed. (Karen, Diné, university administrator, Arizona collaborative).

Two of the participants from the individual interviews spoke about leadership coming

from the campuses who would come from high level positions, while the other participant

talked about having a chair of the collaborative, where someone could hold the position

for two to three years, then others would take turns. Karen (Diné) recommended to rotate

the meetings around the state to get familiar with other campuses and tribal communities:

I'd rotate the meetings, think about geography and being in different spaces, not

having it always like in Albuquerque, but moving it around to different sites,

because it also helps people gain a familiarity with those other campuses and the

communities out there. Maybe tribal communities might host you for a meeting.

Another big area of advice was centered around communication. Karen (Diné)

emphasized the importance of asking others for their input, but also to be intentional and

clear about what the collaborative can accomplish. Communication can help bring

awareness about various issues happening in other parts of the state. Jenna (Lakota)

talked about how important communication is. M (Eastern Band Cherokee) suggested

asking everyone what they hope to get out of the relationship and the collaborative,

…I think it's always the first thing is to see what everybody's hoping to get out of

that relationship or that collaboration. What do they foresee being some of their

biggest, the biggest wants that they are hoping to achieve by being a part of it? I

think that that's a huge piece of it because I feel like even being in the same state,

sometimes everybody has a different way of perceiving things or they might have

things that they want to do differently, but I think that would be part of it too, is to

get to know where everybody's at.

M also recommended to set practical, foundational rules about how to interact, to ensue

respect. M (Eastern Band Cherokee) also remarked about the significance of equally

valuing everyone's input, "I think one of the most important things is to not let one voice

over rank everybody else's when you're trying to accomplish something like this."

Amber noted the importance of talking with our students to ask their opinion and input

for ideas they see about the creation of this collaborative as well as what benefits they

would like to see. Amber explained how student input would help shape the purpose of

the collaborative since it is for Native student success,

> Definitely getting the opinion of your current students that maybe not necessarily
>
> would benefit from the collaborative, as it's ongoing. So, going to your students
>
> and asking, "If you had the opportunity to shape this, what would you do? What
>
> are some of the things that you wish you would have had? What are some of the
>
> support services that you wish you would have had?" That, I guess, it just really
>
> depends on what the collaborative's purpose is, but take that purpose to your
>
> current students, and ask them their opinions, and what they would like to see out
>
> of it, for future students?

Overall, the participants with existing collaboratives from Arizona and South Dakota had much to impart in regard to their experiences with people coming together from various entities to support Native college student success efforts at their institutions. Their lived experiences shed light on the essential ingredients of gathering input from all parties, starting small, showing equity in representation and voices heard, to have a plan for growth, and to be intentional with clear and specific goals.

Summary – Reflecting on White Shell, Turquoise, & Abalone Shell

The collection of voices from each of the participants from the individual interviews, sharing circles, and those with existing collaborative entities at their institutions spoke of many positive and thought-provoking ideas around building a state-wide collaborative in New Mexico.

Through the section on White Shell, which is representative of the eastern Navajo sacred mountain, Sisnaajiní, helps us consider the need for the collaborative through a thorough thought process, Nitsáhákees. Through this aspect of thinking and assessing the participants provided their definitions of Native student success and to consider the definition in various forms from the individual to the communal, between the Western and traditional views, and how we as Native professionals support Native student success personally, through our departments, and through our various institutions.

In the subsequent section on Turquoise, representative of the southern Navajo sacred mountain, Tsoodził, this aspect helped us look at the ideas and to plan elements for the creation of a collaborative entity through Nahat'á, planning. Participants in this section shared their ideas for creation of a coalition by considering the various benefits they would hope to receive, hope to share, and what types of support they would want to

see from a collaborative. Participants also reflected on possible deterrence and motivators for participation. Overall, in this section, participants had positive comments and shared many ideas for creating K'é state-wide, a greater Native community between higher education institutions, tribal communities, and other partners in connection to promoting Native college student success.

