The Power of Water: Countering Indigenous Erasure With John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial Curriculum

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Abstract

The Power of Water: Countering Indigenous Erasure With John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial (JMLSTI) Curriculum

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This study examined barriers that exist in teaching and upholding the *John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial* (JMLSTI) Curriculum in Washington State. The intent of this study is to counter Indigenous erasure in educational spaces and institutions. This work listened to teachers' voices to learn what can be done to increase the use of JMLSTI in a respectful way. This research utilized a mixed-methods approach including interviews, surveys, and training. Using a critical lens and thematic perspective of water, a reflection on prior progress and current actions to increase the use of JMLSTI has been completed.

Keywords: Since Time Immemorial, Curriculum, Barriers, Erasure, Schools, Water

Land Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that this research was conducted on the ancestral homelands of the sduhubš Snohomish Tribe of Indians. I thank them for their stewardship of Mother Earth, including the plants, animals, people, and all other forms of life, as well as the surrounding lands they traverse. Snohomish is a branch of the river systems from which I originate, as my ancestry comes from both sides of the mountains, like a backbone providing me with the strength of the Yakama and Swinomish. I thank them for letting me flow, rest, play, grow, and call it home while respecting the Land of the Snohomish by caring for Her and giving gratitude for all that is provided.

> For those who want to live in deeply sacred and intimate relationship to Land must understand that it first and foremost requires a respectful and consistent acknowledgement of whose traditional lands we are on, a commitment to journeying-a seeking out and coming to an understanding of the stories and knowledges embedded in those lands, a conscious choosing to live in intimate, sacred and storied relationships with those lands. (Smith et al., 2018, p. 29)

Note. The Yakama Nation spells Yakama with an a. This is different from the spelling of the town, Yakima with an i.

Treaty Acknowledgement

As an enrolled citizen of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation established by the Treaty of June 9, 1855 (12 Stat. 951), I honorably acknowledge the Ancestors of Yakama Nation that came before me and sacrificed and negotiated our treaty rights (Center for Research Libraries, 1967), specifically Kamaiakun (Head Chief), Wish-och-kmpit, Skloom (Kamiakin's brother), Koo-lat-toose, Owhi, Shee-ah-cotte, Te-cole-kun, Tuck-quille, La-hoom, Ka-loo-as, Me-ni-nock, Scha-noo-a, Elit Paliller, Sla-kish and those that have fought after them to uphold and protect them.

Note. [Tribal leaders lobby the legislature on the steps of the Old Capital], by Jeffers, 1921, Washington State Archives. This is now the location of OSPI and ONE office space.

Acknowledgements

"Everything I write is a thank you." - Father Patrick Twohy

It is necessary to start with gratitude for the many educators on my life's path. These educators came in multiple forms as coaches, teachers, mentors, principals, and colleagues. Countless people have lifted me up over the years, and without them, this academic journey and dissertation work would not exist.

Thank you to Mars Miller, the Title VI Indian Education Coordinator, who has been an advocate for the Skykomish Valley Indian Education program, which I grew up in, became a teacher representative for, and am a parent of. Her tireless work and support are appreciated.

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Thank you to my friends for the support in this powerful journey. You have been there in more ways to collaborate with, talk to, and laugh through this adventure.

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Lastly, but most importantly, I thank my grandmother, Arlene Rose Hoptowit Wilbur, who shared some of her story with me as a boarding school survivor, has given me strength and determination, and has instilled in me a responsibility to share my voice and do good work. My hands are her hands.

Notes about Style and Format

Synthesizing the research was challenging because, like many Indigenous people, we walk between two worlds, or rather, write between two worlds (Peltier, 2018; Thomas, 2016; Two-Eyed Seeing, n.d.). Most scholarship is in a Western format (Hyatt & Roberts, 2024) rather than an Indigenous format, such as Dr. Dawn Hardison-Stevens' *Warrior Guide,* and it began to include more stories about why and where this research came from (Hardison-Stevens, n.d.). "Stories are excellent disruptors. They can do deep ontological work by drawing us into disconcertment (Verran's term), poking holes in present realities and introducing previously unimagined truths" (Van Horn et al., 2021, p. 30). This research is deeply connected to the curricular water view, bringing an Indigenous theoretical lens, my theory, and deeper knowledge of JMLSTI, which together led to an expanded understanding of what it truly is. Just like the many forms of water and ways that water is connected, JMLSTI is in everything. The focus is on JMLSTI; there are other noteworthy and critical tributaries that support JMLSTI and need to be acknowledged within this research. The acronym JMLSTI was formerly STI. There will be a bracket such as [JML]STI denoting this was used prior to the name change that honors Senator McCoy.

Other important Indigenous notes on style are that a capital "I" is used within this research, along with stories, images, and repeated concepts for cyclical thinking, and capitalized nouns to show respect for the relational and living aspect of beings (Archibald, 2008; Graff & Birkenstein, 2021; Younging, 2018). Totally removing myself from the research is not possible because of the deeply experiential and ingrained relationality practices maintained throughout this study (Peltier, 2018; Wilson, 2008). The hope is that this story will flow in an informative way and that the connections among the parts will be visible.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2015, Washington State mandated the adoption of what is now recognized as the *John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial* (JMLSTI) tribal sovereignty curriculum for use in K-12 education. However, many educators are not utilizing it. Barriers to implementing JMLSTI include inadequate training, fear of teaching it incorrectly, design aspects of JMLSTI, and a lack of accountability for teaching it. At the heart of *John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial,* is the foundational belief that it is a place-based, integrated, and inquiry-based curriculum that supports local tribes in the sharing of their history, treaty rights, sovereignty, and contemporary issues (Lynn, 2022; Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), 2024). As with water, JMLSTI can take numerous forms (Figure 1).

While JMLSTI is endorsed by all 29 federally recognized tribes in Washington State (Washington OSPI, 2024), some disconnects exist between districts and local tribes. Multiple educational leaders emphasize the importance of implementing JMLSTI (Conrad, 2022; Conrad & Parker, 2020; Craig & Sofie, n.d.; Hand, 2020; Holtyn, 2018; Lynn, 2022). There are also numerous educators who do not know what the *John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial Curriculum* is. Ultimately, the research question is: How can we increase the use of JMLSTI in a place-based, respectful way, from the ground up? The term *from the ground up* considers the local Land and tribes, guiding the lessons taught in classrooms. The opposite seeks knowledge from a larger state or national level, down to local districts and classrooms. Place-based directionality, from the ground up, flows like water through connective relationships.

Figure 1

Water Forms of JMLSTI

Note. Figure 1 shows different forms of water and support for JMLSTI. Image elements supplied by Canva [Annette Michelle Woolley] via Canva.com.

Having served as an educator within both public and private educational institutions for the past 22 years, firsthand observations demonstrate a lack of instruction regarding the *John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial* curriculum being taught. While many school districts have implemented JMLSTI, many have not (Arviso et al., 2021). For example, in a conversation with a local school superintendent, there was an acknowledgement that JMLSTI is not being taught (Anonymous, personal communication, November 4, 2024). Many educators have shared

that they are unsure where to find resources, are afraid of teaching the curriculum incorrectly, and need more time and training, so they do not teach it. There is often a disconnect between local Indigenous tribes and school districts, with many people in education expressing issues with JMLSTI being taught. What needs to be addressed is the gap in teacher preparedness and in the implementation of the *John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial Curriculum* across all districts in the state.

Teachers are important facilitators of learning for students. They have the power to impact students' educational experiences, not just in what they learn, but also in how they learn it. Most teachers aim to follow the law and respectfully teach Indigenous history and culture; however, many do not know how to do so or have the background knowledge or confidence to do so. This research aims to examine barriers and provide a bridge to practice to increase the use of JMLSTI in a relational and reciprocal way.

The Power of Water, Positionality, and Stories in Education

I am a citizen of the Yakama Nation with ancestral roots in Swinomish and Puyallup. My grandfather, Claude Henry Wilbur (Swinomish), was considered "lucky" to avoid boarding school because his father was chosen to live and work on a farm; his family needed him there, so he was allowed to stay with his father and not attend boarding school. Grandmother Wilbur had a different path in education. She was taken, along with her younger sisters, to the Tulalip Boarding School in Washington and then to the Chemawa Boarding School in Oregon. *Education for Extinction* describes the goal and purpose of boarding schools as, "Only by attending boarding school could Indian youth, stripped bare of their tribal heritage, take to heart the inspiring lessons of white civilization. The educational solution to the Indian problem truly appeared to be at hand" (Adams, 1995, p. 59). Grandmother Wilbur is a survivor of an

educational system that was meant to strip away her Indigenous culture, language, and voice. The boarding school educational experience was meant to erase her.

I am a Snohomish resident, residing between the homelands of my maternal grandparents, connected by the water that flows between them. Being a mother to three children growing up in the same place where I grew up, it is important for this work to impact educational experiences and knowledges for many generations. Past experiences need to shift for the future. My educational history includes attending a parochial elementary school and a public high school in the same community where my children attend school today. My educational journey includes over two decades as a teacher, primarily in public schools. Historically, education for Native peoples has resulted in the traumatic silencing of voices through residential boarding schools, resulting in intergenerational trauma (Buqué, 2024; Methot, 2019). In creating a better educational experience and future for Indigenous peoples, public schools need to include Native American-focused lessons

A Story of Water

I grew up on the traditional lands of the Snohomish Tribe of Indians. The Snohomish River runs through these lands, providing for the people since time immemorial. As I have previously written, while walking the land in silence (Hardison-Stevens, 2023), a revelation occurred that all along the Snohomish River, “mother trees” are missing (Simard, 2021; Woolley, 2024c). Mother trees provide nutrients, communicate with other trees and plant relatives, and help others in the forest thrive. They are the wise caretakers of new growth. The lands around the river have been turned into farmland. When driving by with people who are new to the area, I like to tell them the story about the river and a flood. I once ice-skated in the corn field near the river. Their reaction is usually one of disbelief and awe. I go on to explain

how it happened, letting them know that one year the river flooded, and then, before all the river water could recede, we had a cold snap, and all the river water froze. My friend's dad knew one of the farmers and asked if he could bring us down to ice skate. He checked the ice's depth for safety, and then we put on our skates and spent the afternoon playing hockey and skating in the cornfield. My skates were too big, as they were hand-me-downs, but I wore multiple layers of socks to make up for it and had one of the best times. What I am reminded of in this story is that water is powerful and takes on different forms as it collects, freezes, floods, evaporates, moves, and changes. Water provides connection, food, and recreation; it has a memory (Cordalis, 2025) and can be so *powerful*. JMLSTI is like water. It can take on many forms, and it is so *powerful*.

It is not lost on me that as I write this and travel through Snohomish, across the street from where I grew up, I am driving through areas where the Snohomish River flooded again this year. Flooding does not happen often, but it has this year.

> Occasionally, the rivers flood these places. "Floods" is the word they use, but in fact it is not flooding: it is remembering. Remembering where it used to be. All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back to where it was. Waters are like that: remembering where we were, what valley we ran through, what the banks were like, the light that was there, and the route back to our original place. (Green, 2018, pp. 126-127)

JMLSTI is an act of reclaiming, remembering, and going back to where it used to be and where it is now. The day after the river remembered, I walked to visit her and checked on the trees that my dad planted many years ago along the river. They are much taller now and still stand strong and high above the water while being surrounded by her.

Values and Leadership

My core Indigenous values are based on Kirkness & Barnhardt's (1991) four Rs: respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility. Additionally, inclusion of a fifth R, the value of relationships, because relationships are the way that all other values work. These are personal values I try to live by and want to exemplify in a leadership position. Leadership evolves by taking responsibility, listening to the ancestral knowledge, and working forward towards healing and dismantling systemic Indigenous erasure in public schools. "I assert that Indigenous peoples themselves must have a voice in remaking educational institutions into spaces of healing" (Kenny & Fraser, 2012, p. 189). In line with these values, this research was conducted using community-grounded methods in relational learning environments and public education spaces.

Another important aspect of my positionality is age. In the second half of my career in education, I am considering what can be left behind for future generations and how I can improve the systems we have in education to better support our Indigenous students. I want to see the system change and the experience for current and future Indigenous students be different from the experience my family had in public schools.

Awareness of Indigenous lessons came through my involvement in the local Title VI (Indian Education) program growing up. This was one area where I felt safe being Indigenous and could celebrate my heritage with others in the school district. While in school, my experience of seeing myself in the curriculum was quite different. I rarely saw information about Native American culture or history in the lessons that we were taught. In third grade, my teacher allowed my mom to come and share about our culture. I remember bringing a small teepee, but other than that, do not remember learning about Indigenous history or culture. While in high school, there was some mention of Native Americans, but it was a general overview from the

colonizers' perspective. The district was predominantly white, where diversity and equity were neither prevalent nor celebrated. In school, the more my indigeneity could remain invisible, the safer I was. I felt that my family and tribes' history was not valued because it was not present in any curriculum or lessons. Instances of microaggressions (Levchak, 2018; Nittle, 2019; Tulshyan, 2022; Williams, 2020) furthered the need to hide who I was while at school.

While in college at Seattle University, things started to shift. Confidence grew in a more accepting environment. In a college history class, we learned about the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest, which allowed students to study family connections to the Land. It was a safe space. Students were encouraged to introduce themselves and say where they came from. While in college, another Yakama person was met. We collaborated and created a Native American student club called Turtle Island People, or TIP. In this club, we were able to share our culture with other students and be a part of other diversity club work.

At the University of Washington, Bothell, I enrolled in a teacher education program that emphasized multicultural education (Banks & Banks, 2020) and inclusive teaching practices. This helped to align my values as an educator and establish a path forward. After teaching for two years, a master's in education was pursued from the University of Washington, Bothell. This program offered the opportunity to reflect on the family's intergenerational trauma through the course *Education and the American Dream* (Van Galen, 2006). This was the first time I acknowledged this trauma in writing, and it was a small part of a healing process. After completing a master's degree, I continued teaching, took on multiple leadership roles, and began teaching in the district where I grew up. This was surreal because I was able to work in the same building where I was once a student. Although I felt safe as an Indigenous teacher representative

in the Title VI Indian Education program, I still worried about being my full self in the school. To be honest, some of this uncertainty may have stemmed from my history there as a student.

After teaching for almost 20 years, I was astonished to learn about the *Since Time Immemorial* (STI) curriculum. As an Indigenous educator and a Title VI Teacher Representative, I did not know about [JML]STI! This is when I began asking colleagues what they used to teach Native American history and culture. Although a few teachers knew about JMLSTI and purchased books recommended in the curriculum, they did not teach the associated lessons. Overall, many of my colleagues and principals were not aware of JMLSTI. I was curious to learn why.

I began by asking questions and offering to work with teachers to teach a lesson about land acknowledgements. Although the school had a land acknowledgement created by district-level teachers, there was no student-friendly version. It was discovered that teachers needed background knowledge of Native history and culture first, so I started there. Then we reviewed slides that could be used with students to teach about the importance of land acknowledgements and the history of Indigenous people and the land. However, teachers were still uncomfortable teaching this lesson. Reflecting upon this, the question was then asked if they would feel more comfortable with a written script. They said yes, so a script was written for them. One teacher was still worried about teaching the lesson, so I offered to teach the lesson with her. Teacher feedback was positive. Two years later, they are still using the slides and teaching the land acknowledgement lessons. This experience taught the importance of supporting other teachers as they gain knowledge and become more comfortable in teaching Native-focused lessons. In order to do this, we had to establish a trusting relationship.

John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial Curriculum

When originally researching this topic, I was frustrated to learn about the lack of use of JMLSTI in schools. One of the first perspectives found was Holtyn (2018), who argued that there needs to be an [JML]STI 2.0 reboot. I agree. What was learned in the research process changed my perspective. In reading an early contributor to JMLSTI, Shana Brown's (as cited in McCardle & Berminger, 2015) description of the original intent of JMLSTI, I learned that JMLSTI was designed to evolve over time. However, it was frustrating to learn from Hurtado that [JML]STI was "encouraged" rather than "mandated" (Washington Professional Educators Standards Board, 2020). According to Hurtado, [JML]STI was originally mandated, but at the last minute, the wording was changed. This angered some people (Washington Professional Educator Standards Board, 2020); however, this decision may have been an attempt to focus on the long game. As one of my uncles said, "If you want to make change that lasts, you go slow. Change that happens fast, can leave fast too" (Arlene Gaeth, personal communication, 2023). Sometimes, making good change and being a leader means moving more slowly and allowing others to make progress at their own pace so the change lasts. Another learning from my research was that many organizations and groups have been involved in teaching, implementing, and advocating for the *John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial* curriculum. When working with different communities and groups, progress may not happen quickly because everyone is at a different place in their growth, learning, and capacity. These are good lessons for educational leaders to consider. Learning about the JMLSTI curriculum and how it can be supported also fits into my goal of being an Indigenous leader who works in reciprocity (Kenny & Fraser, 2012; Kimmerer, 2024). Additionally, an important consideration is what can be given to others in light of the next seven generations (Jacob, 2013; Mitchell, 2018).

We can support JMLSTI through Title VI Indian Education programs by supporting Native educators in working towards healing through mentorship, providing non-Native educators with training, addressing curricular harms, supporting new teachers through pre-service training, celebrating Orange Shirt Day, and respectfully working towards land acknowledgements. Additionally, we can streamline lessons, build in accountability measures, and begin to work from the ground up.

When reflecting upon what was learned about JMLSTI, I also thought about its similarities to water.

> Water is the network that facilitates communication and relationship between all forms of life. Water is a liminal space, always shifting between states. … The liminal space of water is a complex cycle spanning different scales of time-spending just days in the atmosphere and decades in snow and glaciers, and thousands of years in the ocean, and tens of thousands of years underground, and hundreds of thousands of years in the Antarctic ice shelf. … And still, it is in motion. And still, it is all the water in the world today. Every drop is all the water that has ever been on the planet. And all life shares this water. (Simpson, 2025, pp. 50-51)

Like water, the JMLSTI curriculum can be found in different states, places, communities, and forms (Figure 1).

Tributaries of JMLSTI

"We have a relationship with the river, a connection. It's a connection between us and the water and Mother Earth. Water has its own intelligence. It flows wherever it wants. It does what it wants. It's like they say, water is life."

– Linda Meanus, Confluence Project, 2022

Tributary 1: Title VI Indian Education

Title VI was established as part of the Indian Education Act of 1972 to provide more culturally relevant educational programming for Native students in public schools. In the following story, I share my experience supporting a Title VI program.

I am trying to reclaim our (Indigenous) place in education in my community by creating a Title VI Indian Education program and increasing the use of JMLSTI. As this work is done, I am using five Indigenous values, including relationships (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Peterson, 2022; Tsosie et al., 2022). Additionally, work is underway with a committee to address curricular harms and replace some harmful lessons with JMLSTI lessons. The lessons we are planning to add to the district curriculum are from the local tribe (Tulalip), with whom we are working (Craig & Sofie, n.d.). The healing work in community with others has been very powerful, and it is evident how the connections being made are building toward good work. According to Archibald et al. (2019), "Our genealogical connection with all phenomena in the universe intricately interlinks us, much like a spider web" (p. 107). The work for Indian Education is building and going beyond the Indigenous community. The community of praxis is healing work, and we are sharing the lived experiences to decolonize by disrupting and dismantling settler-colonial structures in K-12 education. In sharing our experiences, we are transforming education for all marginalized students.

Since starting the Community Grounded Praxis work, the school district has applied for a Title VI federal grant and has communicated with over 250 families about our program. We have hosted community events almost monthly to bring families together. In these events, we have begun to build relationships, created and voted on bylaws for our Title VI Indian Education program, honored our Ancestors with an Orange Shirt Day event, and are preparing to celebrate

our graduating seniors with a blanket ceremony. We are not doing this work alone. Our district has been networking with two neighboring Title VI programs, the Superintendent, the Equity Director, and district educators, to address harms in the curriculum. The other Title VI programs and ours are supporting each other and our work through co-event planning and sharing. Another meaningful action has been teaching in nine different kindergarten classes, presenting lessons on local Native American people, specifically the two tribes I represent (Yakama and Swinomish) and the Tulalip Tribes. These lessons may be short, but they are a step towards decolonizing and indigenizing the current curriculum we must teach with and are an act of reclaiming educational spaces.

Tributary 2: Native Educator Supports

It was powerful to witness increased support of STI and our Indigenous students through an Indigenous educator's mentorship support training. It was clearly observable that when we support Native educators, we also support Native students and STI at the same time. When Native educators feel seen, heard, and valued, and are given an opportunity for collaborative support, they gain a renewed sense of purpose. One participant shared that, by hearing others and reflecting on education for our Native students, they were inspired to create space for their Indigenous students in education.

Tributary 3: Land Acknowledgement Work

Of the five district connections made over the past five years, only one regularly practiced using a land acknowledgement. While there are differing opinions on land acknowledgements and they can be tokenized, they are a first step in creating education and curiosity about the land that we work from.

Tributary 4: Orange Shirt Day

For two years, in two different districts, I asked to honor Orange Shirt Day. In the first district, we hosted an Orange Shirt Day evening event that was attended by over 40 people. This was a time to share the history of Orange Shirt Day and to acknowledge the local boarding school located only a mile from our school. When talking with the superintendent about the event and related history, it was apparent that they were unaware of the boarding school's history and proximity. We collaborated with our local tribe to provide orange shirts and had one of our Native students design the logo for them. One of the most meaningful moments of the event was when an Indigenous student shared that he now knew there were other Indigenous students like him, and he was comfortable sharing who he was at school. In my current district, we also honored Orange Shirt Day, and it was a success. It was powerful to see so many participate and learn about what the day means. Many of the people who learned about Orange Shirt Day were administrators and teachers. Orange Shirt Day is one-way JMLSTI is supported, as it focuses on learning about Indigenous history.