In the final section of this chapter on Abalone Shell, representing the western Navajo sacred mountain, Dook'o'oosłííd, reflects on the aspect of Iiná, living and implementation. Through this section, participants with existing collaboration entities at their institutions could share the structures and components of their collaborative work. Their insights helped us consider the benefits, challenges, and success factors to build a state-wide higher education collaborative in New Mexico. Overall, the voices shared in the findings chapter leads us to next aspect of the Diné Philosophy of Learning and Living, Siihasin, fulfillment and evaluation, represented by the northern Navajo sacred mountain, Dibé Nitsaa and Black Jet in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Discussion / Implications / Conclusion

I conclude this final chapter through the aspect of Siihasin, fulfillment and evaluation represented by Black Jet. In this chapter, I discuss the outcomes of each of my initial Research Questions and offer what I learned. Next, I propose recommendations for a successful collaboration based upon the data collected in this study. I suggest implications for future research, then I offer my concluding thoughts in creating a state-wide higher education collaborative that supports Native college student success.

Black Jet: Siihasin – Fulfillment & Evaluation

The fourth aspect of the Diné Philosophy of learning and living is Siihasin, which comes from the Navajo northern sacred mountain, Dibé Nitsaa. This aspect is represented by the black circle in Figure 1 (see Chapter 4) and Figure 2 (described later in this chapter). This northern Navajo sacred mountain is adorned with Black Jet and represents fulfillment and evaluation. This aspect of Diné Philosophy of learning and living refers to the conclusion of this research study, where I explore what the possibilities could be and what recommendations would help a state-wide higher education collaborative that supports Native college students to form in New Mexico.

The purpose of this research study was to consider another way to support Native students succeeding in higher education. As Native practitioners, faculty, and administrators we are often working independently in our various programs, departments, colleges, and universities. According to the participants of this study, we all share a common goal of wanting to see more Native students succeed. The definition of success differed as well as how each participant defined the needs of Native college students.

Many of the participants talked about the importance of building community, connecting to each other, networking and supporting one another. This aligned with many Indigenous scholars' view on creating a sense of community on campus. Through the participants cumulative knowledge and expertise, a greater Native community, K'é, can be built through a state-wide collaborative that would support Native college student success.

Discussion

Black Jet: Discussion of Research Questions

While revisiting my Research Questions for this study:

1. Is there a need to form a higher education state-wide collaborative in New Mexico to support Native students attending college?

2. What ideas exist among participants regarding the formulation of a higher education state-wide collaborative to support Native college students?

3. What are the potential challenges in creating a state-wide collaborative and how might they be overcome?

4. How do existing collaboratives initiatives in other states function, how were they created and how are they sustaining?

5. What are some insights, factors, and processes that would help a state-wide collaborative succeed in New Mexico?

I reflected on the voices, ideas, thoughts, and recommendations of the participants from the individual interviews, those who participated in sharing circles, or those who had existing collaboratives at their institutions of higher education. I utilized an important

value of respect, Hoł ílį, throughout the research process from listening and learning from

the participants, to respecting their views, thoughts, and perspectives they shared, to how

I analyzed my data throughout my whole dissertation process.

In regard to RQ1, is there a need to form a higher education state-wide

collaborative in New Mexico to support Native students attending college, the

participants in New Mexico acknowledged that there is a need to form a higher education

state-wide collaborative that supports Native college students. The response to this

research question came from the section on White Shell, Nitsáhákees, in Chapter 5,

where the participants thought about the purpose for the need of building a collaborative.

Participants thoroughly thought about how they define Native student success, which was

the basis to form a state-wide collaborative. There are many ways Native professionals at

all of the New Mexico higher education institutions support Native students and help

them succeed in college – personally, through their departments, or through their

institutions. The need to develop a higher education collaborative would be a new way to

bring people together, share ideas, successes, challenges, processes, and other ideas to

support Native college students collectively through a collaborative entity.

Through the lens of Research Question 1, I learned how the participants'

responses defined Native college student success. Often in higher education success is

defined by graduation and retention rates or on the academic performance of students,

which are the Western measures of success, however from the collective responses, I

learned how success is more than data, numbers, or performance measures. Success was

also defined in terms of personal growth and development, in terms of achieving one's

goals. Success was also defined by Native students' families and communities or perhaps

on balancing between two paradigms of the Western and Traditional, where a Native

student is developing their identity or strengthening their cultural identity. It was

important to learn how Native professionals defined Native college student success, but

also to better understand what the needs of Native college students were.

Through RQ1, I learned about the various needs of Native college students, which

many times point towards financial. Financial needs were significant, but also social

needs, where Native students' cultures and identities are appreciated and where they can

find community on college campuses. When thinking about financial needs of Native

college students, it is also important to included childcare, housing, and food, which were

noted as significant needs by some of the participants. Native student needs were also

connected to the necessity of higher education institutions to respect, appreciate, and

show commitment to Native students and to tribes. Overall, RQ1 helped me better

understand the purpose and need to create a higher education collaborative in New

Mexico that support Native college student success.

Everyone had great perspectives on the formation of this collaborative entity in

response to RQ2, what ideas exist among participants about the formulation of a higher

education state-wide collaborative to support Native college students. The response to

this research question came from the section on Turquoise, Nahat'á, in Chapter 5, when

the participants entered the planning phase in discussing what benefits they would hope

to receive from a collaborative entity, what they would hope to share from their own

work with Native college students, what support they would want to receive from the

collaborative, and to consider potential challenges and motivators to involvement. The

many benefits of participating in a collaborative entity would only enhance work

currently being done for Native student success, not only individually but rather communally.

Through RQ2, I learned how important it is for everyone to come together and how we already share the same goal and purpose in the work that we do as Native professionals that is centered around Native college student success. I also learned through RQ2 the many ideas from the New Mexico participants had on using the collaborative to recruit, increase enrollment, create better pathways into college, and to increase graduation. The New Mexico participants shared their ideas on creating a multi-level Native community event, creating an academic conference for our Native students to participate and develop their leadership skills, creating space to connect to tribal leaders and communities, develop shared curriculum, and to share data through the collaborative. Through RQ2, I learned about everyone's passion to share their work, ideas, inspire one another, and to continue to support Native student success in many ways.

For RQ3, what are the potential challenges in creating a state-wide collaborative and how might they be overcome, participants with existing collaborative entities at their institutions could really speak to this question. The response to this question came from the section Abalone Shell, Iiná, living and implementation aspect described in Chapter 5, where participants with existing collaboratives in Arizona and South Dakota could speak to the challenges they have encountered and ways they overcame those challenges. The challenges they spoke of related to some of the ideas New Mexico participants discussed in the Turquoise section, Nahat'á, the planning aspect in Chapter 5, of wanting to be fair,

equitable, and inclusive to create a greater Native community of professionals across the state who could reach out to one another to offer support in ways to overcome challenges.

Through RQ3, I learned some valuable insights about potential challenges and how to overcome them from the participants with lived experiences from the Abalone Shell section in Chapter 5. One example was to realize potential time constraints and how it may take time to gain support, break new ground, or to build trust with tribal communities who may be skeptical. Also, to consider what it may be like bringing together various personalities, agendas, and other's own way of doing things. I learned about strategies to overcome those challenges with patience, providing great communication, valuing relationships working to build relationships with all participants.

For RQ4, what are existing collaborative initiatives in other states like in what they do, how they started, and how they are sustaining, the participants with existing collaborations occurring on their campuses had much to share about their functions, structures, and how they are sustaining. The response to this question came from the Abalone Shell, Iiná, living and implementation section in Chapter 5, when the participants with existing collaboratives shared examples of their involvement, the origins of the collaborative, and its structure, which provided more insights to how and why a collaborative formed at their institutions – tribally initiated and the other initiated by their university president. The formation of this collaborative would need the support and partnership from tribes and college and university administrations.