Tributary 5: Pre-Service Training for New Teachers

In 2018, Senate Bill 5028 was passed to require pre-service training on [JML]STI for new teachers in Washington State. While this may help prepare new teachers, it does not address the training needs of existing teachers and their lack of knowledge of JMLSTI.

Tributary 6: Addressing Curricular Harms

A barrier to teaching [JML]STI is the existence of a "cycle of unknowing" (Woolley, 2024a). For example, many non-Indigenous educators were taught in an educational system that lacked Native American/Indigenous education. This creates a lack of confidence and fear of "teaching it wrong" (anonymous informants, personal communication, March 2023). When

teachers are afraid to teach Indigenous-focused curriculum, they often opt not to teach it, as opposed to trying to teach it (in)correctly. This creates a need for increased teacher training on JMLSTI, as well as relationship-building with teachers to increase their confidence and comfort in asking questions about teaching JMLSTI (Lees et al., 2024).

Statement of the Problem

Sabzalian (2019) argues that "… settler colonialism manifests in curricular silences, what is not taught and not said in classrooms" (p. xiii). According to Smith et al. (2018), "Literatures that simply appropriate and misrepresent Indigenous knowledges within a mainstream retelling reinforce stereotypes and promote cultural theft" (p. 35). As educators, we bear a moral obligation and responsibility to counter and actively address the erasure of Indigenous people within all schools. Erasure manifests through the curricular invisibility of Native American and Indigenous histories, as well as the omission of contemporary Indigenous knowledge and teachings. "These are the ways that curriculum itself is political, with those reflected in Eurocentric curricula affirmed in their social position, reinforcing the notion that white domination is merely an undisputed reality" (Patel, 2021, pp. 42-43). Unfortunately, the promotion of settler-colonial values, history, and mythology dominate many public school classrooms nationwide, including those in Washington State (Foxworth et al., 2015). How do we counter and rectify these perspectives?

The late Senator John McCoy and others advocated for the passage of legislation in the Washington State legislature mandating the inclusion of Native American history and culture in the public school curriculum (Senate Bill 5433, 2015). Generally, local school districts possess the authority to select and implement curricula. However, the state retains the power to direct

certain curricular matters, including the adoption and implementation of JMLSTI (Alexander & Alexander, 2018).

Unfortunately, JMLSTI is inconsistently taught across Washington State. Within each school district, there are vastly differing relationships with local tribes. While some districts have strong relationships with tribes, many do not; this likely affects how JMLSTI is taught. What we do not know is how to increase the adoption and use of JMLSTI in all districts. Although the state has curricular accountability practices in subject areas such as science, reading, writing, and math, there is a lack of accountability measures for the implementation of JMLSTI (Arviso et al., 2021; Hand, 2020; Holtyn, 2018).

Purpose Statement

This study aimed to gain insights regarding strategies to increase and enhance the use of JMLSTI in Washington State. These insights will be shared with others across the state. These learnings can be used to develop strategies to increase the use of JMLSTI. As articulated by Windchief & SanPedro (2019), "We know the problems of Indigenous education and their causes. With our limited time and money, we must now talk only about solutions and their implementations" (p. 153). The primary issue is the underutilization of JMLSTI; therefore, there is a need to identify effective solutions and implement these solutions accordingly. This study has the potential to promote meaningful learning opportunities for students. "Indigenous researchers such as Smith (2005) assert that Indigenous research is about changing and improving conditions. They are driven by a purposeful dream and not a prescription" (Dunbar, 2008, p. 92). Meaningful change to oppressive systems and increased use of JMLSTI are respectful ways to fulfill the dreams of our Ancestors and to support our youth.

Research Questions

The first overarching research question was: What are the barriers to teaching JMLSTI for teachers? Second, how can current educators be better supported in implementing JMLSTI more effectively in the classroom? Additionally, as JMLSTI is an evolving curriculum, how do we best honor its development by removing barriers and making it more accessible for teachers to implement? The third essential question was: How to begin using JMLSTI from the ground up with a more place-based approach to teaching students the JMLSTI lessons that are from and with local tribes in respectful relationships?

This study aimed to identify ways to enhance and expand the respectful implementation and use of JMLSTI, working from the ground up and in collaboration with local tribes. The aim is to understand how educators can be effectively trained to improve the implementation of [JML]STI in classroom settings. Given that [JML]STI is an evolving curriculum (Brown, 2015, p. 35), an interest in strategies to honor the development of [JML]STI, to reduce barriers to the adoption and use of JMLSTI, and ways in which to make JMLSTI more user-friendly.

Justification/Rationale

This study identified issues related to the adoption and implementation of [JML]STI. Information gained from this study contributes to the limited literature on [JML]STI and provides recommendations to help teachers implement [JML]STI more effectively and respectfully. Teachers are critical to the successful teaching of the JMLSTI curriculum.

As the descendant of a boarding school survivor, I know firsthand how education has served as a site of trauma, and the importance of survivance and healing. This study is an important act of resistance and an attempt at countering colonization by reclaiming our rightful place in the educational landscape (Sabzalian, 2019).

Additionally, engaging with place-based knowledges and integrating culturally relevant curriculum are important because they allow students to learn about the history and peoples who inhabit the lands on which their schools and school districts are located. Creating this connection to the land is important for student learning and for fostering greater respect for local Tribes. The use of local Tribal sovereignty curriculum honors JMLSTI while aligning with legislative intent in an ethical and culturally relevant way.

Significance

This research can be used by teachers, school districts, tribes, and the OSPI Office of Native Education (ONE) to support curriculum development and teacher training. Findings may influence training practices and justify the need for additional training, different teacher-training methods, resources, and time allocation. OSPI's website resources may also be adapted to fulfill the needs of teachers and educators to support the implementation of JMLSTI.

Teaching JMLSTI is a legislative mandate, an act of respect and reconciliation, and a rightful knowledge for all students. Unfortunately, JMLSTI is inconsistently implemented, and there are barriers to teaching the curriculum. It is imperative to identify why it is not being taught, what can be done to support its implementation, and to counter the historical and current Indigenous erasure that exists in schools.

Impact on Others

The unique perspective and approach to researching this topic stem from being a veteran teacher and now an administrator working to change school systems. The goal of this research is to understand the barriers to teaching JMLSTI, identify ways to encourage teachers to teach it, and learn what others in Washington State are doing to address these issues. Another interest is how we can learn from others who have worked on the same issue and apply these learnings in

both theory and practice. Findings from this research can be used by the Washington State OSPI, the Office of Native Education, school district leaders, tribal liaisons, and teachers as they consider and understand barriers to the use of JMLSTI and work to increase its use in classrooms.

Personal Impact

According to Cajete (2000)

> It is the landscape that contains the memories, the bones of the ancestors, the earth, air, fire, water, and spirit from which a Native culture has come and to which it continually returns. It is the land that ultimately defines a Native people. (p. 205)

My river paths have been leading me back home to Indigenous ways of leadership. I am reconnecting with my past for the future generations of Indigenous students. Decolonization in education is the undamming of a river, where salmon are allowed to return to their original places and ways of life, finding their way through their ancestral memories and the memories the water carries (Woolley, 2025b, p. 4). Listening to the ancestors, the land, and the rivers has guided this work for Indigenous justice in public schools. Coming from both sides of the mountain, the water in my river paths holds the memories that bring me back to my Ancestral homelands and carry me forward in the work to reclaim educational spaces for our children.

As a young child, water in its various forms called me to listen to it and reminded me of its continuous connection, even though I did not live in either place. Memories of being mesmerized by water flowing in rivers and ditches, and on the windows of the bus riding home from school, are held within me. Often sitting in silence, looking out the window, decompressing from the school day, I was comforted by the water. Fortunately, I live in an area where it frequently rains. I grew up visiting the Lands of the Swinomish and Yakama; both places

included memories of salmon and water. The Swinomish are the people of the salmon (Christy & Winterbottom, 2016). Many of our family gatherings involved salmon. My family also visited a river in Yakama annually. Aunts, uncles, and cousins all camped next to a river and, for an extended weekend, fished in the river. Memories of admiring my uncles and aunts when they fished and being proud to help carry the salmon back to our campsite, proving my toughness and ability to contribute. Water brought us together, connected us, and was always present.

What the River Carries: Our Stories and Memories[1]

My Grandmother's Story

My grandmother was my favorite person. Fortunately, she spent a lot of time at my house when I was growing up, and we had a special relationship, one that was unique. She was the only person who saw what I needed and gave it to me. A strong relationship was built, and there was a reciprocal willingness to do anything for her. It was important to spend as much time as possible with her while growing up. When my siblings ran to play after dinner, I sat with my grandmother at the dinner table. When my family stayed at her house, I was the only grandkid she allowed to sleep in her bed. When she stayed at our house, she always stayed in my bed. We never spoke about it, but we had a different kind of bond.

One day in college, I visited my grandmother for the weekend. She shared some of her experiences at the Tulalip Boarding School. My grandmother told me how she and her sisters were split up by age groups, and how she would sneak out of her bed at night to try to find her little sisters (one who was very young, maybe only four years old) to comfort them because she could hear them crying. She would try to lie down with them until they fell asleep, then sneak back into her bed. She told me it was very dangerous for her to do because if she got caught, she

[1] From Woolley (2024).b

knew she would be punished severely. This was a story my grandmother shared with me that, to my knowledge, she did not share with other people. Certainly, there are many other stories she could have talked about her time at the Tulalip Boarding School, but this was one that she wanted me to know. I am honored that she shared this with me and am grateful that other brave survivors have shared their stories, too.

Another survivor's story shared and recorded in *Tulalip, From My Heart: An Autobiographical Account of a Reservation Community,* describes how children from Tulalip Boarding School were punished for speaking their native language (Dover, 2013).

> I was given a whipping for speaking our own language in school when I was nine years old… Believe me, we never talked "Indian" at the school again… I gave a talk somewhere to a group, and I explained the reason why we seldom spoke Indian: it was beaten out of us. We were severely punished, and some of the boys and girls got worse punishment than I did. (pp. 118-119)

While this story is not from my grandmother, she lived in the same place and had similar experiences. My grandmother grew up in boarding schools, where to survive, she could not speak her Native language. Grandmother would have been beaten if she spoke her language. She never taught her language to her children. I only heard her speak it in whispers to herself when she was in her kitchen or with her sister in private on the reservation. Other than that, I never heard her speak her language.

Down the River, Intergenerational Trauma and Selective Mutism

Just as rivers move downstream carrying their water memories, families pass on intergenerational trauma. "Intergenerational historical trauma is a well-received theory within indigenous communities today because it centers the fact that suffering and healing are

connected across generations; it reaffirms an indigenous belief in connectedness" (Jacob, 2013, p. 12). My grandmother's trauma from boarding school is connected to me. Indigenous communities have known this for a while. Scientific communities are beginning to study and accept the theory that trauma can be passed down through genetics from one generation to the next. "We are just beginning to learn that stressful experiences affect gene expression in humans, as well" (Van der Kolk, 2015, p. 154). Kennedy (as cited in Sinek, n.d.) explains that our bodies have circuitry that governs how we react, and some of these memory pathways are already established at birth. "Your body is always forming circuits; you are born with 25% of your circuitry… When things happen, our bodies go in and take inventory. What do I know about how to respond in situations like this?" My grandmother learned that to survive, she could not talk; her body learned this, and this trauma changed her. The memory in her body was then passed down to me.

Memories from the past are expressed in the present. According to Methot (2019), "This past-as-present reality is reflected in the lives of many Indigenous people" (p. 4). There are two trauma responses that were present in my younger self. One was the inability to talk. The other was the fear of separation from a family member. Early research on selective mutism points to anxiety being an underlying cause (Hua & Major, 2016; Longobardi et al., 2019). However, other and newer research is beginning to show that anxiety is not always a cause and that there may be intergenerational dynamics related to trauma, loss, and dislocation (Melfsen et al., 2021; Monzo et al., 2015; Wolynn, 2016).

The other intergenerational trauma response pertains to the fear of separation. According to Methot (2019),

> When children were separated from their families and forced to attend the schools, the separation from a support system meant that they struggled alone with their traumatic experiences, which made recovery difficult or impossible. This disruption in social structure is one of the main reasons why trauma has become intergenerational within Indigenous communities. (p. 45)

Similar to selective mutism being passed on, the fear of separation was also passed down within my family. Again, we see how the past is a reality in our present-day lives. I am grateful for the stories that survivors feel comfortable sharing with us, because they help us begin to understand where we came from. As Dover (2013) wrote, "She (Dover) wants us to know her people's history as they lived it, since events of the past participate in the lives of modern-day Tulalip peoples" (p. xx). For my family, our history in education was disrupted by traumatic colonized experiences. The more that is known about the past, the more that can be done in the present to change the future and *my* children's futures in education.

Decolonized Empowerment in Education Today

It is necessary to understand my educational history before proceeding with this research. Absolon (2022) writes that "memory comes before motive" (p. 172) and that we have to reconnect with our ancestors to know what work will motivate us.

> Indigenous scholars, through their search, reconnect to their ancestors, land, culture, traditions, language, history and knowledge. The search, in a sense, becomes a catalyst to remembering who we are and what we know and to bringing those truths forward. In my writing I've thought about how we remember; when we locate we remember where we come from and who we are. I've thought about the significance of memory: blood, spirit, heart, mind and body memory. Memory exists in all aspects of our whole being.

> Reconnecting to our whole self is memory work… we reconnect with our communities because we've been dismembered through Residential Schools, relocations… (p. 173)

Decolonizing education, for me, means remembering and reconnecting with the past, and working to heal and re-envision, re-create, and re-claim safe educational spaces not just for myself but for my grandmother and my children. In a sense, this makes it safe for my voice to be heard and to overcome the disguised "disorder" of having selective mutism. Chrona (2022) describes decolonization as reconciliation through education. My motives and future work in education are clear to me. It is important for me to work towards decolonization through correcting curricular harms, supporting Indian Education through Title VI (water forms of JMLSTI), and reconnecting with my river paths and people by increasing the use of the *John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial* curriculum from the ground up.

Water Connects Me and My Responsibility

Following the flow of water in river paths provides a connection to the responsibilities we owe to our Earth and people. According to my Swinomish Ancestors,

> Everything starts and ends with the land. We have to take care of every bit of it, whether it's the trees, the water or the air. It all has some useful, helpful purpose with it if we ask. But we have to learn how to use it. And we can only do that if we're there, listening. (Christy & Winterbottom, 2016, p. 19)

What this means to me is that it is my responsibility to care for the Land and listen to what is needed in my community.

Responsibility for decolonizing education does not fit in just one box. There are multiple goals to work toward. It is my responsibility as a teacher to increase the use of *John McCoy(lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial,* make curricular corrections, and work for Indigenous

students in my district. As Jacobs (2006) writes, “As an antidote to current anti-Indianism and colonialism in American educational institutions, Americans must engage in the decolonization of curriculum and literature available to our school children” (p. 78). This means that the responsibility for advocating for Indian Education for all students, teachers, and leaders falls upon my shoulders. “… [L]eaders must be strong, predictable, and patient, able to change what they are doing (whether pacing slower or faster or changing the path that the group will take) if that is what is best for the overall unison of the group” (Jacob, 2013, p. 25). Like the fluidity of water, a dynamic leader moves and adapts to the community's needs. It is imperative to stay connected and listen to all my relatives and ancestors while knowing where my river path has been and where it is going.

In doing this work, I empathize with my salmon relatives in their call back home to the mountains.

> … answering a mysterious call, they head back home, readapting to fresh water, starting the long upward migration against the flow of the rivers, seeking their birth streams in the high country, sensing the Earth’s magnetic field, and “smelling” their original waters. (Van Horn et al., 2021, p. 98)

Túx̣naaš. I am returning home… following the river to where I need to be, what I need to do, and how to give back to my community.

Yakama Nation Decolonizing Acts of Feminism and Leadership

River paths are returning me home and reconnecting me with the Indigenous ways. I have been researching and reconnecting with both my Yakama and Swinomish relatives. Jacob (2013) (Yakama) writes about a vision of what a Yakama decolonizing praxis is. It “1) understands indigenous bodies as sites of critical pedagogy, 2) centers social justice praxis to build a moral

community, and 3) utilizes grassroots indigenous resistance as a mechanism to dismantle colonial logics" (p. 107). These are areas in my leadership that I am trying to listen to and act upon in education. Another way to decolonize education is by supporting feminist scholarship and leadership. "This being the twenty-first century, it is well past time for scholars to stop treating Native American history as though only men saw, thought, acted and spoke" (Jacobs, 2006, p. 121). Furthermore, feminism is an important aspect of Yakama-specific decolonizing praxis. As Jacob (2013) writes, "Yakama decolonizing praxis, which highlights the important place of women in cultural revitalization movements, builds upon Native feminist scholarship" (p. 107). Not only is it important to build upon Native feminist scholarship but it is also important to respect "the importance of Native women elders as culture bearers, the need to reshape educational institutions to serve our people" (Jacob, 2013, p. 109). In doing so, this is an act of working towards social justice and change.

From the start of my teaching career, it was understood that teaching was a political act, and this is experienced even more now as an Indigenous feminist scholar reconnecting with the river paths of home. "Yakama decolonizing praxis is rooted in a political commitment to social change that draws upon indigenous culture and identity and thus builds upon theories of radical indigenism and indigenous resurgence" (Jacob, 2013, p. 114). All of this is done for the greater good of our extended community. "Strong individual tribal people are collectivist-oriented yet feel an individual sense of responsibility to work toward the collective good" (Jacob, 2013, p. 115). Recently, I was asked if this was my "dream job" to be an educational leader. My response was that it is not my dream job, but rather it feels like I am answering a call, as my responsibility is to be an educational leader. If I can improve the educational outcomes for Indigenous students now and in the future, then that would be a dream actualized.

Sites of Healing, Inclusion, and Giving Voice

The colonial history of boarding schools that tried to eliminate Indigenous people will never be forgotten. "The boarding school, whether on or off the reservation, was the institutional manifestation of the government's determination to completely restructure the Indians' minds and personalities" (Adams, 1995, p. 97). Boarding schools did more than just restructure the minds and personalities of Native peoples; they caused lasting intergenerational trauma. As Absolon (2022) writes,

> colonial policies are completely about displacement and severing Indigenous Peoples from the land and anything that ties us to her. Colonial violence is a history of being brutally dismembered from our lands, families, communities, culture, language, ancestors and so on. So when we remember, we actually become re-membered and reconnected with our land, community, history, family members, identities, language, culture and ancestors, and our open wounds can begin to heal. (p. 173)

How I am related and connected to my grandmother and the trauma that she experienced changes the way I move forward. According to Jacob (2013), "… Yakama decolonizing praxis is centrally concerned with thinking intergenerationally. Activists were guided by the teachings and instructions of elders and dedicated their lives to carrying out work that would benefit the future generation" (p. 109). Making education a renewed site of healing, inclusion, and a place for our Indigenous voices to be heard is a goal of mine.

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks: Relationships are Foundational

The conceptual framework used in this study involved the four Indigenous values of responsibility, reciprocity, relevance, and respect, along with the additional value of relationships (Chrona, 2022; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Tsosie et al., 2022). These principles are evident

throughout many Indigenous methodologies and frame this research approach. One protocol that exemplifies Indigenous values is to offer participants a gift of chocolate as a gesture of appreciation for their participation. This embodies reciprocity and respect for the participants' time. This approach is based on a successful method that was previously used by Conrad (2023), who noted, “While forming these relationships, teachers sought additional learning and help with [JML]STI teaching through gifts” (p. 8). This practice also honors the Yakama cultural heritage of gift-giving to “bring relations together in a cycle of reciprocity” (Jacob, 2013, p. 97). Although chocolate may appear to be a minor gesture, it is sometimes these small gestures that foster meaningful relationships that demonstrate respect.

This research involved adopting a curricular water perspective, guided by the direction the study needed to flow, and insights derived from the voices of my ancestors. The foundational methods emphasized relationships throughout all the research endeavors. Decolonizing research relies heavily on fostering relationships (Brown, 2015; Chrona, 2022; Patel, 2021; Quinless, 2022; Smith, 2019; Wilson, 2008; Wilson et al., 2019). The relational research paradigm was used to investigate strategies for enhancing the implementation of JMLSTI in public school classrooms. Collaborating with educators, leaders, local tribes, OSPI, students, Indian Education Family Advisory Boards, and Indigenous communities in good relations constitutes a core methodological approach in this research. Building these connections with others represents the goal of conducting good work and advancing efforts to increase the use of JMLSTI.

Relationships served as the key connection between the Indigenous research context and the research questions addressed in this study. According to Wilson & Wilson (2013), “We develop, build, and apply traditional Indigenous knowledge by building relationships with our research topics” (p. 350). In this study, research was conducted in relation to local Tribes, three

local public school districts, a small private school, an Equity Director, Washington State OSPI, my Ancestors, our Creator, my family, teachers, and students. The interconnected pathways of these river paths and relationships will become a powerful way forward for JMLSTI and its utilization. As Brown (2015) writes,

> [JML]STI compels its users to create and develop partnerships between school districts and tribes so that tribes can tell their own stories and begin trusting an education system that was hurtful at best and genocidal at worst. Tribes are tired of having schools teach about them rather than with them. [JML]STI's success depends on the success of this collaboration, this tribal and community involvement. (p. 35)

One uplifting collaboration involved engaging with the local Tribes and their newly developed curriculum, which they graciously shared with me and the local school districts that reside on the lands of the local Tribes. I obtained permission from the local Tribes to share their curriculum with the private school in this study. This initiative emphasized foundational efforts and exemplified working from the ground up. I was eager to learn how to enhance the application of JMLSTI through collaboration with other educators. An original contributor to JMLSTI stated, "*relationships, relationships, relationships*-this is so important in the work we do with Indian Education" (Hurtado, as cited in McCardle & Berninger, 2015, p. 69). Building and nurturing relationships is not only an important part of this work but also a significant responsibility as a member of the Yakama Nation. According to Jacob (2013), "A main principle of Yakama decolonizing praxis is that our people are strongest when women and men work together to bring about healing for our people" (p. 109). This research was conducted responsibly to honor my cultural heritage and people.