Through RQ4, I learned more about the structures of existing collaborations in Arizona and South Dakota and gained new insights into how they began and how they are sustaining. I learned that a major part of the collaboratives was to connect people

between Non-Native Colleges or Universities (NNCUs), Tribal Colleges or Universities (TCUs), tribal governments, tribal leaders, tribal higher education departments, university leaders, administrators, faculty, staff, and with high school and college level students. Besides the collaboratives being connectors, they also provided many learning opportunities for everyone. I learned that many of the projects and programs created through these collaborations were grant funded, especially from the federal government. I also learned about important aspects of sustaining collaboratives through having the same goal, gaining university leadership support, effective communication, showing appreciation, respect, patience, as well as having an open mind and heart.

 In regard to RQ5, what are some insights, factors, and processes that would help this state-wide collaborative succeed in reaching its goals, the participants who had existing collaboratives on their campuses had many contributions. The response to this question came from the Abalone Shell section in Chapter 5, when the Arizona and South Dakota participants reflected on factors, insights, and processes to help a collaborative reach its goals. The participants with existing collaboratives discussed the benefits of collaborative work, and ways a collaborative supports their work. The participants had advice to share to help a collaborative succeed. Much of their advice brought me back to the Diné concepts of K'é, Hózhǫ́, Hoł ílį́, and Da'áhiiniitą' – relationality, beauty and balance, respect, and uplifting one another.

 What I learned from RQ5 was through the experiences of the participants with existing collaboratives in Arizona and South Dakota was around being inclusive, showing equity, planning for growth, and developing specific goals. I learned about the importance of ensuring representation from each institution and tribal community. I also

discovered the need to give the collaborative time to grow, but with a plan for its growth. I also gained advice about the importance of communication when requesting input and when making plans for what the collaborative can accomplish. Communication can also bring awareness about various issues happening in other areas across the state.

I learned so much in meeting with every New Mexico individual interview participant, with each New Mexico focus group session, and in interviewing those who had collaborative efforts on their university campuses from Arizona and South Dakota. K'é, the kinship and relationships that formed through the research study process showed me the possibility of creating a greater Native community of higher education professionals, practitioners, faculty, and administrators who all share a common goal of Native student success. Each relative spoke of the importance of our ties and continued support of our tribal communities. Participants spoke of ways to incorporate Indigeneity into our work, helping our institutions understand the shared responsibilities of helping our Native students succeed, which is for the greater good of our tribal nations.

Participants reinforced what other Native scholars have described being important to our Native students, which is building community on our campuses. Through this collaborative, we can also build a greater Native community that can stretch across our state. Da'áhiiniitą' also represents the meaning of collaboration by holding one another up and uplifting each other. Some participants talked about this as "we're stronger together" or "we're better together." I agree that we can accomplish more if we work together, develop ways to support one another and our Native students in new ways.

Community is "the medium and the message" (Cajete, 2015, p. xiii). As Cajete says that Indigenous communities have always had reciprocity with mutual benefits,

harmony, and well-being (2016). Together a collaborative and provide a reciprocal relationship for everyone involved as members, higher education entities, Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and as tribal communities. We can think of community in the harmony and well-being sense as Cajete (2016) describes it, which also connects to the concept of Hózhǫ́. If we can think of the creation of this collaborative in a balanced and beautiful way, we can also have good outcomes for ourselves and for everyone involved. Through the concept of Hózhǫ́, we can be respectful in our process and have a positive outlook on what we hope for this to become.

Black Jet: A Collaborative Creation

Through the voices of the participants, relatives, and co-collaborators, the following is a recommendation for creating a state-wide collaborative in New Mexico for Native student success in higher education. The recommendations came from the voices, thoughts, and input of all the participants from New Mexico, Arizona, and South Dakota. The recommendations take into consideration what each participant shared from the individual interviews, from the sharing circles, and from those who have an existing collaborative at their universities. I viewed the recommendations from my Diné valued conceptual framework, which includes K'é, Hózhǫ́, Da'áhiiniitą', and Hoł ílį́. As a New Mexico higher education collaborative forms, it will grow and develop with the input of everyone involved and based on everyone's Indigenous values and framework. These recommendations I present here are based upon my Diné conceptual framework which is connected to the Diné philosophy of Sa'ąh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón, of beauty, harmony, balance, and peace. These recommendations are also based on the Diné philosophy of living and learning as described in Figure 1 in Chapter 4. These

recommendations connect to the "sun-wise" path or clockwise direction beginning in the east, then proceeding to the south, the west, then to the north from my perspective as an Asdzáán. The path is circular, not linear and would evolve around the collaborative.

Recommendations for a Successful Collaborative.

Figure 2

Collaboration Model

Note. This figure represents a collaborative model, which include the four main parts of a collaborative entity.

Figure 2 describes a collaborative model based upon the Diné Philosophy of Living and Learning from Figure 1 in Chapter 4. The east, Nitáhákees, is represented by K'é, which is connected to all the people involved in the collaborative and are the contributors and collaborators. K'é can be used to bring together Native practitioners, faculty, and administrators with Native students, educators, and tribal communities. K'é

is recognizing that relationality we share as Indigenous people with agendas to promote Native Nation building and supporting our tribal leadership and up and coming leaders of our tribal communities, our Indigenous youth. The process of creating a collaborative entity starts with thinking, which would include the contributions from Native professionals, practitioners, faculty, administrators, Native students, and tribal communities. The east is also represented by the relationships, mentorship, and empowerment that can be developed by working together in this collaborative.

The south, Nahat'á, is represented by Hózhǫ́, which encompasses the collaborative structure, the careful, intentional planning. This is represented by the blue circle in Figure 2 above. The planning phase would require establishing strong, attainable goals. It would also include making a plan for how to grow. As Heather (Navajo Nation) shared,

> I think if it was organized really well with a real strong mission, a strong policy, I
> think there could be grounds for it, there could be really something and, like I
> said, with a home, with a place for it to live.

Where would the collaborative live, where would its home be? Recommendations from the participants included creation of a financial arm that would address short-term and long-term plans to remain stable financially perhaps through grants or requesting funding from the state government. Participants also recommended a faculty or curriculum development arm and an arm for managing data. Collaborators would need to consider what parts need development and to create the plans for its creation.

The west, Iiná, which is living and implementation connects to Da'áhiiniitą' and community building. The west is represented by the yellow circle in Figure 2 above. The

existing parts of the collaborative would be the partnerships and representation of Tribal

Colleges and Universities (TCUs), community colleges, Non-Native Colleges and

Universities (NNCUs), and tribal communities. How do we partner with one another,

collaborate, and work together? Implementation would be a way to take action, meet, and

to begin meeting our goals we set out to accomplish. We must use our hearts, think of our

mutual benefits, be cooperative, think about our long-term benefits and how we can

empower and inspire one another. This connects to the concept of Da'áhiiniitą' to uplift

and hold one another up through our collaborative work. Implementation also means

having clear communication, building trust with one another. As many of the participants

said, we can work better and have greater outcomes if we work together.

The north, Siihasin, which is assurance, evaluation, and fulfillment. The north is

connected to Hoł ílį, respect amongst the membership, respect within the various

partnerships and diversity of tribal communities represented. This aspect also connects to

looking at how we can work with our state legislators and university administrations to

connect with them and for advocacy as well. There must be a period of reflection and

evaluation to determine progress made in reaching our goals, to assess what is going well

or what needs to be improved and how we would like to improve it. Respect also requires

us to remain focused on our mission, to be culturally appropriate where we can recognize,

acknowledge the diversity of cultural backgrounds and communities we all come from.

We can be respectful and draw from our diverse cultural strengths as a greater Native

community of collaborators who share the same purpose of supporting and promoting

Native college student success.