Water Flow Guides the Work

In conducting this study, I used a place-based approach, which acknowledged that my ancestors originated from both sides of the Cascade Mountain Range. This serves as an analogy for functioning as a backbone of strength for the people, with the waterways connecting me to the saltwater and the lands of my ancestors. In keeping with this theme of water, the conceptual framework used in this study was grounded in Indigenous relational themes and adopted a water-centric curricular perspective, similar to Conrad's (2020) approach. The water perspectives I used included the various river paths and the interconnectedness I experienced while doing this work. These river pathways are inherently circular and linked, embodying a network of nature's connections. Researchers have incorporated a water-based approach in conducting their Indigenous research and decolonization efforts (Conrad, 2020; Georgeson & Hallenveck, 2018). As Georgeson & Hallenbeck (2018) describe,

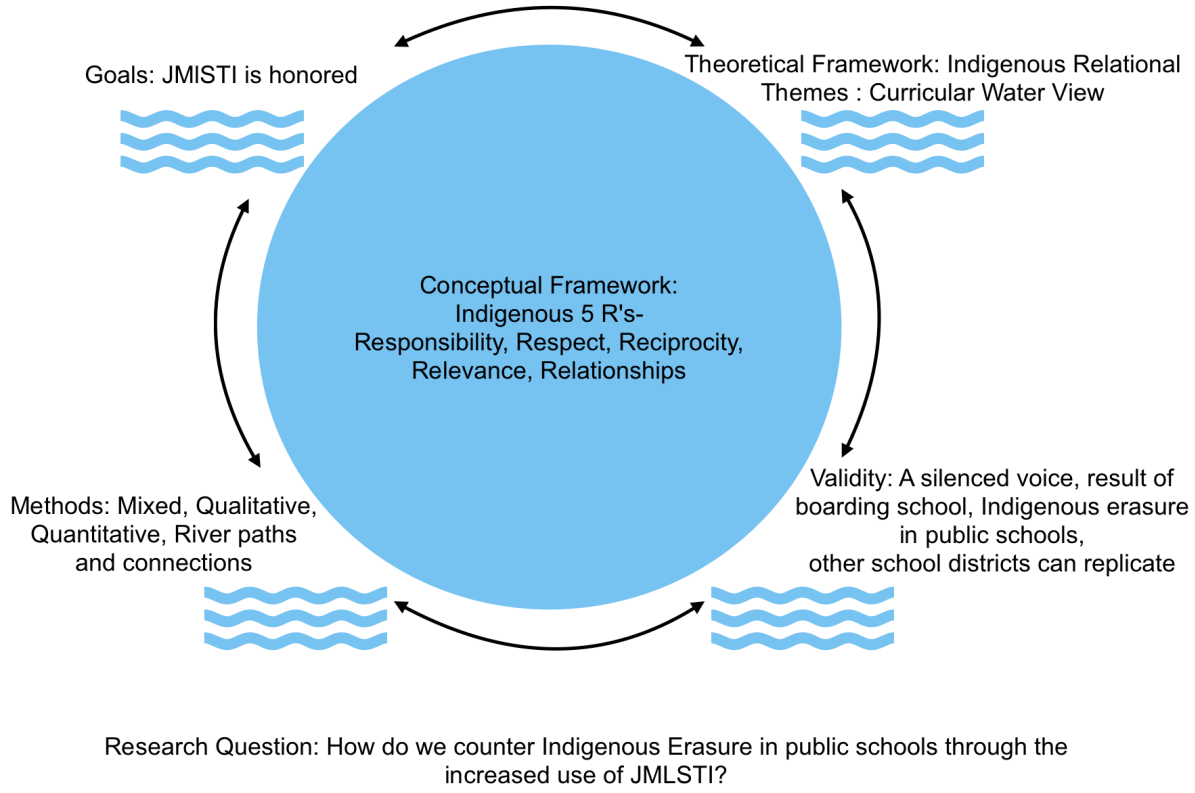
> It was all because of water and fish. History, time, colonization did everything in their power to separate us. But the water and the fishing, the movement of the water, of following fish, kept us together. Family, water and fish. (p. 34).

Indigenous scholars describe "the concept of *water view* as a lens for decolonial education and struggle" (Conrad, 2020, pp. 97-98). The water view also represents a form of liberation, highlighting the relationship we maintain with water grounded in principles of reciprocity, respect, and accountability. The curricular water view initially encountered through Conrad's (2020) research was adapted for use in this study (see Figure 2). Conrad explains, "A curricular water view understands tribal curriculum implementation as a distributed endeavor of curricular stewardship answerable to salmon, rivers, and local Indigenous peoples" (2020, p.

113). This approach resonated with me because of its emphasis on the interconnectedness of all relatives, the sense of responsibility it entails, and its capacity for fluidity and adaptability.

Figure 2

Curricular Water View in Research for JMLSTI



Note. This figure, created using *Freeform,* illustrates the elements of a circular curricular water view that will be utilized in Indigenous research methods and frameworks at JMLSTI.

In Figure 2, the curricular water is expanded to include objectives, a conceptual framework, validity, methodologies, and research questions (M. Montgomery, personal communication, January 11, 2025). The conceptual framework is represented by Indigenous values, while the theoretical framework is represented as Indigenous relational themes, and the curricular water view. These elements are interconnected with the research's validity, focusing

on silenced voices, due to the traumatic history of boarding schools, the colonized educational systems, and Indigenous erasure in public schools. This is emphasized by the fact that other school districts can learn from and replicate findings from this study. This approach employs a mixed-methods strategy integrating qualitative and quantitative methods and the connections established by river pathways.

Additionally, this approach aligned with the research objectives, which aimed to honor JMLSTI and incorporate it into educational curricula. At the center of the circle is the main research question: "How do we counter Indigenous erasure in public schools through the increased use of JMLSTI?" It also includes the list of the five Rs that will connect all the elements of the research methodologies. In this framework, each part can flow into the other, and they are all interconnected in a circle, like the cycles of water.

Reconciliation is a key component of the research methodology and is achievable through the research process. Scholars recognize reconciliation as a significant aspect of the contextual dimension of decolonization (Chrona, 2022; Wilson et al., 2019). Wilson et al. point out that reconciliation also builds new kin relationships. Connections and relationships remain important elements of the research methodology and can be developed through decolonizing conversations.

Researcher Positionality Connected to Theoretical Framework and Methods

As an Indigenous teacher, leader, and parent, my positionality fits well with the curricular water view and theme. Emphasis was placed on Indigenous values throughout, and the relationships that connect the work, like the water of a river system that connects us all. As Patel (2016) writes, "Research is a fundamentally relational project, relational to ways of knowing, who can know, and to place" (p. 48). According to Wilson (2008), "It is the voice from our ancestors that tells us when it is right and when it is not. Indigenous research *is* a life-changing

ceremony" (p. 61). In conducting this research, I hope to honor my Ancestors. I listened to their guidance along the way. Therefore, the research flowed freely like a river, reaching its intended destination. This rationale underpins the choice of a mixed methodology, given its capacity to incorporate interviews and other forms of data, which are inherently relational (Chilisa, 2020; Wilson, 2008).

> Identity for Indigenous peoples is grounded in their relationships with the land, with their ancestors who have returned to the land and with future generations who will come into being on the land. Rather than viewing ourselves as being in relationship with other people or things, we are the relationships that we hold and are part of. (Wilson, p. 80)

The multitude of relationships and connections made it hard to choose one methodology and path. As Windchief & San Pedro (2019) write, "As Indigenous scholars, our work should not mimic western research methodology or be limited to the intellectual dominion or praxis limitations encapsulating the western tradition of research and knowledge production" (p. 150). The overall goal of my research is to be transformative and to help public education counteract the erasure of our Indigenous students. Through the analysis, the aim was to develop recommendations applicable to other school districts, thereby enhancing the use of JMLSTI.

Assumptions

Although I had a prior professional relationship with most of the teachers in the study and training, it is assumed that they gave honest and accurate responses, especially considering that their responses are all anonymous.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into chapters: Chapter 1, introducing the study; Chapter 2, presenting the literature review or voices of wisdom section; Chapter 3, explaining the

methodology; Chapter 4, presenting findings and themes; and Chapter 5, presenting conclusions and next steps.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Voices of Wisdom

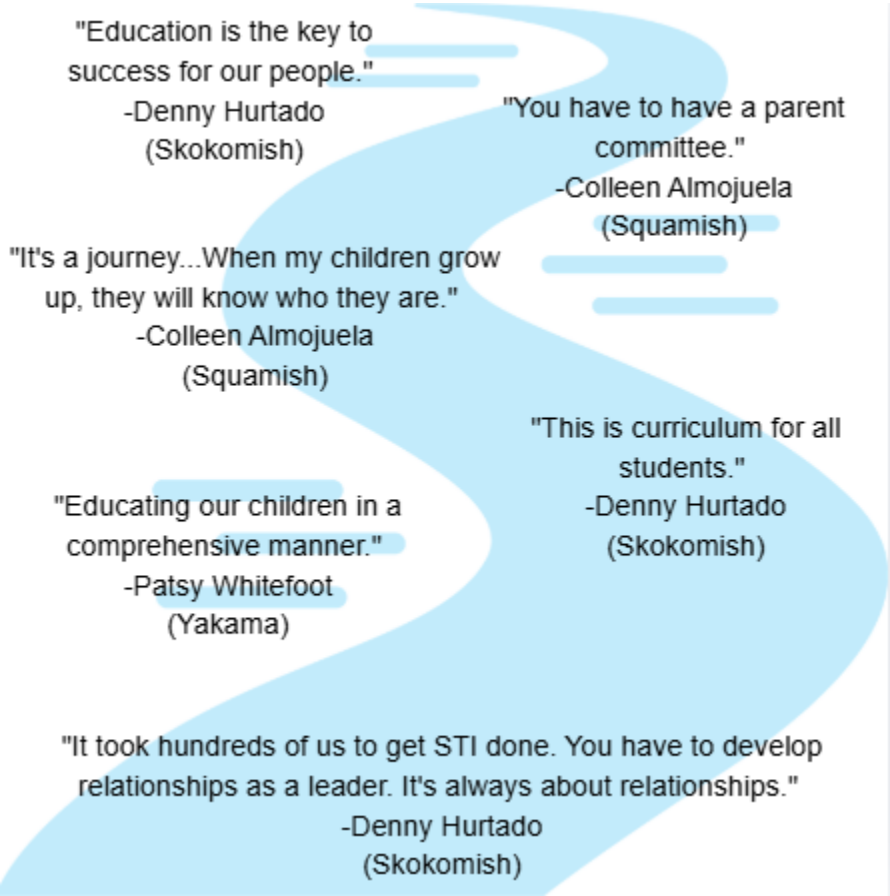
"Many Indigenous Peoples, including my Anishinaabe relatives and my Haudenosaunee neighbors, inherit what is known as a 'culture of gratitude,' where lifeways are organized around recognition and responsibility for earthly gifts, both ceremonial and pragmatic."

–Kimmerer, 2024, p. 11

Before beginning the literature review, gratitude must be given. I recognize and thank all the people before me who have fought, persisted, and made contributions to the work of the *John McCoy* (lulilaš) *Since Time Immemorial* curriculum (Figure 3). These powerful quotes (Figure 3) were shared in a class (Bill, 2025) where I learned about Native American educational leadership in the Pacific Northwest and gained important insights on Native leadership from some of the original warriors in Native education (Bill, 2012). As Kimmerer (2024) states, "all flourishing is mutual" (p. 33), and all the progress and drops of water that join the river are positive collections moving in the right direction, together. While there are directions I would like to see the river flow for JMLSTI, it is acknowledged that this work is only one drop in the river. There is more strength in the collective bonding of the water molecules than in one single molecule (Figure 3). I may contribute to the flow, but it is the joining of all the water that will keep it moving powerfully. Thank you to everyone for the work they have done and will do regarding JMLSTI. As Smith et al. (2019) write, "Water is life. Land is our first teacher" (p. 1). Figure 4 shows various research sources and JMLSTI's contributions. There are many other contributions of water to JMLSTI that are not listed. It would be impossible to include every drop of water that contributes to JMLSTI, as water is omniscient.

Figure 3

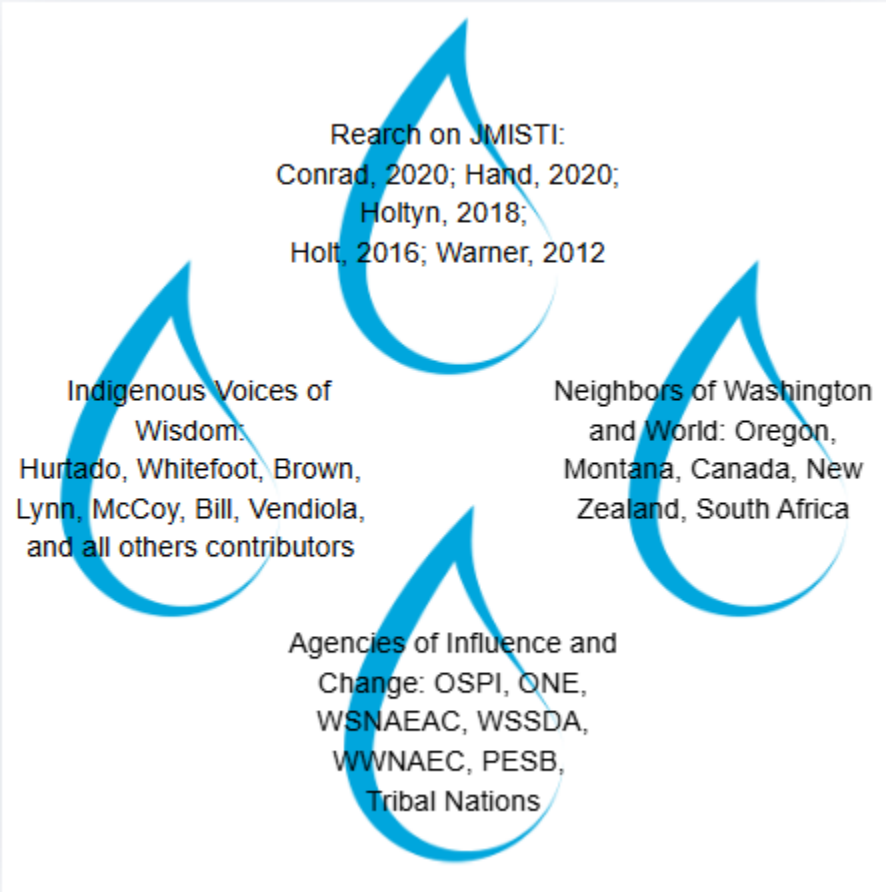
Voices of Wisdom: Acknowledging the Ancient Knowledges from the Tribal Rivers in which these Elders call home along the Skokomish, Squamish, and Yakama. This came from Dr. Denise Bill's class she taught called 591: Indigenous Leadership in Education and Community Concepts for University of Washington, Tacoma Muckleshoot Doctoral Cohort on June 29, 2025. The elders were originally interviewed in Dr. Bill's dissertation, titled Native American Educational Leadership in the Pacific Northwest (2012). Dr. Bill invited the Native Educational Leaders to share their wisdom with the cohort in a ceremony at Muckleshoot Tribal College on Native educational leadership.



Note. This figure represents the quotes and wisdom from Native Educational leaders in a Ceremony (Bill, 2025). Image elements supplied by Canva [Annette Michelle Woolley] via Canva.com.

Figure 4

Contributions of Water - JMLSTI from a Variety of Water Sources



Note. Image elements supplied by Canva [Annette Michelle Woolley] via Canva.com.

Original Warriors of JMLSTI: A Chronological Review

The Indigenous Voices of Wisdom that I want to recognize for contributing to the creation of JMLSTI are Patsy Whitefoot, Denny Hurtado, John McCoy, Michael Vendiola, Laura Lynn, Shana Brown, Willard Bill, Jr., and many other contributors. Acknowledgement and gratitude are given to the original warriors of *John McCoy* (lulilaš) *Since Time Immemorial* through the visual timeline created by OSPI and displayed in Figure 5. The *Since Time Immemorial* Timeline includes many of the major influences for Native students, along with harmful practices, such as boarding schools and other documentation of the miseducation of

Native peoples. This timeline also includes the Indian Education Act of 1972, which funded Indian Education programs (e.g., Title VI). This circular timeline shows how multiple connected educational supports for *John McCoy* (lulilaš) *Since Time Immemorial.* As previously written (Woolley, 2025c), to address Indigenous philosophy, epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics, and to empower self-determination and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples in the foundations of Indigenous Literature regarding Washington State's *John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial,* a Tribal Sovereignty Curriculum, we must revisit the roots of this curriculum.

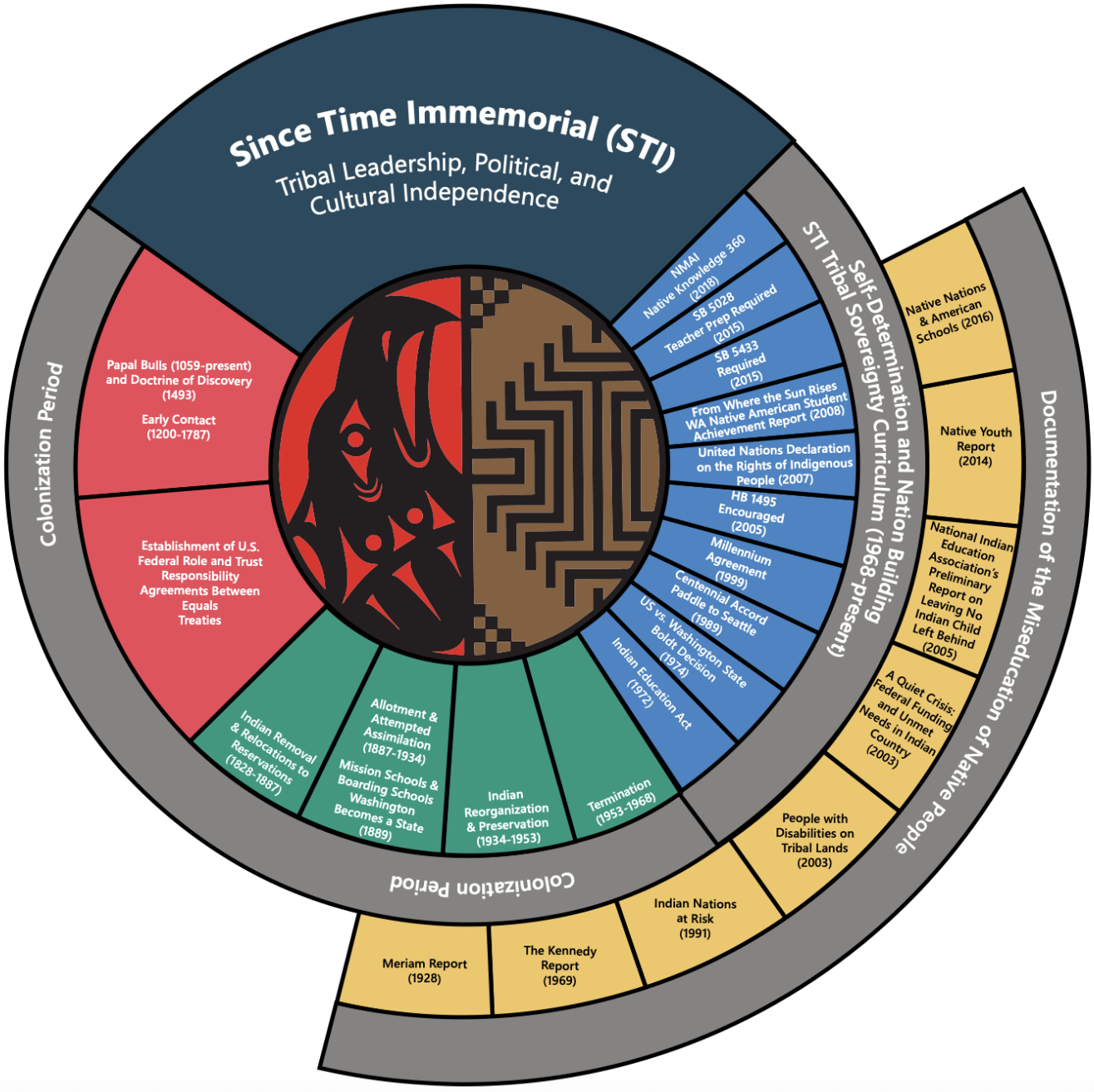
> Since time immemorial, tribal sovereignty has been the life pursuit of Indigenous peoples throughout this great land. Since time immemorial, our life and times have been recorded through our oral histories, songs, traditions, just as the trees have recorded their environmental growth and challenges in their rings. And since time immemorial, our spirit of sovereignty has enveloped our being, has permeated what we teach our children and-most importantly-**how** we have taught our children. (McCardle & Berninger, 2015, p. 23)

John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial was recently renamed and signed into law by then-Governor Jay Inslee to include John McCoy (lulilaš)'s name in the title in recognition of his contributions. JMLSTI is a living and changing document. "Because tribal sovereignty is viewed and practiced differently by different tribes, it is essential that the curriculum be regularly modified, updated, and refined" (McCardle & Berninger, 2015, p. 35). Furthermore, each local tribe must have the opportunity to contribute and guide the teachings of their people in their sovereign way. At the broader government level, this idea receives support; however, reaching this goal requires patience and effort. Brown (as cited in McCardle & Berninger, 2015) projects,

"…we have faith that in time, ours will be a model that is no longer the exception but the rule" (p. 36).

Figure 5

Timeline



Note. Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Since Time Immemorial: Tribal Sovereignty Curriculum

Issues Impacting the Adoption and Implementation of JMLSTI

Absence of Accurate Indigenous Histories in Schools

Holtyn (2018) highlights the absence of accurate Indigenous histories in schools and examines the need for a "STIC 2.0" or revamp of the JMLSTI curriculum, barriers to funding, teacher use of JMLSTI, and training. These are all issues in need of further research. Similarly, Journell (2009) concentrates on racial stereotypes portrayed in the American Indian narrative and addresses the deficiencies of contemporary Indigenous education. I have also observed instances in which school districts want to continue engaging non-diverse (non-Native) evaluative groups to review curricula for cultural relevance and appropriateness. Numerous damaging lessons (both historical and contemporary) of Native American/Indigenous people that are being taught in current curricula in public schools, even though they may be evaluated as good curricula (Amplify, 2021; anonymous personal communication, December 4, 2024). The harmful curriculum needs to be corrected as a component of properly teaching JMLSTI. Using a curriculum that is created for a national audience is fundamentally problematic to achieve teaching from the ground up and from a place-based approach because there is no way that a curriculum can meaningfully include all of the knowledges from our diverse Native nations.

Lack of Native Teachers

According to Conrad (2020), "those most influencing what reaches students are the state's predominantly white, non-Indigenous teachers and administrators who determine the depth of content engagement, rather than tribal nations" (p. 4). Conrad asked, "Can non-Indigenous teachers meaningfully teach such a curriculum?" (p. 3). Holtyn (2018) asked, "What can be learned from the 4-D approach of appreciative inquiry to help ensure successful implementation of *Since Time Immemorial* for all students?" (2018, p. 45). While Conrad (2020)

asked if non-Native teachers could teach JMLSTI well, Holtyn (2018) assumed it was possible for JMLSTI to be taught by non-Natives and was focused on what could be done to make it more successful. Both researchers saw the value and need to teach JMLSTI. In summary, both Conrad (2020) and Holtyn (2018) argue that JMLSTI can be implemented successfully and is a solution to Native erasure in Washington State's public education. I wholeheartedly agree with them.

Need for Curricular Integration of Native Studies

Holtyn (2018) emphasized the need for Indigenous education to be integrated into and embedded across all curricular areas. The term "integrating" curriculum refers to teaching Indigenous lessons alongside other subjects, such as science. For example, a science lesson could teach about the seasons and incorporate the place-based tribal lunar phases (Cedar Box Experience). Similarly, Spang (2017) focused on the teaching of Indigenous STEM. Luong (2023) conducted extensive research on many of the same issues addressed by Sabzalian (2015), Holtyn (2018), and Conrad (2020), within Oregon State's version of JMLSTI, known as *Tribal History/Shared History*. Pewewardy et al. (2022) examined disparities in Indigenous education and developed a model to support educators' educational practices. Each of these researchers cited the need for more curricular integration of Native studies.

Absence of Place-Based Learning

Pewewardy et al. (2022) also identified the absence of place-based learning in schools throughout the United States (p. 57). According to them, "This consciousness-raising approach to curriculum can help challenge the racism, racial microaggressions, and biased curriculum that often 'push' Indigenous children out of school" (p. 102).

“Reconciliation through Education”

The fundamental issue is that numerous classrooms across Washington State are not implementing JMLSTI. Nonetheless, Chrona (2022) argues that we *can* engage in decolonization in what she calls “Reconciliation through education” (p. 43). It is worth considering whether part of the challenge in utilizing this framework stems from a lack of engagement with local tribes and JMLSTI lessons. Chrona (2022) advocates for a combined approach that simultaneously addresses both inclusion and reconciliation in the implementation of tribal cultures and histories. Addressing both historical harms and the contemporary integration of tribal cultures within public educational institutions would honor the intent and objectives of JMLSTI. Senate Bill 5433 explicitly states,

> The legislature recognizes the need to reaffirm the state’s commitment to educating the citizens of our state, particularly the youth who are our future leaders, about tribal history, culture, treaty rights, contemporary tribal and state government institutions and relations and the contribution of Indian nations to the state of Washington. The legislature recognizes that this goal has yet to be achieved in most of our state’s schools and districts. (sec. 1).

This legislation addresses the need to educate about the historical and contemporary components for the benefit of our future leaders and Indian students.

There is a beautiful weaving of theory and practice when reviewing the curriculum developed by the Tulalip Tribes for JMLSTI (Craig & Sofie, n.d.). The *Tulalip Tribes Sovereignty Curriculum* “honors our past but also strengthens our community’s future” and provides “a more focused education on our specific cultural heritage” (Craig & Sofie, n.d.). It is evident that this education is necessary; however, a significant question remains regarding the

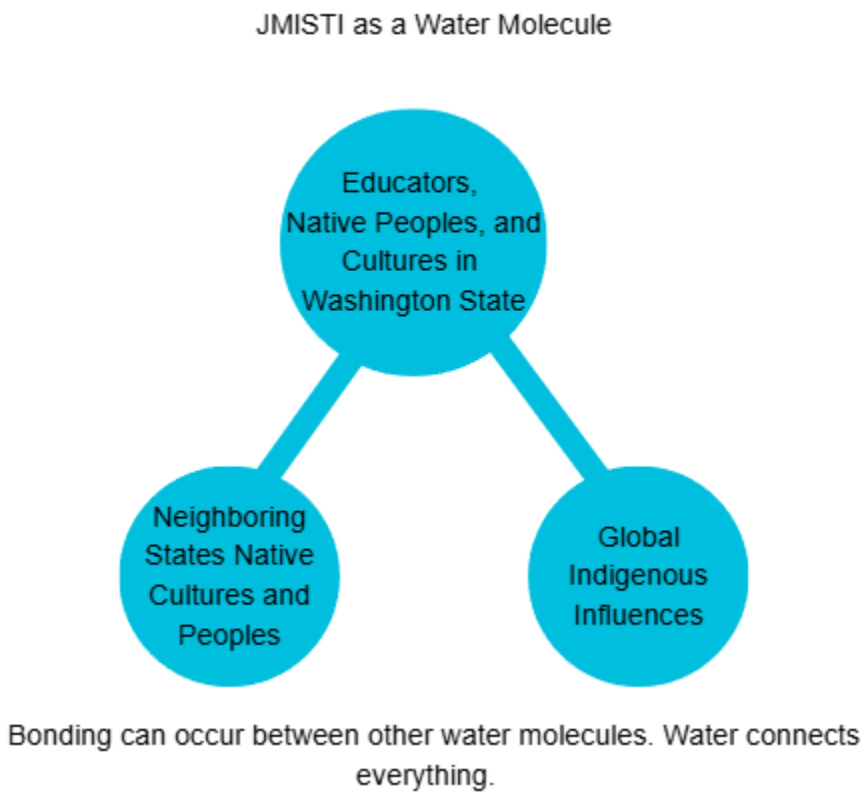
optimal methods of implementation, given that it is not currently being executed effectively in most locations.

Importance of Integrating Indigenous Culture and History in the Curriculum

There is much to learn from others regarding Indigenous education practices, as we are all connected like water molecules (Figure 6). Conrad (2020), Hand (2020), and Holtyn (2018) endorsed the implementation of JMLSTI in classrooms, along with all 29 federally recognized tribes in Washington State. Sabzalian (2019) and Luong (2023) cite the need for Indigenous education for all, drawing upon their experiences working in neighboring Oregon and the state's version of JMLSTI. Other scholars (Journell, 2009; Spang, 2017) have also written about the need for Indigenous education across the United States. Similarly, in Canada, Pilon (2006) emphasized the significance of integrating tribal history into school curricula for all students. Internationally, scholars (Chrona, 2022; Dunne & Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018; Jonnaert et al., 2021; Masoga, 2024; Zimu-Biyela, 2019) have noted the urgent need for Indigenous education to combat colonialism. (Jonnaert et al., 2021) "… endorse the development of indigenous curricula that respond to local community education" (p. 17), and they recognize that "the role of curriculum is to translate education policies into pedagogical practices and, ultimately, learning experiences at the classroom level" (p. 17)

Figure 6

JMLSTI Water Molecule



Note. This Canva image was created to show a water molecule with significant connections to JMLSTI. Image elements supplied by Canva [Annette Michelle Woolley] via Canva.com.

Global Influences

During a forum on Indigenous education, a representative from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (United Nations, 2003) stated, "the participation of indigenous peoples in designing curricula was still limited, and education still fell short of eliminating prejudice and discrimination targeted at indigenous peoples" (p. 2). UNESCO includes voices from many countries, including New Zealand, Asia, Mexico, and the Americas, that argue the importance of Indigenous education. While there are instances where

place-based Indigenous education is being done well (Concha, 2024), the reality is that Indigenous education is taught inconsistently (Uyeda, 2022). What can be done systematically to address this inconsistent teaching of Indigenous education and culture in schools? Identifying the problems or barriers is critical. Craig (Yakama) (as cited in McCardle & Beringer, 2015) advises that collaboration with Indigenous tribes is a crucial component in bridging the gap between teacher implementation of Indigenous education. Holtyn (2018) and Conrad (2020) concur that this collaboration is essential for the successful implementation of JMLSTI. According to Brown (2015), "Tribes are tired of having schools teach about them rather than with them. The success of JMLSTI depends on the success of this collaboration, this tribal and community involvement" (p. 35). Across all levels - local, state, national, tribal, and international -there is consensus that Indigenous education *should* be taught. However, the degree to which it *is* being implemented varies dramatically.

The Movement of Water

Water is powerful, can take on many forms, and moves throughout the world in mystifying ways. Simpson (2025) writes,

> The liminal space of water is a complex cycle spanning different scales of time-spending just days in the atmosphere and decades in snow and glaciers, and thousands of years in the ocean, and tens of thousands of years underground, and hundreds of thousands of years in the Antarctic ice shelf.
>
> A drop of water inside me appears on my skin as sweat in the summer. This evaporates into the air, travelling as water vapour. Its travels expose it to conditions that cause it to undergo condensation, and it falls to the earth as some kind of precipitation. It can fall and be collected in the ocean. It can fall into the collection of groundwater, intercepted by

soil, infiltration and percolation, learning to move sideways. It can run off into a lake or a river that moves it to the ocean. It can be transpired, perspired, expired by plants and animals.

And still, it is in motion. And still, it is all the water in the world today. Every drop is all the water that has ever been on the planet.

And all life shares this water. (p. 51)

The quote frames connections to water, its forms, and the places it moves. This is an important concept to understand before discussing the contributions of this research.

Washington State, Research Contributions Related to JMLSTI

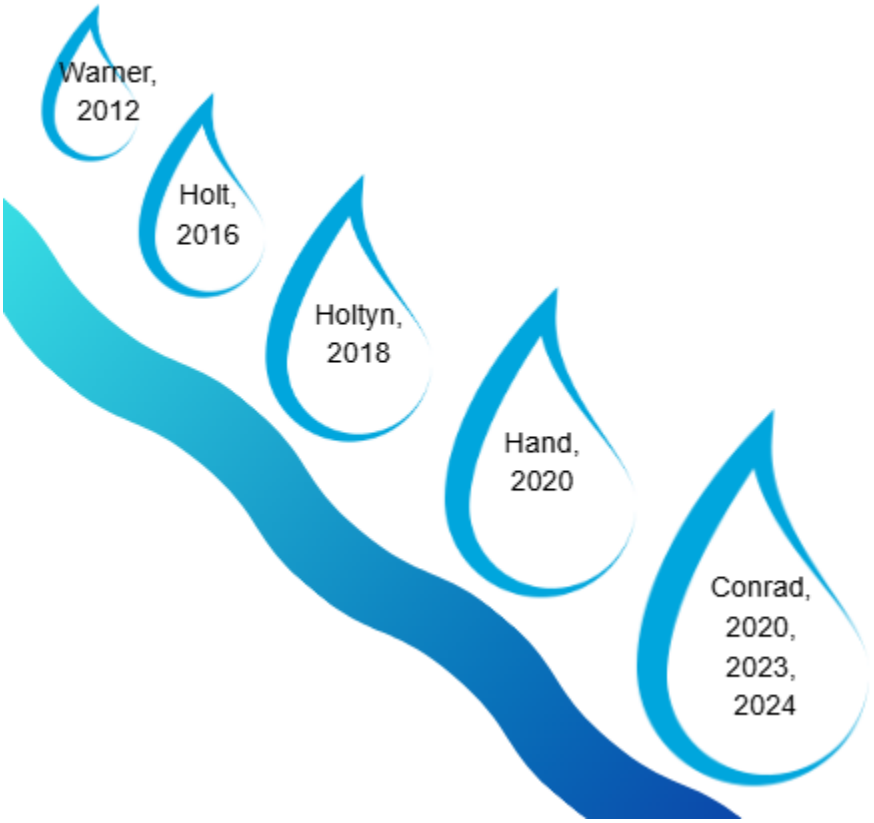
John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial curriculum is both old and new. The foundations and knowledges have been around for generations or since time immemorial. However, the establishment of the *John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial* curriculum as a mandated curriculum by the legislature has only been in effect for 10 years, since 2015. Therefore, the extent to which it has been formally researched is scant, but important. There are five primary studies conducted on JMLSTI (Conrad, 2020; Hand, 2020; Holt, 2016; Holtyn, 2018; Warner, 2012), and another (Talbert, 2021) that did not specifically aim to study JMLSTI but did include it among its topics.

For this section of the literature review, a chronological summary helps tell the story of the research contributions. The timeline of the research is important given the monumental developments in JMLSTI since it became a mandated curriculum in 2015. After presenting the research flow, a comparative analysis of suggestions and needs across all sources is beneficial. This is where the justification for my research joins the river path of JMLSTI. I consider the contributions of water before me and carefully reflect on my educational experiences, how they

flow together, and how they can change the course of the river and JMLSTI. It is important to discuss other concurrent flows or tributaries that are also working in the same direction.

Figure 7

JMLSTI Literature and Contributions to the Water Path to Research on JMLSTI



Note. Using Canva, Figure 7 presents research and literature on JMLSTI. Image elements supplied by Canva [Annette Michelle Woolley] via Canva.com.

Early Contributions to Existing Literature in Chronological Order

Warner (2012) wrote one of the earliest dissertations on the *Since Time Immemorial Curriculum* prior to JMLSTI being mandated in the education system in 2015 (*Indigepedia: Digital Decolonization – Living Histories of Native American Peoples Indigenizing K-12 Curriculum in Washington State*). Warner offers an optimistic review of [JML]STI focused on

digital aspects and how this shifts knowledges online, capturing histories to have the capacity as a model to be shared as part of the education system. Warner's goal was to help clarify the shared landscape of responsible, respectful, and reciprocal relationships between non-Natives and Native American people in Washington State. Warner provides information on the roots of colonization, Indigenous knowledge, Indigenization, and key concepts related to JMLSTI. Warner shares that Indigenous knowledges are not new. He points to the ways in which utilizing JMLSTI can improve different forms of capital. Due to the newness of JMLSTI online and its potential for global sharing, Warner offered a hopeful vision for the impact of JMLSTI; however, he recognized a critical aspect of its success.

> Indigenous living histories will only be living if they reflect the relational respect that is necessary to transform the curriculum, the relationships on and with the land, and the understanding that Native peoples have already been contributing to the story of the place for thousands of years. (Warner, 2012, p. 119)

As Warner pointed out, relationships are fundamental to the success of JMLSTI, Native and non-Native students. The next scholar, Holt (2016), shares the belief that relationships are critical to implementation.

Holt (2016), the year after JML was mandated by the state. She studied five Indigenous education advocates who played key roles in the development of JMLSTI, providing valuable learnings from some of the original voices of JMLSTI. Holt also shared the history of colonized education systems and what a culturally responsive curriculum can be. Her focus on *ancestral knowledge* from the original voices and champions of JMLSTI exemplifies respectful inquiry (p. 13). Holt's research was conducted using a decolonized method and contributes to the reclamation of educational spaces in an Indigenous way by respectfully learning from those who

walked before her. Many of the early benefits and barriers to implementing JMLSTI were also presented in her research.

These studies flowed from the initial excitement of having a new way to share Indigenous history and knowledges, as Washington was one of the first states, after Montana, to include Native American history and culture in the curriculum. Although neither study offered a critical view of the actual implementation of the curriculum, most likely due to the early stages of the curriculum, they did offer suggestions and hope for JMLSTI as a transformational change in Indigenous education. Holt (2016) also identified obstacles to its success and implementation, specifically the need for more advocacy, training, support, and administration. Holt concluded that "there is still much work left to do" (p. 128).

Three research studies (Conrad, 2020; Hand, 2020; Holtyn, 2018) on [JML]STI are considered "the big three" because they focus on the logistics of using [JML]STI. The first two studies (Holt, 2016; Warner, 2012) laid out the historical context of where [JML]STIs originated and why they are important and discussed the hope and potential for their continued prevalence. Holtyn's (2018) dissertation used a 4D qualitative approach, including an appreciative inquiry centered on discovery, dream, design, and destiny (the 4 Ds). Holtyn (2018) interviewed teachers and educational leaders (2018, p. 45). This study is a natural step from Holt's (2016) work because Holtyn (2018) also used inquiry and interviewed community members who were among the original voices and advocates for the creation of [JML]STI. In essence, she learned from historical actors, as well as other teachers and educational leaders, about their use of [JML]STI. Holtyn requested that participants have extensive knowledge or experience with [JML]STI. She used three of the 4 Ds, which include dream, design, and destiny, to frame her analysis.

While Holtyn (2018) found many positives in the use of JMLSTI, she also made recommendations and conclusions that demonstrate the need for more support in implementing JMLSTI. Holtyn demonstrated the need for full commitment to JMLSTI and a desire for JMLSTI to be used more widely. She also found potential misrepresentations in other curricula. Holtyn concluded that JMLSTI is beneficial to all students and can address gaps in current U.S. History courses.

Holtyn also found a lack of funding for [JML]STI as noted in the participant quoting,

> When comparing this amount of funding to the commitment, for instance, of the state of Montana, where they dedicate $4.4 million to their Schools of Promise and curriculum you can see how funding devoted by Washington State ($300,000) is clearly not enough to support Since Time Immemorial implementation appropriately. (p. 92)

Funding was among the multiple recommendations and dreams that Holtyn (2018) had for [JML]STI.

In addition to funding, Holtyn (2018) identified the need for more accessible and collaborative online communication for teachers, the need to update [JML]STI-related materials online so that teachers can use them more easily, the need for integration of [JML]STI into all school subjects, strong encouragement of the use of [JML]STI, increased use, and the need for training. One of the biggest takeaways from Holtyn's research is that [JML]STI needs to continually move and change, claiming,

> Many seeds of change are in motion for [JML]STIC, yet as education evolves, so does [JML]STIC. There are some matters that need to be addressed to ensure that the successful implementation of this curriculum continues. This study proves that there is

certainly a need for further studies of the curriculum and its use in other schools and school districts throughout Washington State. (p. 94)

Holtyn recommends additional studies that build upon her research and connect to the work of other scholars. Shortly after Holtyn published her research on [JML]STI, Hand (2020) and Conrad (2020) published and added to the river of research on [JML]STI. Hand directly supported and built upon the important research that Holtyn did by agreeing with Holtyn on the need for continued research on [JML]STI and points scholars to look to Holtyn's research.

Hand's (2020) research addressed fundamental issues with Native erasure in education and critically examined what they called the affordances and constraints of JMLSTI. She considered what needs to be addressed in education and how *Since Time Immemorial* does this. Hand (2020) identified three main constraints to the use of JMLSTI: 1. Inaccurate information has been and is currently being taught about Indigenous people. This miseducation is problematic for many reasons: 2. invisibility of Indigenous people in both historical and contemporary contexts; and 3. lack of time (pp. 40-42). These constraints offer a glimpse into what needs to be addressed in the adoption and use of *Since Time Immemorial*.

Hand (2020) also identified four main affordances of *Since Time Immemorial*. The first is that JMLSTI centers Indigenous peoples and knowledge. Second, JMLSTI disrupts and challenges the hegemonic master narrative, changing the narrative of history. Third, JMLSTI increases the visibility of Native people by teaching in an anti-colonial way and making visible the impacts of settler colonialism. Lastly, JMLSTI is a quality curriculum. Specifically, lessons are engaging and align with grade-level standards. Hand concluded that *Since Time Immemorial* is a small step towards decolonization, and classrooms can be a site of resistance and rebuilding.

Conrad (2020) conducted a qualitative study of teachers implementing [JML]STI. Conrad analyzed teaching effectiveness using six successful teaching themes, presented as the rings of a cedar tree. Two questions guided this study: 1. What supports non-Native teachers' learning process to more consistently and meaningfully teach Indigenous perspectives, sovereignty, and history? and 2. What role, if any, do teachers' relationships with Native peoples, lands, and knowledges play in that learning process? (Conrad, 2020, p. 3). Conrad's research demonstrates that non-Native teachers can teach JMLSTI well; however, she identified two challenges for teachers – pressures associated with standardized testing and a lack of awareness of cultural responsiveness and sovereignty. Conrad (2020) also found that relationships with Native peoples, lands, and knowledges support non-Native teachers' ability to successfully teach JMLSTI. This is an essential component of meaningful and consistent implementation.

A powerful learning from Conrad's (2020) work is the use of a non-Western academic framework for viewing research through a curricular water view. This lens or viewpoint is based on the recognition that "water is a life form and a form of life" (Conrad, 2020, p. 99) and a form of collective radical relationality that is decolonizing. It brings with it the premise of reciprocity, responsibility, respect, and relationality (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Two moves are required to implement a curricular water view in education (Conrad, 2020, p. 108). The first is the ability to share curriculum responsibility and accountability with local Indigenous peoples and recognize the limitations of educators' understandings (Conrad, 2020). The second is the commitment to building ongoing reciprocal relationships with local Indigenous peoples, lands, and waters, and learning with (not about) Indigenous educators and community members to deepen knowledge of Indigenous ways (Conrad, 2020).