Other Recommendations. There are three other ideas that came from the participants during discussions through individual interviews or the focus group sessions. One idea was to expand the collaborative to include Non-Native practitioners, to include People of Color, and other allies. Another idea would be to expand the study to include more of the region in the Southwest: Arizona, Colorado, and possible Oklahoma and Texas. A third idea was to add all levels of Indigenous education such as K-12 educators, students, and parents.

Other Ideas to Consider. Since the start of my dissertation study, there have been some changes and challenges to also take into consideration for the creation of a collaborative in New Mexico. I began this research study in the summer of 2019 and since then there are some new considerations. In February 2020, I found out about a tribal liaison type position that now exists at the state level. There is a Director of Indian Education Division, Tribal Liaison, under the Indian Education Division, which is under the Higher Education Department for New Mexico. This position works closely with representatives of our 24 tribal nations in New Mexico as well as being the liaison to work with the higher education institutions in our state. Perhaps the collaborative could work with this part of the state government to gain information about what is happening at the state-level, to hear from tribes, and to also share what is happening in our various institutions of higher education.

The other significant impact has been the COVID-19 Pandemic that began near the end of 2019. For the University of New Mexico, we began working remotely in March 2020. The Pandemic has significantly impacted our Native Nations locally in New Mexico, but also across the United States and the world. For our Native students locally,

many have been impacted in many ways and we saw the deep disparities and challenges our students and tribal communities faced. In relation to my research study, thankfully I was able to finish collecting data in December 2019. The Pandemic also showed us the importance of connecting with others remotely and virtually. For me personally, I have been able to learn how to work remotely from my home and to rely more on our technology to keep us connected. Pre-Pandemic, some participants mentioned the vastness of our state and how we could come together to meet for this collaborative, many would have to travel long distances with concerns for the need to pay for travel, lodging, and food were possible hinderances to participating. Now that we are in this Pandemic, I see the possibilities of virtual meetings and being creative in finding ways to still connect to others that may be in pre-Pandemic times we would not have considered.

Implications for Future Research

There are a couple areas of suggested future research in relation to this study. One idea for future research would be to focus on college entry and preparation with a greater focus on connecting collaborations with high school level Native students. The collaborative could be space to add more emphasis to college readiness and preparation and to research how collaborations could extend beyond the college level. Perhaps a future study could consider the possible impacts of collaborative efforts to increase the number of Indigenous students entering college. Another idea for future research would be on how a collaborative could connect with other entities outside of this study such as non-profit organizations who also support Native college student success like College Horizons (collegehorizons.org), Graduate Horizons (graduatehorizons.org), the American Indian College Fund (collegefund.org), the American Indian Graduate Center

(www.aigcs.org), or Indigenous Education, Inc. (i-e-i.org). These organizations support Native college student success and perhaps a state-wide collaborative as proposed in this study could connect with other entities along with NNCUs, TCUs, tribal higher education departments, state legislature, and tribal communities. Collaborative efforts should always be expanding and inclusive of more partners for greater success.

Concluding Thoughts

When I originally thought about embarking on this research process I was inspired by collaborative work and partnerships I have used in my work to tap into a network of other Native professionals, faculty, and administrators to continue to advance our Native students towards success. I was interested to learn about the possibility of creating a collaborative entity across our state of New Mexico to bring us together as a greater Native community. What I have learned through this process is that it is possible to work together across institutions and tribal communities to help our Native college students through recruitment, persistence, retention plans. Through a collaborative or coalition, we can share our ideas, network, communicate, and continue to strive for our common goals of Native student success. Tribal identity is important not only for our Native students, but for us as well as Native practitioners, faculty, and administrators. We must continue to look to our strengths and the strengths of our communities for continued Nation building and helping shape our future leaders through higher education. Building community is important for our Native students on our individual campuses, but is also important for us as Native staff, faculty, and administrators in higher education institutions to build community for a greater network across our state.