What can be learned from Conrad's research is not only the what, but the *how* of research practices that support JMLSTI in an Indigenous way through a curricular water view (2020). According to Conrad, "Tribal curriculum-and a curricular water view-thus replace curricular ownership or teacher leadership with *distributed curricular stewardship*" (p. 109). Curricular water view partners well with JMLSTI because it is land and place-based and built upon relationships, reciprocity, responsibility, and interconnectedness. Each researcher, over time, added to the river of knowledge regarding JMLSTI (Conrad, 2020; Hand, 2020; Holt, 2016; Holtyn, 2018; Warner, 2012). The power and flow of these early researchers proved that relationships are important, Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers can teach JMLSTI, and there is a need for more training and implementation of JMLSTI. The valuable research that flows next is from a mainly Indigenous team that collectively researched [JML]STI and provides strong guidance for what is needed (Arviso et al., 2021).

In 2021, Arviso, Guerrettaz, Phillips, & Wynne were all Indigenous authors except one, who together wrote research. This study aimed to learn if educational equity exists in Washington State for Native American students or Tribes. Arviso et al. (2021) conducted interviews with mostly Native participants who had various experiences with Native education. A key learning was that [JML]STI needs to be taught more evenly and widely throughout the state.

> Some participants also reported another type of concern: there is an uneven adoption of [JML]STI with one administrator participant reporting that only 50% of school districts currently implement the curricula. Thus, one area in need of improvement is simply increased teaching of [JML]STI across more districts. (Arviso et al., 2021, p. 28)

The authors also made recommendations to increase the use of [JML]STI in teacher recertification training, historical knowledge for teachers, and to achieve educational sovereignty. The team also recognized that everyone needs to work together. Finally, they concluded that there is a "dearth of data and publications on these topics" (Recommendations for the WEA and Washington Educators in General, para. 19), which points to a need for more research.

Conrad's research was published in 2022, 2023, and 2024 in three journals, including the 2022 edition of *Clearing*, a journal on environmental and sustainability education in the Pacific Northwest. This article provided a general summary of lessons and suggestions for supporting educators in teaching *Since Time Immemorial*, along with other resources. This knowledge sharing will likely reach more educators because it is easily accessible. Most recently, Conrad & Hardison-Stevens (2024) co-authored an article on the implications of Grandmother Cedar for teacher education, educational leadership, and curriculum implementation. Each of these publications offers evidence of water's connectedness and power to reach others.

The Power of Student Voice

The power of student voice, shifting practices, and motivation has always been strong. Hearing directly from students can be inspirational. One of the more promising shifts comes from Petrone (2020), who researched the integration of Native youth voices into teacher education programs by centering them. He found that this was "transformative" for the preservice teacher education.

Gaps in the Literature

There is a need for more research regarding the impact of elevating student voice for STI. Talbert (2020) focused on the impact of [JML]STI in civics education. Vandenberg (2025), a

history teacher from Seattle, found that her students wanted to learn about gaps in history books. The NEA actively promotes the use of multicultural and social justice books. In Washington State, North Thurston has implemented JMLSTI in its history classes by focusing on the Indigenous practice of community building within an existing course. Unfortunately, "... most history classes don't go in depth on Native history despite its importance to our country" (We 2.0, 2025). While this has significant potential to change practices with JMLSTI, the voices of most mainstream teachers are missing in the literature.

Conclusion

Teachers are in the best position to change what is taught in our classrooms. Prior researchers have focused on learning about teachers who were already familiar with JMLSTI and were currently teaching it (Conrad, 2020; Hand, 2020, Holtyn, 2018); however, the research demonstrates a focus on all teachers, including ones who are not teaching JMLSTI, occasionally teaching JMLSTI, or are not teaching JMLSTI from the ground up. Based on prior experience, teachers are requesting JMLSTI training, and even Land Acknowledgements, feeling awkward about appropriate language. As educators continue to teach JMLSTI lessons, there have been positive impacts from training at the respective schools by the people trained, whether the Office of Native Education (ONE) or leaders trained through one of the ONE trainings. The reciprocity grows across the state.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This research used a mixed method approach (Chilisa, 2020) to study the adoption and use of the *John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial* (*JMLSTI*) curriculum. JMLSTI is a living, evolving, and flexible curriculum (Brown, 2014) that partners well with a fluid mixed methods approach.

> The rationale for mixing focuses more on techniques and methods marginalizing other processes such as building relationships and connecting with participants and the environment in ways that show respect, are reciprocal and relevant to the needs of the Other, and are at the same time rigorous. (Chilisa, 2008, p. 167)

Mixed methods fit well with my Indigenous core values as exemplified in the 4 Rs: Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991) with the additional value of Relationships, and the curricular water view (Conrad, 2020). A mixed methods approach honors Indigenous ways of knowing and the belief that everything is connected, like water. Additionally, a mixed methods approach recognizes my positionality and is built upon the principles of two-eyed seeing (Chilisa, 2008, p. 159), the balancing of the two perspectives of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing with Western knowledges.

According to Smith (2021), "Indigenous methodologies are often a mix of existing methodological approaches and Indigenous practices" (p. 164). This research aimed to be adaptable, capable of blending and flowing where it naturally needs to go, and not constrained by a singular methodology. This allowed me to work in a self-determined manner, which is a crucial strategy for Indigenous research (Chilisa, 2020; Quinless, 2022; Smith, 2021). Additionally, the mixed methods approach enabled engagement to work *effectively* in and *for* the community.

According to Windchief & San Pedro (2019),

> Embedded within Indigenous knowledge, and subsequently Indigenous methodologies, is a practice of research that values the critical inner acuity of a researching self in relationship with community. It is this inter-relationship between self and community within ancient Indigenous societies that is the foundation for contemporary Indigenous cultures-Why then would this not be central in Indigenous methodologies and Indigenous research practices? (p. 34)

Once more, engaging in the community is connected to the Indigenous value of working in relationships and constitutes a viable methodology. Ultimately, to expand the ideas of the research and not to be limited, Chilisa (2020) shares,

> The rationale for mixing focuses more on techniques and methods, marginalizing other processes such as building relationships and connecting with participants and the environment in ways that show respect, are reciprocal and relevant to the needs of the Other, and are at the same time rigorous. (p. 167)

Research Design

A mixed-methods research design was used, including interviews and training with surveys, to develop a holistic understanding of teachers' needs while also engaging them in problem and solution thinking regarding the non-use of JMLSTI. The primary research question for this study was: What can we do to counter Indigenous erasure and increase the use of JMLSTI? I also asked, “What are the barriers to teaching JMLSTI for teachers?” And how can current educators be better supported in implementing JMLSTI more effectively in the classroom? Additionally, as JMLSTI is an evolving curriculum, I was interested in how we can best honor its development by removing barriers and making it more accessible for teachers to implement. My third essential question was: How do we begin to use JMLSTI from the ground

up with a more place-based approach to teaching students JMLSTI lessons that are from and with local tribes in respectful relationships?

Population and Sample

For the interviews, I selected teachers who I had worked with in previous years from four different schools and districts, including one private school. All of them taught on the homelands of Coast Salish territory. I had taught a JMLSTI lesson with 12 of the 16 teachers I interviewed. I included them in the sample because they were motivated to teach and learn about JMLSTI. I had not taught with the remaining four teachers who participated in the interviews. Two were new to the school and were on a grade level team with the other teachers and they voluntarily chose to join the interviews. One participant was interviewed because they were at the school when interviews were conducted. When they were informed about what I was doing, they said they would love to learn more about JMLSTI, so I invited them to be interviewed. The last participant was someone that has extensive experience working with JMLSTI. Some of the interviews were conducted individually while others were conducted in small groups. Participants were selected who had direct, relevant experiences with JMLSTI. Their use of JMLSTI varied from very familiar to the majority who were minimally familiar.

For the second part of the research, surveys and training, teachers that wanted to learn more about JMLSTI were asked to participate. They were encouraged to ask other teachers they knew who might be interested in learning more about the curriculum. Twenty-two teachers participated in training and completed the pre and post-surveys. This group included teachers who were not teaching JMLSTI as well as teachers who had experience teaching it. Training groups ranged from one to seven participants. Some of the training participants and interview

participants overlapped because interviewees were asked if they were interested in learning more about JMLSTI.

Locations of the Study

This study investigated strategies that educators in rural school districts who lack strong ties to a Native community or extensive use of JMLSTI can employ to engage and increase the respectful utilization of JMLSTI. This research was conducted in districts where I have worked, which are characterized by a low prevalence of JMLSTI use, as well as in a small private school in the same locality. Collaboration with local tribal representatives, the Equity Director, the District Superintendent, the Indian Education Family Committee, OSPI, and other relevant stakeholders, as necessary, was critical to this study.

The locations where research was conducted are within the traditional homelands of the Coast Salish territories, situated along the northwest coast of Washington State and surrounding areas. This area is where I grew up and am proudly blessed to call home, where there are numerous resilient, strong tree relatives, such as cedars, alders, firs, hemlocks, and cottonwoods, as well as extensive waterways. The region features many significant river systems that link to the coast, with tributaries and wetlands interspersed throughout the area. The waterways serve as vital connectors among communities. This research aimed to follow the flow of these waterways to establish meaningful connections with others.

Accordingly, our collective responsibility, as outlined by JMLSTI, is to initiate teaching from the ground up in partnership with local Tribes. According to Senate Bill 54333, school districts "… shall incorporate curricula about the history, culture, and government of the nearest federally recognized Indian tribe or tribes, so that students learn about the unique heritage and experience of their closest neighbors" (SB 5433, 2015, Sec. 2). This goal is to support ground up

curriculum; however, the directionality of curriculum sharing and access is from the top down or from the state down to local school districts in many rural areas. This system creates a barrier for teachers because if they want to seek more information, they may not have the connections (or waterway/streamline) to do so. For teachers to be connected, they would have to seek out a resource, person, or expert with whom they do not have a relationship. Furthermore, school districts "shall collaborate with any federally recognized Indian tribe within their district, and with neighboring Indian tribes, to incorporate expanded and improved curricular materials about Indian tribes, and to create programs of classroom and community cultural exchanges" (SB 5433, 2015, Sec. 2). These initiatives seek to effectively meet the educational requirements of students in learning JMLSTI, while respecting the contributions of tribal leaders and ancestors who preceded us to counter the Indigenous erasure that occurs in public educational institutions. The objective was to work with school districts and the local Tribes in good relations and to help connect the two entities.

Interviews and Surveys

Qualitative interviews were used to answer five primary questions. Two of these questions aimed to identify the challenges and barriers that exist in teaching the JMLSTI curriculum. One neutral question asked how long the teacher had been teaching, and two questions asked what could be done to support teaching [JML]STI. For 12 of the 16 participants with whom I had previously taught, an initial question was asked to gauge the effectiveness of JMISTI regarding a JMLSTI lesson I had taught the prior year. The reason this was done was two-fold. First, it is a practice of reciprocity and relationality that reminds teachers of our prior positive work. Second, it helped to gain insight into what the teachers thought was effective in a JMLSTI lesson before asking additional questions. Additionally, a pre-survey was administered

before training on JMLSTI, and a post-survey was administered after the training as a quasi-experimental quantitative approach to determine whether the training increased the use of JMLSTI.

Interview Questions

1. When we taught a lesson on JMLSTI before, did you find that effective and if so, what made that effective?
2. What is a barrier(s) to teaching JMLSTI from OSPI?
3. What makes it difficult to teach Native American lessons? /And if familiar with JMLSTI, do you find it hard to use the JMLSTI website? (Some teachers did not know of the website, so this question was not applicable.
4. How many years have you been teaching?
5. What are some of the things that you think would help teachers teach JMLSTI?
6. Do you think having a support person to help with questions and training would help teach JMLSTI?

Pre-Survey Questions

On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being no/none/not likely, and 5 being very knowledgeable/highly likely. Please rate your familiarity with JMLSTI

1 2 3 4 5

I know where to go to find lessons for JMLSTI

1 2 3 4 5

Do you know about the Tulalip Tribal Sovereignty Curriculum? Please circle Yes No

Do you currently teach a lesson(s) on Native American history or culture?

What lesson/curriculum do you use?

What would you like to know more about to support teaching a Native American lesson/unit?

Post Survey Questions

On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being no/none/not likely and 5 being very knowledgeable/highly likely.

I know where to go to find lessons for JMLSTI

1 2 3 4 5

What is the likelihood that you will teach a JMLSTI or Tulalip Sovereignty Curriculum lesson?

1 2 3 4 5

Did you find today's training useful? Yes No

Do you think more training on JMLSTI or the Tulalip Curriculum would be useful?

Yes No

Besides training, what would be helpful in teaching JMLSTI or the Tulalip Sovereignty Curriculum?

Data Collection and Analysis

The instruments used in the interviews included an audio recorder and a phone recorder. Each interview began with the participant receiving a copy of the consent form (Appendix A) and being asked whether they had any questions. I then asked for their verbal consent to participate and to audio record the interview. At the conclusion of the interview, I thanked each participant and offered them a chocolate bar as a token of appreciation. During the interviews, I recorded responses with an audio recorder and then transcribed them into a Word document. One

exception was the first interview, which I did not audio record because I transcribed the responses manually. With all interview recordings and responses, transcriptions were emailed to the participants to verify their responses, and they were asked to correct any statements that were incorrect or inaccurate. For the interview analysis, the researcher identified significant statements and key phrases in the transcripts as part of an interpretive analysis. Data from the interviews is incorporated as direct quotes within the findings and conclusions.

For the training group, the same consent process was followed before they were asked to complete the pre-survey. Then they were provided with information on relevant resources for teaching JMLSTI, answered questions about implementing JMLSTI, and shared ideas on how to effectively honor JMLSTI. This was done by using website links and a PowerPoint presentation I created. The resources provided focused on curriculum sources from the ground up and were drawn from local land, as this aligned with the purpose of the study. Other applicable resources were provided about cultural protocols, successful teaching strategies, and current issues that aid in teaching Native American history and culture (e.g., state and national websites). At the conclusion of the training, participants were asked to complete the post-survey. Finally, participants were thanked and offered a chocolate bar.

After collecting the pre- and post-surveys, responses were entered into an Excel spreadsheet to calculate the mean of responses on a 1-5 scale. Then the yes/no responses were tallied, and the open-ended questions were coded to identify themes. In the pre-survey, the curricula used were categorized by source. Data from the surveys are presented in thematic charts, and a comparative statistical analysis of the pre- and post-survey results is presented in a graphical question comparison.

Research Ethics and Human Subjects Protection

One of the earliest realities learned about being a teacher was that teaching is a political act (Freire, 1993). In today's world, teachers are viewed in a critical way by parents, the public, and their school districts. Therefore, to protect participants' voice, statements, and positions, participant contributions were anonymized. Prior to conducting this research and submitting the IRB proposal, I completed the University of Washington's IRB 101 tutorial (Appendix B) on May 19, 2025. The research proposal was approved by the University of Washington's IRB as exempt research.

To ensure that research participants were fully aware of the potential risks and benefits of the study, a consent form (Appendix A) was shared with all participants, and they were asked for verbal consent to participate. The consent form provided information about the study, who they could contact regarding their participation, and a statement informing participants that participation was voluntary and anonymous, and that they would be offered chocolate as a token of appreciation for participating. The original plan was to provide training to at least two schools, so I included a letter for the principals in my proposal. However, due to the timing of the research proposal's approval, I was unable to conduct research with the entire group of teachers. In response, the training was shifted to be offered to individuals or small groups of teachers during their personal time.

To minimize potential bias, after asking the questions, recorded responses in the participants' own words were used as participants completed the surveys without input or influence, unless there was a clarifying question, which was rare, and often only was needed to clarify a term, such as JMLSTI. Additionally, after the interview was recorded, each participant

was emailed the transcript to confirm that the recorded responses were accurate and reflected what they intended to convey.

Limitations

The limitations of this study include a small sample size for the training groups and the inability to verify whether the teachers did, in fact, increase their use of JMLSTI after the training and the likelihood that they would increase their use of the curriculum. Ideally, training should be conducted with all teachers at a school, then checked months later to determine whether the JMLSTI lesson has been successfully implemented. Conducting training with an entire school means that administrators or properly trained educators train all teachers, not solely those who are motivated to learn. This would allow for a broader and more inclusive group study. Another limitation is that the interviews were short in length due to time constraints during the school year. The shorter interviews did not hinder the information gained from the teachers. The feedback in the responses was succinct and direct, which is valuable. Additionally, some teachers extended the interview by adding comments after the questions were completed. For instance, one teacher shared a slide deck that they used for training at their school. The questions were not designed to be in-depth; however, because of an existing, trusting relationship with teachers, many of them “cut to the point” and shared honest, real answers with me.

Chapter 4: Findings and Results

As stated in Chapter 1, the study reported here examined how to respectfully increase the use of the JMLSTI curriculum in classrooms. Specifically, I was interested in learning what barriers teachers face in teaching this curriculum and how to support them in implementing it from the ground up. This chapter is organized around the two parts of the study: quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were gathered by administering a pre-survey, training, and a post-survey after training, with each question assessed. The qualitative data were gathered through interviews with teachers responsible for teaching JMLSTI, and they show the themes among the participants.

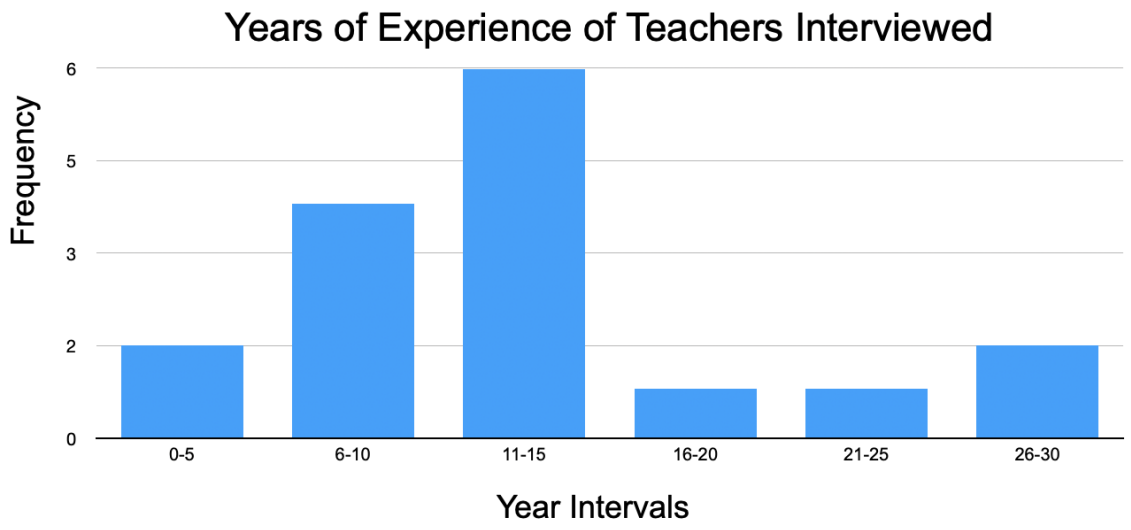
Demographics of Participants

The participants in this study are all teachers who work in schools in the Coast Salish Territory. All participants were women, which was not intentional. However, there is a natural tendency for a higher percentage of women to be elementary teachers, and all participants were teaching in elementary classrooms at the time of the surveys and training. Teachers represented every grade level from kindergarten to fifth grade, including a Multilingual Learner teacher and a Librarian, from the combined pre-survey/training/post-survey and interview groups. The average (mean) years of experience for the interview group of 16 teachers was 13.125 years, with a standard deviation of 6.927 years (Figure 8). The standard deviation and histogram indicate that the distribution was widely dispersed and there was a variety of years of experience. This distribution of years of experience is of particular importance, given that teachers were required to complete preservice teacher training in 2015, which would have included at least six of the teachers surveyed. Additionally, years of experience are of interest because JMLSTI has been mandated for over 10 years, and most teachers have taught for more than that period. Although it

was not asked, none of the participants surveyed reported having Native American ancestry or heritage. One did state that they had experience teaching at a residential school in a different state.

Figure 8

Interview Question 3



Note. Histogram Participant Years of Experience (Woolley, 2026).

Pre and Post Survey Questions

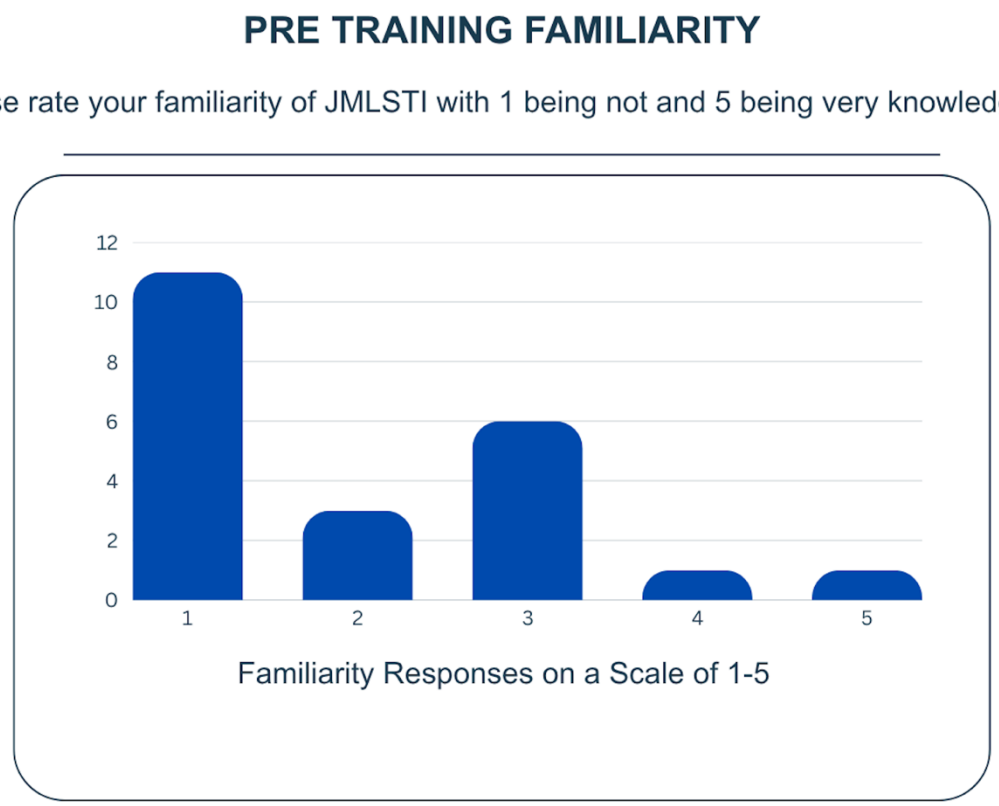
The pre and post survey and training were completed by 22 participants. Of those, 22 participants, 16 also participated in the interviews. All the questions on the pre and post surveys were complete, except for one question that was not answered one pre survey and one post survey. This means on those two questions there were 21 responses instead of 22. The one question unanswered on one pre survey was the last question, "What would you like to know more about to support teaching a Native American lesson/unit?" The post survey question that was not answered was, "Besides training, what would be helpful in teaching JMLSTI or Local

Tribal Sovereignty Curriculum?" For anonymity, I replaced "local" with the real local tribal name here. It is unknown why these two questions were left blank; however, it is possible that the participants did not know what to suggest that would support them teaching or want to know more about.

The first questions on the pre-survey were asked to understand how familiar teachers were with the JMLSTI curriculum, knowledge of where to find lessons, and if they were familiar with the local tribal sovereignty curriculum. The first question asked teachers to rate their familiarity with JMLSTI (Figure 9). The data show that, on a scale of 1-5, teachers were not very familiar with the curriculum, with most participants rating their familiarity as 1. Only two participants rated their familiarity as 4 or 5 (very knowledgeable). Another way to think about this response is that 20/22 participants rated their familiarity as less than 3 (moderate), with a majority (14 participants) rating themselves at a 1 or 2 on the familiarity scale.

Figure 9

Question 1 Pre Survey



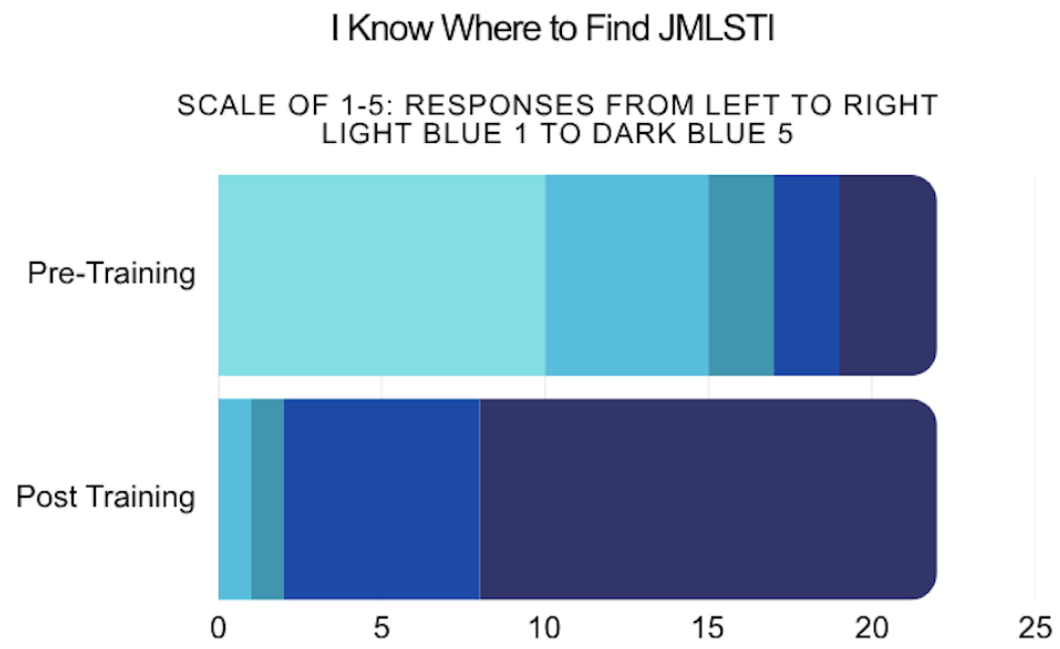
Note. Participant Familiarity of JMLSTI (Woolley, 2026).

The second question on the pre survey was also on the post survey and it asked participants to rate their knowledge of where to go to find lessons for JMLSTI (Figure 10) on a scale of 1 to 5. Since these two questions were the same, they are displayed in a stacked color scale graph to compare the change in responses from the pre-training to the post training. This extract is pivotal to look at because it indicates pre-training there is a large number of participants that rated their knowledge in the lightest colors on the left that are rated 1 and 2, well over half of participants. In the second half of the graph (Figure 10), indicating post training knowledge, zero participants rated themselves as a 1. The darker blue colors (4 and 5) far

surpassed the post training scale and represent a majority of participant responses (20/22). This comparative data reveals the effectiveness of the training on teachers' knowledge of where to find JMLSTI.

Figure 10

Question 2 Pre Survey and Question 1 Post Survey

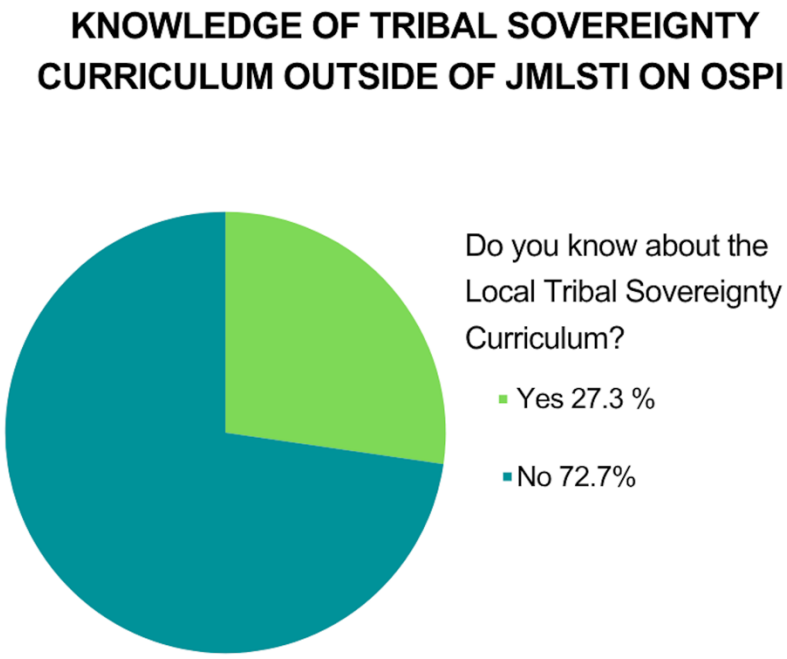


Note. Knowledge of JMLSTI (Woolley, 2026).

The next pre-survey question 3 asked about the teachers' knowledge of the local tribal sovereignty curriculum (Figure 11). This was a simple yes-or-no response. The pie chart below shows that only 27.3% of teachers know about their local tribal sovereignty curriculum, and 72.7% responded no, they do not know about it.

Figure 11

Question 3 Pre-Survey

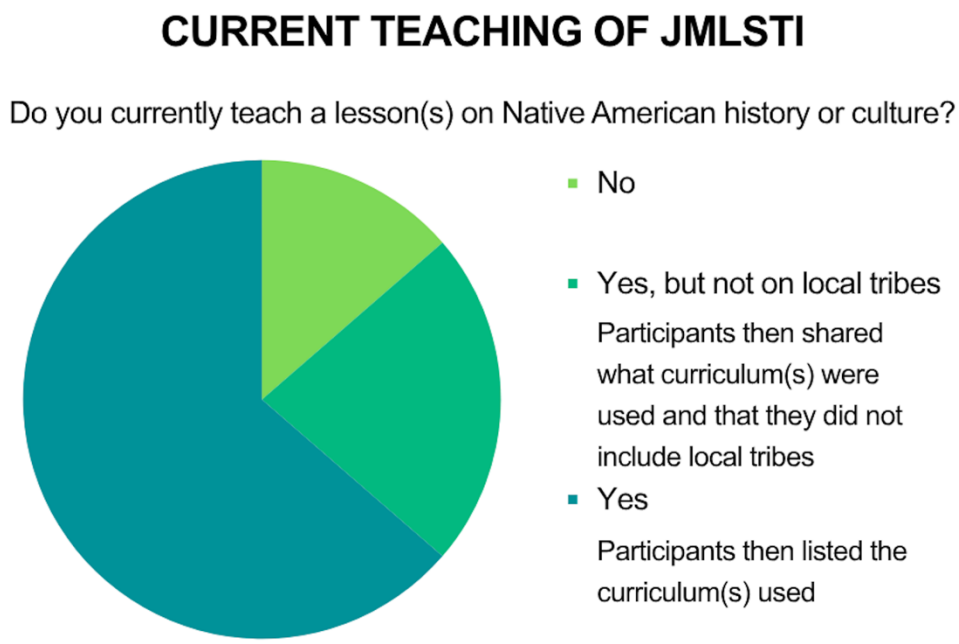


Note. Sovereignty Curriculum Knowledge (Woolley, 2026).

Question 4 on the pre-survey asked about the current teaching of a lesson on Native American history or culture (Figure 12). It was a yes-or-no question. There were 3 *No* responses made up 13.6% of participants. Of the remaining *yes* responses, five of them noted in the follow-up question that they did teach a lesson(s), but the lesson was not on a local tribe. This voluntary distinction that some participants provided is interesting.

Figure 12

Question 4 Pre Survey

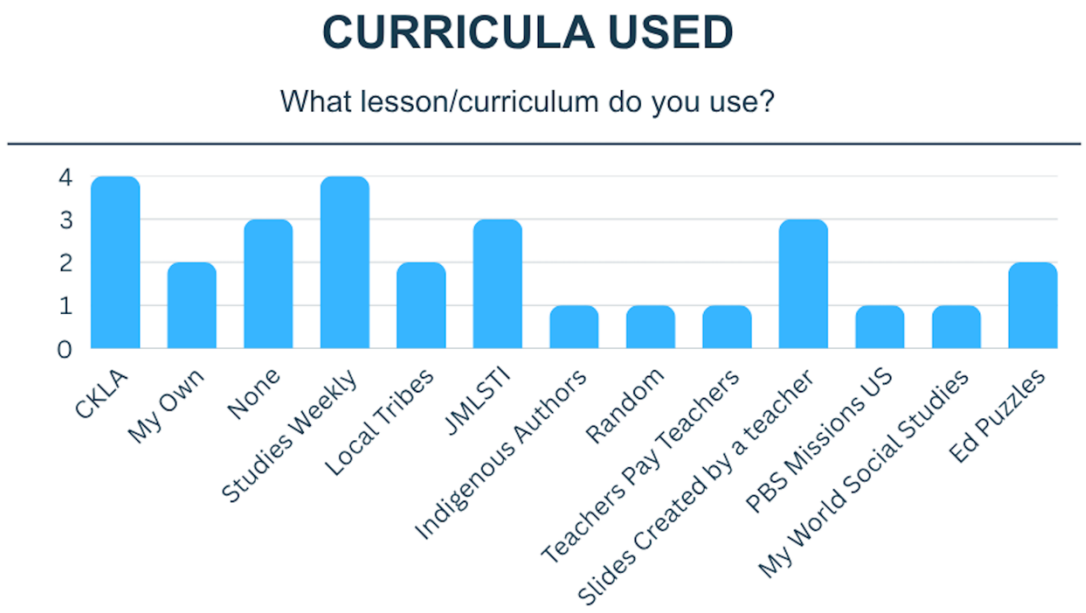


Note. Participant Current Teaching (Woolley, 2026).

The follow-up question to question 4 on the pre-survey asked which curriculum teachers used to teach Native American history and culture (Figure 13). Responses varied significantly. Teachers could write multiple responses, so the numbers in the bar graph represent mentions of different curricula, meaning one teacher could say they used more than one curriculum. The variety of responses ranged from 13 different curricula. The two highest responses, each with 4, were CKLA and Studies Weekly, which are district-adopted curricula. It is important to note that the two highest responses are neither JMLSTI nor the local curriculum. The next three highest responses, each mentioned by three participants, were None, Slides Created by a Teacher, and JMLSTI. There were mentions of Local Tribes, My Own, and Ed Puzzles twice. Only two responses said they used curriculum from local tribes, and it is insightful that two also said they use their own curriculum. The other responses varied widely.

Figure 13

Pre Survey Question 5

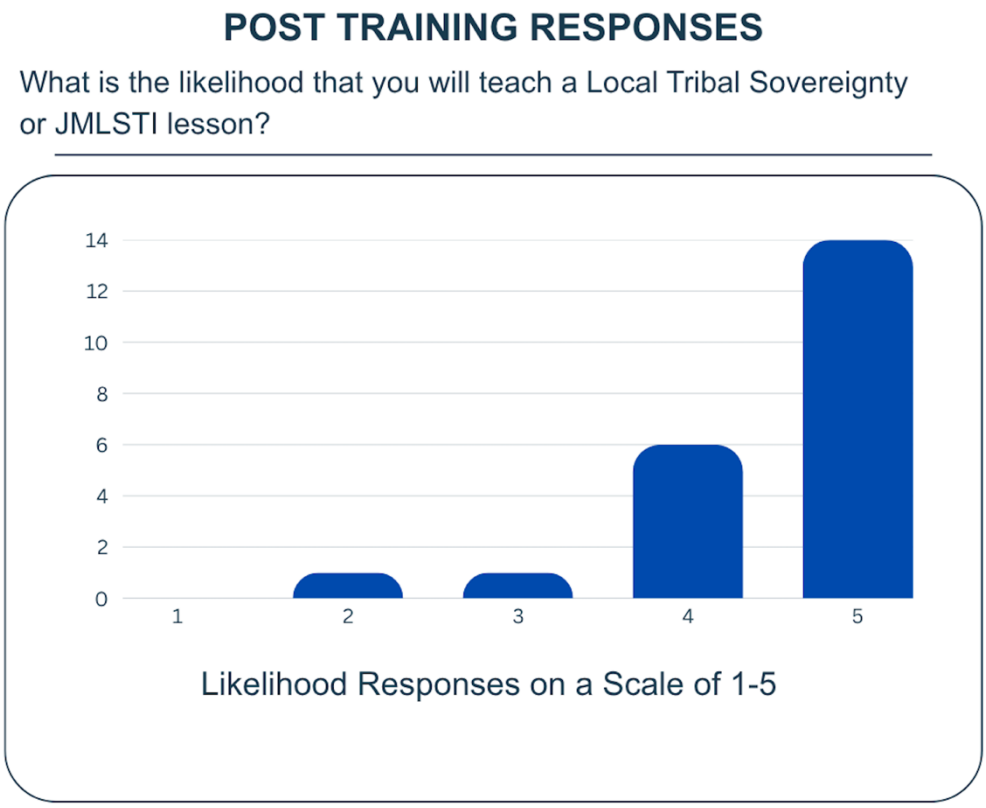


Note. Curriculum Used by Teachers (Woolley, 2026).

Post-survey question number two addressed the likelihood that a teacher would teach a lesson on JMLSTI after completing the training (Figure 14). This question can be compared to the pre-survey familiarity question (Figure 16), which shows teachers are not very familiar with it. After training, 20/22 teachers said they were very likely to teach a lesson on JMLSTI, which is the aim of this research study - to increase the use of JMLSTI. It is particularly interesting that there is strong declared intention to teach a lesson using JMLSTI. The two graphs (Figure 9 and Figure 14) are near mirror opposites in terms of the data.

Figure 14

Question 2 Post Training



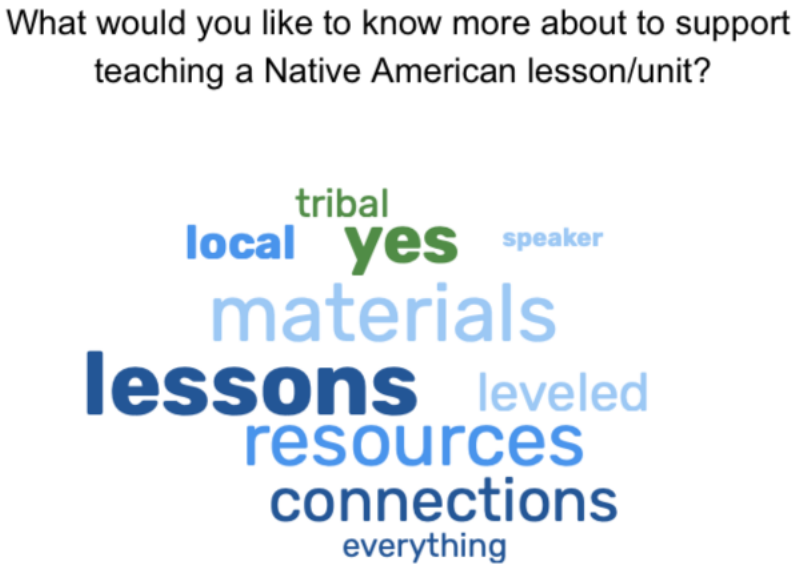
Note. Likelihood of Teaching JMLSTI (Woolley, 2026).

The last question on the pre-survey addressed what teachers would like to know more about to support their teaching of JMLSTI (Figure 15). This is represented in a word cloud, where responses mentioned more frequently are larger. The terms “lessons, resources, materials, connections, and yes” were the most common responses. It is interesting that some teachers responded with “yes,” because that is not an answer in the format of the question. I think participants may have misread the first word and only considered the second word, so the question was, “Would you like to know more…?” and then responded with a yes response. Sometimes people do respond with a yes in the positive sense intended by the question. Either way, some of the "yes" responses included exclamation marks, which may indicate that

participants felt strongly about this. The other most recorded words were “tribal, speaker, local, leveled, and everything” (Figure 15).

Figure 15

Pre Survey Question 6

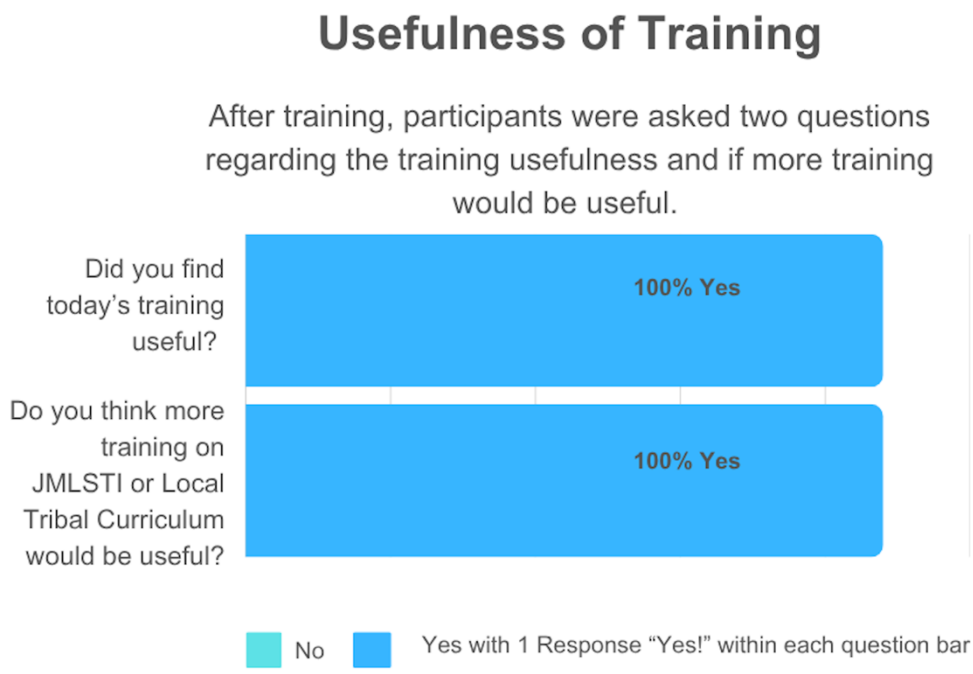


Note. Word Cloud Support Request (Woolley, 2026).

The next two questions (questions 3 and 4) on the post-survey are shown in the same display because they were both yes/no questions (Figure 16). Both questions were 100% yes responses. Each of them also had yes responses in which participants added extra exclamation points before circling an answer choice. Question three stated, “Did you find today’s training useful? Question four was, “Do you think more training on JMLSTI or local curriculum would be useful?” The fact that both were answered with such strong responses is significant.