The Diné valued based conceptual framework I used during this research process is my framework from a Diné perspective from the values instilled in me by my parents, grandparents, and relatives. In moving forward with building a state-wide collaborative we must be cognizant of the diversity of our cultural and tribal backgrounds, to be respectful of each community, but also to draw strengths from all of our Indigenous communities to come together. We can tap into the expertise that we each hold and cultural frameworks we each come with to shape a collaborative to fulfill our common goal of Native Nation building and Native student success. Community is at the core of where we come from and is what we can use to build state-wide capacity. I would like to end by saying, Baa aheeh nisin shik'éí dóó shidine'é. Ahé'hee'.

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Appendix A

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please tell me your name, any tribal affiliation, and where you are from.

2. What is your current job title and where do you currently work?

3. Do you currently work at a Non-Native College or University (NNCU), a Tribal College or University (TCU)?

4. How many years have you worked with Native college students?

5. How do you define a Native student succeeding in higher education?

6. What do you think are the needs of Native college students to help them succeed?

7. What relationships, techniques, programs, and services do you find most helpful to Native student success?

8. What do you think are ways that you help Native college students succeed?

9. How is your department or program currently assisting Native college students? What programs, services, mentoring, etc.

10. If you were to join a state-wide higher education collaborative for Indigenous education, what benefits would you hope to receive for you and for your work with Native students?

11. If you were to join a state-wide higher education collaborative for Indigenous education, what would you hope to share from your own work with Native students?

12. What kinds of support for you and your work with Native students would you find helpful from a state-wide higher education collaborative?

13. What do you think would motivate individuals to become involved in a
    collaborative partnership? What might deter them that we should try to avoid?

14. Is there anything additional you would like to add or that I may have forgotten?

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions

1. Please introduce yourself with your name, tribal affiliation(s), and the college or university where you work.

2. First, let's discuss our conceptions of Native college student success. I am hoping for a range of ideas rather than consensus. Who would be willing to share first?

    a. Probing Question: (Name), how would you compare your sense of student success with others in the group?

    b. Probing Question: In your experience, are the ways student success has been discussed here different from how it is often defined in Western contexts including colleges and universities? How so?

3. In what ways can professionals from NNCUs, TCUs, and tribal communities work together to support Native college students?

4. What potential challenges may occur in creating a state-wide collaborative?

5. How might these challenges be overcome?

6. Would you describe what you think the ideal collaborative would be like?

7. Describe what factors would help make a collaborative successful and sustaining?

8. In what ways might tribes benefit from a state-wide higher education collaborative?

9. What do you think would motivate tribally based programs, NNCUs, and TCUs to get involved in collaborative efforts?

10. How could we ensure mutual benefits within a collaborative?

11. Is there anything additional you would like to add or that I may have forgotten?

Appendix C

Existing Collaborative Individual Interview Questions

1. Please tell me your name, tribal affiliation(s), and where you are from.

2. What is your current job title and where do you currently work?

3. At what type of institution do you currently work – Tribal, Native-Serving, BIE, other?

4. How many years have you worked with Native college students?

5. How do you define or describe a Native student succeeding in higher education?

6. How is this different and similar to the way success is defined in a Western or Non-Native context?

7. What do you think Native college students need to help them succeed?

8. What relationships, techniques, programs, and services do you find most helpful to Native student success?

9. In what ways have you or your institution collaborated with tribally based programs, departments, or institutions?
   o What has been your involvement?
   o What are the origins of these collaborations?

10. Please describe the current structure of the cross-institutional collaborative that you have been a part of?

11. What factors have been helpful to sustaining a collaborative in your institutions with other colleges/universities/Tribes/Nations?

12. What are some challenges the collaborative has encountered during its existence?
    o How were those challenges overcome?

13. What do you think are some benefits of being a part of a collaborative between your institution and other colleges/universities/Tribes/Nations?

    o   Are there any drawbacks?

14. What kinds of support for you and your work with Native students would you find/or have you found helpful from a state-wide higher education collaborative?

15. What advice would you offer us as we develop a Native higher education collaborative in our state?

16. Is there anything additional you would like to add or that I may have forgotten?