Figure 16

Post Survey Questions 3 and 4

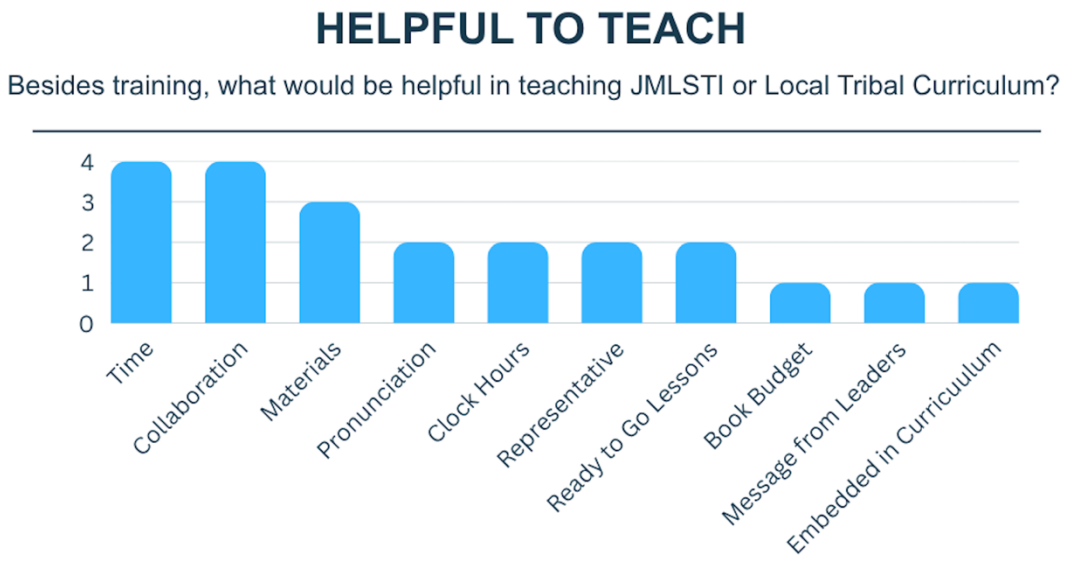


Note. Training Questions Bar Graph (Woolley, 2026).

Question five on the post survey asked, "Besides training, what would be helpful in teaching JMLSTI or Local Sovereignty Curriculum?" (Figure 17). All of the responses are important to consider. The top two responses were time and collaboration. The next highest request was materials with three responses. "Pronunciation, Ready to Go lessons, Clock hours, and Representative" were the next highest responses (Figure 17). It is interesting that "Pronunciation, Ready to Go Lessons, and Materials" were each mentioned because those all have to do with resources for teachers. When those are combined, that would be significant because they would make up the largest percentage of responses if they were grouped as resources.

Figure 17

Post Survey Question 5



SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

Note. Helpful to Teach (Woolley, 2026).

The quantitative data insights are complimented by the qualitative interview responses. The interview questions were:

Interview Questions

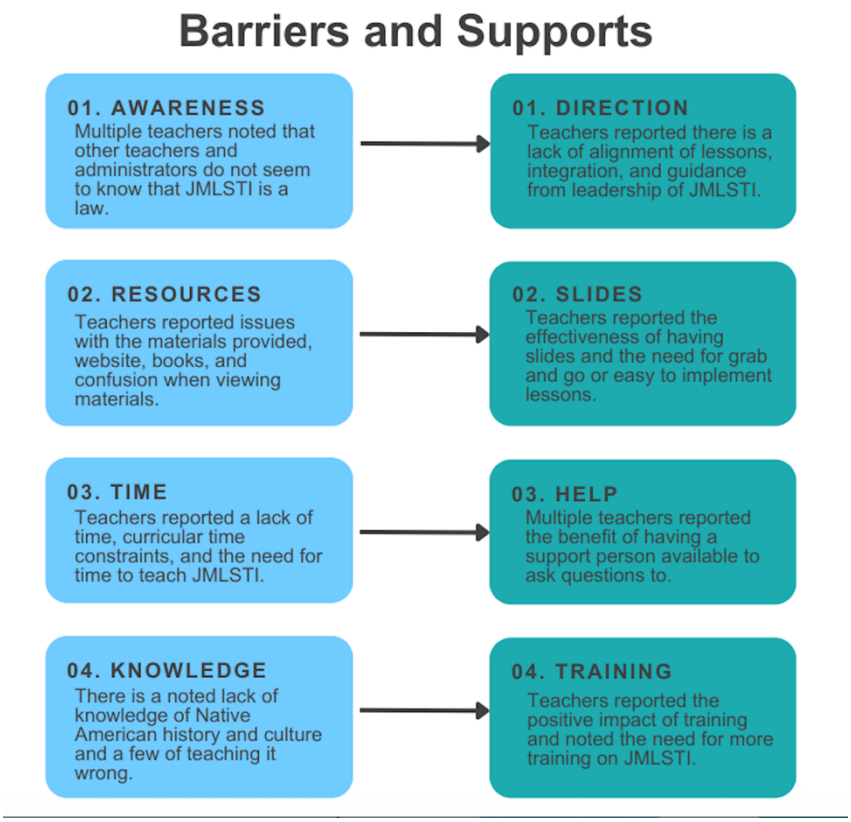
1. When we taught a lesson on JMLSTI before, did you find that effective and if so, what made that effective?
2. What is a barrier(s) to teaching JMLSTI from OSPI?
3. What makes it difficult to teach Native American lessons? /And if familiar with JMLSTI, do you find it hard to use the JMLSTI website? (some teachers did not know of the website, so this question was not applicable).

4. How many years have you been teaching?
5. What are some of the things that you think would help teachers teach JMLSTI?
6. Do you think having a support person to help with questions and training would help teach JMLSTI?

The responses to the interview questions were analyzed by identifying themes through repeated occurrences. To provide anonymized data, Coast Salish River names are given to the interview group(s). The following Coast Salish River names are dxʷdəwʔabš (Duwamish), ’el’iʔw’ (Elwha), sq̓ʷali’abš (Nisqually), sqʷuqʷbəʔ (Snoqualmie), sdohóbš (Snohomish), spuyaləpabš (Puyallup), sdudaqałbš (Stillaguamish), and c̓x̣íl̓əš (Chehalis). After the interviews were concluded and transcribed, member checking was completed to verify participants’ responses. This was done via email. An agreement was obtained by 100% of the participants, with only one participant who wanted to modify their responses. Although they edited the grammar in their responses, they did not modify the content. The qualitative thematic analysis is shown in Figure 18. Following Figure 18, a more in-depth description and analysis is presented by displaying each theme, along with interview quotes that represent the concurrent theme.

Figure 18

Qualitative Interview Themes



Note. Barriers and Supports (Woolley, 2026).

Awareness

The first barrier, and the most commonly mentioned (by 7 participants) in the interviews, was the lack of awareness that JMLSTI is a law. “I think a lot of teachers are not actually aware of the state requirements that we do teach the curriculum and teacher knowledge, because we didn’t grow up in a time when we were taught any of this information. I have had to find time to educate myself before I can educate the students” (c̓x̣íl̓əš Chehalis, personal communication). In this, the c̓x̣íl̓əš (Chehalis) states that teachers do not know it is a state requirement and points to a lack of teacher knowledge. An additional teacher said, “Until (teacher) came here, I didn’t even know it was a requirement” (dxʷdəwʔabš Duwamish, personal communication). Not only are

teachers unaware, but leaders are too. “I don’t even know if principals are aware that it is a law” (sqʷuqʷbəʔ Skokomish, personal communication). Another participant made a similar comment and shared that they were the one who informed the leaders that it was a law. “Cause I think even administrators also don’t know it’s a law. I’ve said that to a few, and they are like, ‘huh, what are you talking about’…yeah, yep, like it’s that law!” (dxʷdəwʔabš Duwamish, personal communication). This is evidence that leadership is not aware of the state requirement to teach JMLSTI also.

Furthermore, there is a lack of awareness of JMLSTI. “I have encountered quite a few 4th-grade teachers over the years that don’t even know what Since Time Immemorial is, which is really distressing” (c̓x̣íl̓əš Chehalis, personal communication). Not only does this participant explain that teachers do not know teaching JMLSTI is a law, but they also are sharing that many teachers do not know what JMLSTI is. “I think one I that it’s just not super well known. When I share it with other teachers, they’re always surprised that it is a law. It’s always surprising that it is a law that we do need to teach the curriculum and so that’s something that I’m familiar with because I went to a training online led by someone and they did a great job… there’s just a lot of curriculum to teach and unless there’s someone district wide who’s saying here’s the time, here are the resources to do it, it’s really on the individual teacher because there’s no checks and balances for someone to teach it (sqʷuqʷbəʔ Snohomish, personal communication). This participant not only noted that it is not a law but also pointed to the lack of direction that teachers are receiving and the support needed for JMLSTI to be implemented.

Direction

Beyond leadership direction, teachers need to know the specific direction of the actual curriculum and what they should be teaching. “The grade chunking together of K-2, etc. makes it hard to know who should teach what” (sḳʷali’abš Nisqually). The lessons on JMLSTI are grouped in multiple grades, such as K-2 and 3-5. Another sḳʷali’abš (Nisqually) participant expanded on this to say, “Yeah, it would be so much better if the lessons were already designated as K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 because we already have 4th grade teachers that are very protective of teaching Washington State History” (sḳʷali’abš Nisqually). spuyaləpabš (Puyallup) expanded what sḳʷali’abš (Nisqually) said and added that having conversations would be important. “… intentional conversations with grade bands of you know, we’re doing this, so that you can jump in here, so you can jump in here, kind of that vertical alignment. That we’ve had conversations about with literacy, we’re just now starting to have them with math, but we haven’t had them at all with any of the other subject areas that we’re supposed to teach” (spuyaləpabš Puyallup). The lack of direction leads to confusion.

> I don’t know if any of it’s getting taught at any of the other grade levels, so do I cover everything? And I just throw everything out there? Do I skip around? Do I, you know there’s been no expectation at a larger level of, ‘this is what you need to do for each grade level. This is what you need to to throughout the course of the year.’ It’s just thrown out there. (spuyaləpabš Puyallup)

spuyaləpabš (Puyallup) noted that they have many questions about what to do because they do not know what other teachers have taught or not taught. They summarized and added issues with unknown accuracy and not being sure if certain curricular items were place based or not. “I think one of the huge barriers is not having any sort of a guide to follow that you know is accurate.

> We have a very rough outline of standards that we have to teach and there's things online that you can find; not having any sort of a guide where these are the places you would best find things, these are like clear-cut lessons that you could teach, or more activities to keep the kids engaged that you know are going to represent in the best way… Versus things that we have at the district that I don't know if its's outdated, I don't know if it's best for our location, you know I don't have that knowledge, and so I think rather than poking around in a million different places and pulling strings from different websites, not having any sort of guide to go off of" (spuyaləpabš Puyallup).

spuyaləpabš (Puyallup) mentioned the problem with not having the guide and also concerns about the lack of confidence in the materials. Material issues can be a subset of the resources for JMLSTI.

Resources

The second theme that came out with significant mentions from participants was the barrier of resources for JMLSTI.

> Okay, so the first barrier, and I haven't been on the website recently, so I will say that, but the first barrier that I discovered when I was doing the work a couple of years ago is that the website looks like something from the wayback machine. And in fact, some of the resources are only available on the wayback machine. So, when I was trying to put together modules for our school, I found it very difficult to locate the listed resources. There was… There weren't great examples of what it should look like and so I took the structure of the lesson plans and tried to adapt it to modern teaching. And at that point, I think the website was like 15 years old and so they were only able to locate, for example for Pathway 3, one copy of each of the books that we needed. We had one in the library;

> miraculously it was one I was able to buy second-hand, but they're currently not in print. I even called the publishers, and they were unable to supply me with a copy of the book!" (sdohóbš Snohomish, personal communication).

Snohomish mentions multiple issues with the resources, including having to spend a lot of time on the website, broken links, and unavailable books.

Sq̓ʷaliʾabš (Nisqually) shared an issue with the books referenced for use in the lessons. "The books need context from OSPI". There are issues accessing the books and seeing their context in relation to the lessons. sdohóbš (Snohomish) also pointed out, similar to other participants, that the website is daunting. "When you go on the website, it looks so daunting". What is interesting is that two participants used the term "daunting" and said it was not easy to navigate. "It's not in a format that's like ready to teach, you really have to go into the website and find it first and then digging through just pages of just text in order to be able to get anything out of it" (dxʷdəwʔabš Duwamish). Both dxʷdəwʔabš (Duwamish) and sqʷuqʷbəʔ (Skokomish) mentioned having grab and go lessons as helpful. "I think having more grab and go" (sqʷuqʷbəʔ Skokomish, personal communication). Being able to navigate the JMLSTI resources and use grab-and-go lessons would be helpful in implementing it. There are other elements to the actual curriculum formatting that would support teachers' use of JMLSTI.

Slides

To carry the theme even further, and because it was mentioned six times among the participants, it is important to note that having slides as a support could be helpful. "I think having provided slides so it would be like ready to go with approved, like these are videos from our actual tribes, so you don't have to just Google random and hope it's applicable" (dxʷdəwʔabš Duwamish). One participant shared the importance of slides and that they created slides to share

with others. “I’ve made slides that help supplement, which makes it very easy for me to share them with other people too” (sqʷuqʷbəʔ Skokomish). Slides make it easy for many people to share and use them. “I think if we didn’t have those slides, we really probably would just be like ‘oh, put that on the back burner until we…” (dxʷdəwʔabš, Duwamish). Without the slides, JMLSTI may not be taught, may be put off, or may be taught less. Slides are one of the supports that would help JMLSTI be taught.

Time

Time was among the most mentioned themes represented as a barrier for teaching JMLSTI. It was mentioned six times by participants. “And so something that has inhibited us really a lot is time. I mean, I would love to teach more” (’el’iʔw’ Elwha). ’El’iʔw’ (Elwha) and sq̓ʷali’abš (Nisqually) had mentioned how difficult the time constraint was. “The time constraints are huge. We struggle with how to integrate the lessons into our other content areas” (sq̓ʷali’abš Nisqually). In teaching time is often mentioned as a challenge for teachers; however, when it comes to JMLSTI, help is also a support that should be highlighted as a theme.

Help

Multiple (four) teachers mentioned how beneficial having a support person would be to implementing JMLSTI. “I think that it would be lovely if there was like a representative to come and model some of the lessons” (sqʷuqʷbəʔ Skokomish). sqʷuqʷbəʔ (Skokomish) mentioned a person to model the lessons, and Stillaguamish also said having someone present it would be helpful. “Access to knowledgeable staff members that can present it” (sdudaqałbš Stillaguamish). Like sdudaqałbš (Stillaguamish) and sqʷuqʷbəʔ (Skokomish), spuyaləpabš (Puyallup) indicated that a support person would be helpful. “I think so for sure, especially with something new. Right? Anytime we’re getting new curriculum or new resources, having

someone to reach out to once you get into it, start digging, and have questions, I think, is huge. Again, just like with any new curriculum, you need to have someone kind of facilitating it and available for those kinds of questions and things that pop up" (spuyaləpabš Puyallup). spuyaləpabš Puyallup revealed the need for a support person to ask questions as they arise. Whenever a curriculum is new to people, having support people as a resource is critical to implementation.

Knowledge

In Chapter 1, the "cycle of unknowing" was mentioned as a barrier to teaching JMLSTI, and again it is significant because it was also mentioned in the interviews (Woolley, 2024a). "…Teacher knowledge (is a barrier) because we didn't grow up in a time when we were taught any of this information. I have had to find time to educate myself before I can educate the students. I didn't learn anything really about Native Americans growing up AT ALL" (Chehalis c̓x̓íl̓əš). If teachers do not have the knowledge because they were not taught Native American history and culture, then they may not be prepared to teach it to students.

Nisqually pointed to a broader level of unknowing among the general public and knowledge of Native American historical issues. "Yes, people that are not in education don't know why Columbus Day is problematic" (sq̓ʷali'abš Nisqually). The general community does not know enough about JMLSTI and even teachers who have had some education on it also do not feel qualified yet to teach it. "Yeah, staff members not being knowledgeable about it. And then with me, I've only done one unit at SPU when I was getting my teaching certificate" (sdudaqałbš Stillaguamish). sdudaqałbš Stillaguamish recognized that the class in their college teacher prep classes was not sufficient to be prepared to teach JMLSTI. Again, c̓x̓íl̓əš (Chehalis) highlighted the difficulty in teaching something when they do not have the knowledge to do so.

“I want to support and pre-teach the upcoming units that the 3rd grade team is teaching on Native Americans. But how do I when I don’t know the history myself?” (c̓x̣íl̓əš Chehalis). The lack of knowledge and experience is connected to feelings of being intimidated and fearful. “I think anything new is always hard and a little intimidating and overwhelming, but particularly something that teachers do not have a lot of knowledge or experience can be extra intimidating” (c̓x̣íl̓əš Chehalis). This intimidation builds into a real fear of teaching it wrong.

Teaching It Wrong

The idea of teaching it wrong was mentioned so often in the data that it warranted its own subset under the theme of knowledge. As el’iʔw’ (Elwha) shared,

> I don’t have that background and my biggest fear is spreading misinformation. My biggest fear is to give them misinformation that in their little brains they soak u so fast that they now have that misinformation. It wouldn’t be intentional...

There was recognition that the mistake would not be intentional, and it appeared that Elwha was worried about this possibility. Similarly, dxʷdəwʔabš (Duwamish) mentioned a lack of knowledge and worry about making mistakes.

> And as someone that has taught Native American children, I still feel I don’t know enough. And I’m like I’m going to make a mistake or I’m going to present something incorrectly. And I have that battle with myself that some is better than none and so you know why I mean… I could see how it would be overwhelming to people who have zero support and background in it. (dxʷdəwʔabš Duwamish).

What is important to note is that this participant from dxʷdəwʔabš (Duwamish) taught at a residential school for Native American students and still did not feel they had the knowledge base to teach JMLSTI here in Washington State (the residential school was in a different state).

Dxʷdəwʔabš (Duwamish) also noted an understanding that others may not teach the curriculum when they have "zero support and background in it".

Another fear of teaching the curriculum incorrectly concerned being offensive or receiving negative feedback from parents about the lessons. As sdudaqałbš (Stillaguamish) shared, "Trying not to be offensive about it when you are teaching it. Yeah, and trying not to get feedback from parents. I am always afraid of parents coming back and saying my child is not old enough to hear about that". The fear and worry expressed are important in this context because they reveal that teachers may teach the curriculum less often or less thoroughly due to these fears. As sqʷuqʷbəʔ (Skokomish) shared,

> I think the apprehension of wanting to make sure I'm doing it right. I want to make sure that I'm being- I don't have as much background and although the trainings are really helpful, I want to make sure I'm doing it right and so I feel like teachers who are wanting to teach this but may be unsure-they don't want to cause more harm than good.

This is another example of how participants worried about teaching the curriculum wrong and causing harm or misinformation. This is an important barrier to teaching JMLSTI.

Training

One of the last themes that came up was the request for and importance of training. spuyaləpabš (Puyallup) shared,

> I think the biggest thing is teacher training. Cause we don't get any of it. We've never had any teacher training on it. At least in my nine years since I've been here. And it's kind of you figure it out ion your own type of thing, or you need to remember that this was supposed to be done, but there's no like pacing guide on it where it's like, hey you need to be doing this, remember, it's not like pushed. And there's never been any kind of

> teaching training on it as far as this is the best practice for it… Yeah, it would be huge having intentional training on it, intentional conversations…

sdohóbš (Snohomish) also mentioned the need for training. in JMLSTI, along with culturally responsive practices that support JMLSTI. sdohóbš (Snohomish)shared,

> But I had been asked to present to the staff about it and as part of doing the presentation for culturally conscience (actually-competent) DEI, I was trying to teach my staff the basic tenets of how to be culturally sensitive, too. And so, we talked about the importance of reducing erasure, the importance of talking about native people as present in our time as well as in historical times.

It is helpful to know that there is a deeper level of training that is needed for teachers to be equipped to teach JMLSTI.

Flowing Together

In the surveys and interviews common themes regarding what would help teachers teach JMLSTI were time, collaboration, and materials/resources (Figure 17 and Figure 18). The other major finding was the positive impact of training as observed in the data from the pre survey and the post survey after training (Figure 9 and Figure 14). The emphasis on training was also present in the themes of the interviews. Likewise, the data in Figure 16 also revealed the usefulness of training, with 100% positive responses to two questions regarding the need and helpfulness of training. Concurrently, in Figure 10 the positive impact of training could be seen by the strong increase in the responses to the rating on knowing where to find lessons for JMLSTI after the training compared to before the training. Another commonality among the interviews and surveys was in regard to resources. In the interviews, resources were viewed as a barrier (e.g., difficulties in using resources) (Figure 18).

In the surveys, when asked, “What would you like to know more about to support teaching a JMLSTI lesson?”, participants listed materials, resources, and lessons as the most frequent responses (Figure 15). The data showed that there are still teachers not teaching JMLSTI and the teachers that do teach the curriculum do not teach local place-based lessons (Figure 12). Data also show a lack of teacher knowledge of the curriculum, with only 27.3% of teachers knowledgeable of the local tribal sovereignty curriculum (Figure 11). Teacher experience did not seem to show a major impact on their knowledge (Figure 8). Data also showed that teachers use a wide variety of curriculum to teach JMLSTI (Figure 13). This is interesting as one of the themes that emerged in the interviews was that teachers need more direction on what to teach.

In Chapter 5, conclusions and next steps will be discussed.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Next Steps

Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the study on JMLSTI, and important conclusions drawn from the quantitative and qualitative data gathered, analyzed, and presented throughout the study. This chapter connects the findings to the literature, discusses unanticipated findings, implications for the profession, and conclusions. This chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and the researcher's remarks.

Summary

Settler colonialism has contributed to Indigenous erasure, which manifests through curricular silences (Foxworth et al., 2015; Sabzalian, 2019). In Washington State, *John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial* (JMLSTI) curriculum was encouraged in 2005 and later mandated in 2015 to be taught in every classroom, every year (Washington OSPI, 2024). This curriculum was endorsed by all 29 federally recognized tribes in Washington State to teach a place-based, integrated, and inquiry-based curriculum that supports local tribes in the sharing of their history, treaty rights, sovereignty, and contemporary issues (Lynn, 2022). The problem is that many educators are not teaching it due a variety of barriers. This study aimed to gain insights regarding the barriers to teaching JMLSTI and what supports are needed for teachers to increase the use of JMLSTI. These insights can be used by policymakers, teachers, tribal leadership, OSPI, and others to implement supports to increase use.

The overarching research question was: What are the barriers to teaching [JML]STI for teachers? Followed by, how can current educators be better supported to implement JMLSTI more effectively within the classroom? As JMLSTI is an evolving curriculum (Brown, 2015, p. 35), how do we best honor its development by removing barriers and making it more accessible

for teachers to implement? The third question was: How to begin using JMLSTI from the ground up with a more place-based approach to teaching students the JMLSTI lessons that are from and with local tribes in respectful relationships?

This research used a mixed-methods approach (Chilisa, 2020) to honor Indigenous ways of knowing and core "R" values (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991), and the belief that everything is connected, like water. The design included interviews and training, along with pre- and post-surveys of elementary teachers. All the teachers live and work in the homelands of the Coast Salish territory. Teachers were asked if they wanted to participate in this study and training. Consent forms were provided to participants, and all teachers were given pseudonyms (Coast Salish River Names) to create anonymity. Interviews were conducted orally and audio-recorded, transcribed, and member-checked. Surveys were conducted using a paper form and collected. The training was done in person using PowerPoint slides, websites, open questions and answer format to meet the unique needs of each teacher. Data analysis for the surveys was done by examining each question and quantifying the responses. Thematic data analysis was used to code interview responses.

One of the major findings was that teachers' knowledge of JMLSTI (familiarity and knowing where to find it) significantly increased after training was completed (Figure 9 & Figure 10). This indicates that training may be beneficial to teachers' awareness of JMLSTI. When considering the importance of using JMLSTI from the ground up or with a place-based local tribal sovereignty curriculum, there are currently few teachers aware of such curricula outside of OSPI, with 72.7% indicating "no" (Figure 11). The data support the theme that teacher training was useful (Figure 16) and teachers think having time, collaboration, and materials would help them teach JMLSTI better (Figure 17). After completing the thematic analysis of the qualitative

data, the major themes that emerged were awareness, resources, time, and knowledge as barriers (Figure 18). Major themes that would support teachers included direction, slides, help, and training (Figure 18). Common themes from both types of data show that time, collaboration, and materials/resources would help teachers teach JMLSTI (Figure 17 and Figure 18). Teachers used a wide variety of resources and reported multiple times that having better resources, specifically slides to follow would help them teach JMLSTI better.

Findings Connected to Literature

This study is a continuation of the immense number of contributions from the original warriors of JMLSTI (Figure 3, Figure 4, & Figure 5) since time immemorial. The most prevalent research on JMLSTI that this study is related to comes from Conrad (2020), Hand (2020), Holtyn (2018), Holt (2016), and Warner (2012). The connection of this study to Warner's (2012) can be found in the acknowledgement that relationships are key to the success of JMLSTI. The emphasis on relationships is seen in the data regarding the need for collaboration and a representative to work with them (Figure 17).

Holt (2016) concluded that there was a need for more advocacy, training, support, and administration. This study builds upon those learnings because the most prevalent themes identified were on training, awareness (advocacy), help (support), direction (administration) as seen in Figure 18. The findings in this study clarify these needs for successful implementation. The findings in this study also reveal a new insight that there is a great need for increased teacher knowledge of Native American history and culture (Figure 18) in order to implement JMLSTI. This lack of knowledge appeared to be a barrier for teachers in teaching JMLSTI and can be described as a "cycle of unknowing" (Woolley, 2024a). The "cycle of unknowing" is when teachers do not have the knowledge to share and continue to not pass down essential knowledges

of JMLSTI to the next generation, thus continuing in a constant cycle of the lack of knowledge (Woolley, 2024a). Many teachers reported that even administrators did not know that JMLSTI existed or that it was required. Holt (2016) primarily focused on the original contributors to JMLSTI. In contrast, the importance of this study (Woolley, 2026) is that there is a focus on current teachers of JMLSTI who can offer a snapshot of a moment in the current time and needs.

Holtyn (2018) made many of the same conclusions that this study offered in terms of the need for training, increased use, updated materials that are easy to use, integration of JMLSTI into other school subjects, and encouragement to use. This study demonstrated the usefulness of training (Figure 16). Other top responses for helping teachers were time, collaboration, pronunciation, ready to go lessons, clock hours and a representative to assist teachers (Figure 17). One major difference between Holtyn's (2018) study and this study is that she interviewed teachers who were already familiar with JMLSTI; whereas this study interviewed a wider variety of teachers, as well as more teachers.

This study also showed that teachers requested direction on JMLSTI, meaning they wanted more clarity, integration of lessons into other subjects due to time constraints, and specific directions regarding which lessons should be designated for each grade (i.e., curricular vertical alignment). This study also built upon Holtyn's (2018) study by showing that ready to go lessons or slides that can be easily used are needed for teachers to better teach JMLSTI. It was also shown that slides are incredibly powerful as a tool for teachers. This was shared by one teacher sqʷuqʷbəʔ (Skokomish) who said she created slides, shared them with other teachers, and those teachers still report using them. The same was true with sq̓ʷali'abš (Nisqually) teachers.

This study also moves beyond Hand's (2020) study regarding the constraints and affordances she identified, to offer recommendations for the teaching of JMLSTI. This study

concurred with Hand (2020) that time is a major constraint or barrier to teaching JMLSTI (Figure 17) and that there is a lack of awareness or knowledge of Native American history and culture among teachers and this is a barrier to teaching JMLSTI. This "cycle of unknowing" (Woolley, 2024a) impedes teachers from teaching JMLSTI despite teachers saying that they are highly motivated to teach it. As ’el’iʔw’ (Elwha) shared, "I don't have that background, and my biggest fear is spreading misinformation" Many teachers have a fear of being disrespectful and teaching JMLSTI wrong (Figure 18) so they don't teach it as often or as much as they should or could. This is troubling given that Hand (2020) confirmed that JMLSTI is a quality curriculum that should be taught.

I agree with Conrad's (2020) hat non-Native teachers are able to teach JMLSTI well. I build upon this argument investigating specific barriers teachers encounter and the supports they need to teach JMLSTI. This study affirms Conrad's (2020) finding that a challenge for teachers is a lack of awareness of cultural responsiveness and sovereignty. Awareness was one of the major themes identified in my study as a barrier for teachers (Figure 18). While this study did not focus on the relationships of teachers with local tribal communities, many participants did state a desire to have more tribal representatives in their classrooms helping to teach JMLSTI. Teachers also reported the importance of lessons being taught with local tribal content. ’el’iʔw’ (Elwha) shared,

> Ensuring that it is tribes that are right here because as young kids they don't think big picture, they think very local, they think very intimate to them, what is right with them…But with the littles unless it's in their backyard or right in their vision, they don't really make a connection.

Teaching student's lessons (from the ground up) with local content has a powerful connection for them.

Lastly, Ariviso et al. (2021) found that JMLSTI needs to be taught more evenly and widely throughout the state. My research concurs with Arviso et al. and finds there needs to be better guidance and awareness of JMLSTI among educational leaders. The fact that multiple teachers reported that they had not been given a clear message from leadership that they should be teaching JMLSTI, and teachers not only sharing that other teachers are unaware of JMLSTI, but leaders are not aware of it either, is problematic. This finding suggests that JMLSTI needs to become better known by all teachers and leaders alike.

The importance of this study is its practical insights gained from all teacher participants (ones with varying levels of knowledge and understanding of JMLSTI and Native American history and culture). which can be used by leaders to change practices to increase the use of JMLSTI.

Unanticipated Findings

One of the unanticipated variables that occurred that was not anticipated was that many of the interview participants wanted to be included in the group that received training on JMLSTI. This indicated to me that teachers are motivated to receive help and support teaching JMLSTI and that their intention of working in respectful reciprocity exists.

Conclusions

An initial question regarding teachers' years of experience (Figure 8) indicates that even new teachers (ones that should have had preservice training in JMLSTI) have not had sufficient training to confidently teach JMLSTI and would benefit by having more training, direction, time, help, and resources. Based upon these findings, there is a need for increased awareness across the

state among teachers and leaders (administrators). Improvements should also be made in the development of resources that are easy for teachers to use, particularly providing slides for teachers to follow while teaching lessons. Increasing training and identifying a designated support person available for teachers to ask questions could help increase teachers' confidence and use of JMLSTI.

In addition, this study identified two steps that leadership can address in terms of time and direction. Teachers reported a lack of alignment of lessons, curricular integration, and guidance from leadership. Designating which lessons should be taught in which grade would help teachers know what they should be teaching. The lack of this information seems to impede some teachers from teaching JMLSTI. Teachers also need to be allotted time within their teaching schedule to teach JMLSTI. Teachers also need time to participate in training and knowledge acquisition outside of the workday to help break the "cycle of unknowing" (Woolley that are needed to break, 2024a). These findings help to identify supports teachers need in order to teach JMLSTI and counter Indigenous erasure in schools.

Implications for Scholars and Professionals

Considering historical attempts at Indigenous erasure, countering Indigenous erasure in curriculum and schools is a responsibility all educators have. Additionally, Washington State mandates that students be taught this information. The implication for scholars is to consider how a new curriculum should be launched when those who are supposed to be experts in the material are expected to teach it but are not trained or knowledgeable about implementation. It is also important to consider what happens when a mandate is neither well-funded nor broadly communicated. One recommendation is to consider how information about JMLSTI is communicated to educational leaders, including expectations regarding legislative requirements.

Currently there are no accountability practices in place. Some questions related to this are: How to implement new curricula collectively across a state without any accountability? How are new curricula delivered? And do these curricula need revisiting in leadership circles?

The implications for those in the profession are to consider how practices can be utilized to support one another, work collectively to begin making changes to support our Indigenous students, and include Indigenous history and culture in schools. Another implication for professionals is to consider how to incorporate and allocate time for training and knowledge acquisition for teachers on teaching JMLSTI. Similar to other content areas, a support person or coach may be needed for implementation. With the fast pace and high demand of curricular time, integrating JMLSTI can be helpful, but designating time and encouraging teachers to prioritize teaching JMLSTI is critical for at least minimal lesson presence. The broader implications for the field of education include how to reduce this gap in teacher knowledge over time to ensure our students are learning accurate information about Indigenous peoples and Tribal Nations now and in the future.

Recommendations for Further Research

Increasing collaborative learning is important (Kazemi & Calabrese, 2026). Kazemi & Calabrese have studied how to increase teacher collaboration. One key strategy is meeting teachers where they are (2026). Studies like this can be influential in the field of education and could also benefit teacher learning on JMLSTI.

Another area for further research could be examining the most effective lesson plan format for teachers and identifying the characteristics of ready-to-go lessons. It may also be helpful to learn the specifics about what makes slides so effective and easy for teachers to use.

JMLSTI is evolving and needs a relaunch to educators across Washington State to increase awareness. Research could also be conducted on the use of Oregon State's tribal curriculum, Tribal History/Shared History (TH/SH), as it is laid out differently from Washington State's website and format (Oregon Department of Education, 2026). Oregon State's website is organized by grade level, and lessons are organized by tribe-specific curricula for each grade. If a teacher wanted to teach from the ground up and teach a place-based lesson about where they were located, it would be easy to find resources. Given these differences, it would be helpful to conduct a comparative analysis of different states that have developed or mandated Indigenous-focused curricula. It might also be helpful to conduct studies on the state of Montana, as it was the first to mandate the teaching of Native curriculum. Findings from this type of study could help to increase the teaching of place-based knowledges.

These findings might help us to better understand the steps needed to effectively roll out the JMLSTI to leaders and teachers. This information could also help us to streamline and contextualize the strong Indigenous content of JMLSTI so that teachers have what they need to teach it. As one teacher sḳʷali'abš (Nisqually) in this study said, "I bought all the books for [JML]STI but still don't have the content around the books to teach them well" (personal communication). Providing the books or materials needed online would help teachers, so they do not have to spend time searching for them. One teacher reported that the books they needed were no longer in print and that it took a lot of effort to track them down (sdohóbš Snohomish, personal communication). While some tribes have created JMLSTI websites and resources, we may need to research how to support this groundwork and share local tribal sovereignty curricula with teachers. In doing this work, it will also be important to understand how we can support smaller tribes that may need more agency.

Researchers should also ask how best to support Indigenous educators. While conducting this research, I co-facilitated an Indigenous educator professional group and saw that when we support Indigenous educators, we are supporting Indigenous students and JMLSTI (Woolley, 2026). This was powerful to see.

Lastly, if I had more time, I would have liked to follow up with the participants who were trained to find out how much they used the information they learned in the training to teach JMLSTI lessons to their classes.

Concluding Remarks

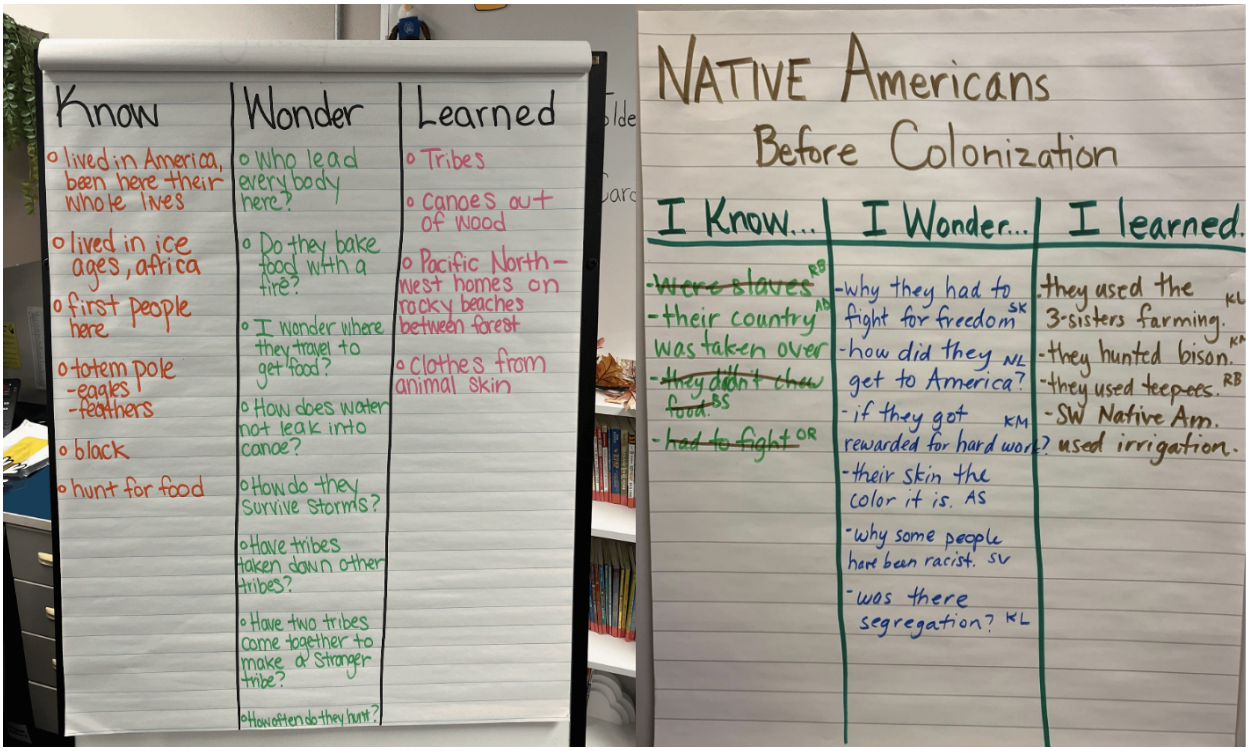
As Mitchell (2018) writes,

> Our modern-day floodplain is the colonial educational system. It provides shallow soil that is deficient in nutrients. Instead of teaching respect for the rich biodiversity that ensures a healthy balance, it teaches homogeneity and strips away the value structure that is held within our core culture teachings… Colonial education does not provide us with the tools needed to live sustainable lives that are in reciprocal harmony with the rest of creation. (pp. 154-155).

Increasing the use of JMLSTI is necessary to enrich the soil, feed our roots, and reclaim the educational systems that we have been living with. Doing so will counter the Indigenous erasure that has occurred and is still occurring in our schools. One of the fascinating aspects of doing this study has been the emphasis that teachers as participants placed on wanting to learn more. Two teachers shared their Know-Wonder-Learn (KWL) charts with me from a lesson they taught with their students (Figure 19).

Figure 19

KWL Charts



Note. Woolley, 2026. Know Wonder Learn Charts from classrooms.

I am curious what these charts would say if we were to create one with teachers regarding their understanding of JMLSTI. We could start our learning with these charts, correct, and add to them after a training.

> As Hohepa (2013) writes,
>
> What occurs between Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge is not linear. There is potential for reciprocal engagement and impact at many given points. What exists is fundamentally relational, involving multidirectional exchanging and interchanging of ideas. In this sense Indigenous conceptualizations can contribute just as much to the revisioning of non-Indigenous conceptualizations and theories. (p. 626).

When we work in good relationships with one another, change can happen. Water can go between, move forward, and provide connections to what is needed in many ways.

Water is powerful. Ultimately, water likes to gather in rivers, streams, and tributaries and move toward the ocean. "Several stated that this relational way of being was at the heart of what it means to be Indigenous" (Wilson, p.80). When we work together, we can have a positive impact, especially when we are connected to the land. "Like governance and leadership and every other aspect of reciprocated life, education comes from the roots up. It comes from being enveloped by land" (Simpson, 2017, p. 154). Working with our local tribes to teach what matters to them should be a priority for the direction of JMLSTI. Teaching our students this is critical because,

> Our children are our most precious gift… The responsibility to care for them is a sacred gift. Our relationship with them is reciprocal. We are the caretakers of the children, and the children are the caretakers of our future. Thus, how and what we teach them determines the type of future that we will have. (Mitchell, 2018, p. 209)

Teaching from the ground up in a place-based way is critical for the future of our children and it is important that we do what we can to ensure they are not erased in education.

This leads me to push for greater accountability in teaching JMLSTI. As Simpson (2017) writes, "Continually generating meaning is often, but not exclusively, done in ceremony and involves ongoing ethical systems of accountability and responsibility, particularly for emotional trauma and healing" (p. 157). Education for many Indigenous people involved or involves trauma, like boarding schools. Collectively, we need to continue to take action and hold ourselves accountable to honor JMLSTI. One way that gives me hope is in seeing that recent legislation is pushing for accountability, evaluation, compensation to tribes for collaboration,

consultation, district compliance in 2025-2026 (SB Report 5570). In a report to the Legislature, “School districts are required to incorporate curricula about the nearest federally recognized Indian tribe or tribes into their social studies curricula no later than September 1, 2026” (SB Report 5570). This push is inspiring to hear about because it is the kind of spark needed to work in relationship with the land and tribes, and to do so from the ground up in a place-based way.

“Indigenous education is not Indigenous or education from within our intellectual practices unless it comes through the land, unless it occurs in an Indigenous context using Indigenous processes” (Simpson, 2017, p. 154). My grandmother was a survivor of harmful boarding schools and had an experience in education that warranted reconciliation and healing. What gives me hope are the many ways we, as Indigenous people, are working in relationship, reciprocity, respect, and responsibility through the land to support all our students. There are numerous warriors who came before us, and numerous who are currently advocating for JMLSTI. In so many ways, there is both an abundance of research on JMLSTI and a lack of effective research.

It is fitting to close this in the same way that it started, with gratitude and a reflection of a story. I want to thank ALL JMLSTI warriors, past, present, and future, who help bring it into our classrooms respectfully. You are countering erasure one lesson at a time. Elder and storyteller, Elaine Grinnel (S’Klallam) told me a story about a little boy and his grandfather who went to a river. The grandfather asked the boy if he wanted to be shown how he could change the course of the river. The grandfather took just one rock out of the river and showed the boy how impactful moving even one rock could be in changing the river's course. “Doesn’t have to be very much, just a little bit, and it will be changed forever” (Sun Productions, 2023, p.103). Little changes can make a big difference. When I think about all the little changes happening at JMLSTI, I have

hope because I know they are making a big difference. As we move forward, we can continue to make changes that will change the course of the river.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Information About A UW Research Study

Countering Indigenous Erasure with *John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial* (JMLSTI) Tribal Sovereignty Curriculum

What is this study about?

You are being asked to participate in a research study about increasing the use of Indigenous history and culture lessons in schools with the JMLSTI curriculum. It is up to you to decide whether you want to participate. If you decide to enroll, you can stop participation at any time.

We are asking you to be in the study because we recognize that teachers are the most important factor in teaching Indigenous history and culture in schools. Curriculum is always changing, and we want to discuss current curricular options for your area. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in this study.

What will you be asked to do?

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to complete a short pre-survey, participate in talking circles and/or interviews, and a post-survey a couple months after the initial pre-survey.

What will happen to the information you provide?

The information you provide will be anonymous. This means that your name will not be connected to the data.

Other information

To work in reciprocity, chocolate bars will be provided as a thank you for participation.

What can you do if you want more information?

Talk to the study team. Annette Woolley is the lead researcher at the University of Washington for this study and can be contacted at gaetha@uw.edu/425-293-4132.

Talk to someone else. If you want to talk with someone who is not part of the study team about the study, your rights as a research subject, or to report problems or complaints about the study, contact the UW Human Subjects Division at hsdinfo@uw.edu or 206-543-0098.

Appendix B

CERTIFICATE OF TRAINING

This certifies that

Enter Your Name Here Annette Woolley

has successfully completed the University of Washington's IRB 101 tutorial. This tutorial covers:

- the history of the abuses of human subjects in research;
- the ethical principles at the foundation of IRB review;
- determining whether an IRB application is required;
- submitting an IRB application at the University of Washington; and
- informed consent.

Jason Malone
HSD Director

5/19/25
Date

Save