THE IMPACT OF INCORPORATING MUCKLESHOOT CULTURE INTO THE CURRICULUM ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

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Abstract

In this paper, I study the outcomes of Indigenous students who participate in educational systems that are Tribally controlled. Within these Tribally controlled systems, culture is purposefully placed into the curriculum. Utilizing a mixed methods approach that incorporates both surveys and interviews of both graduated students and faculty, I uncovered the importance of relationships in educational spaces and the positive impacts of culturally implemented classroom and place-based learning on student outcomes. Understanding the outcomes of Indigenous students who go through educational systems not originally designed for them but augmented for Tribal needs is a step forward for all Indigenous communities to successfully have their people walk in two worlds.

Keywords: Indigenous, Indigenous education, Indigenous educational outcomes, relationships

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Chapter 1: Researcher Positionality and Introduction

haʔł sləx̌il, Ryan Wilson tsi dsdaʔ bəqəlšułabš čəd. Good day, my name is Ryan Wilson, and I am a Muckleshoot Tribal member. My paternal grandmother was Mildred Calvert, and my paternal grandfather was Glen Wilson. I come from the Nason/Kanasket family. My mother was adopted, and little is known about her blood family. I carry the first name Ryan, which was her adoptive family surname.

If someone had approached me ten years prior and provided a breakdown of my educational journey to this point, I would have completely dismissed everything that was said. Upon graduating with my Master's Degree in Occupational Therapy in 2016, I was overjoyed that my work in educational institutions was complete, with the future requirements being around continued education and licensure requirements around occupational therapy in Washington state. Little did I know that several events were about to take place where I would again volunteer to enter academic spaces.

The first event occurred after World War Two, when my Arkansas born and raised grandfather, being discharged by the United States Navy after the Pacific War Theatre came to a close, found himself in Seattle in hopes of securing work and met my Muckleshoot reservation born and raised grandmother, who had moved to Seattle to start a new chapter in her own life. In the North Seattle area of Lake City, they chose to settle down and start their family. They had two male children, with the eldest ending up being my father.

Figure 1 My Grandmother on the Reservation

Note. My grandmother in front of the family house on the reservation, creator and date unknown. Personal photograph from Ryan Wilson's collection. Used with permission.

My grandfather's side of the family came from Scot-Irish immigrants, who were first displaced from England in the 1500s to Ireland and then to the 'new world' due to religious friction with the Northern Irish Catholics. George Wilson, that side of the family's patriarch, landed in Pennsylvania in 1786, and the subsequent generations would see themselves farming into Arkansas. My grandmother's side of the family has been traced to my great-great-great-great grandfather named Kanasket. He was half Klickatat and half Muckleshoot. He developed a reputation for himself fighting and killing federal troops, with the general of the time stating, "He hated all white settlers, and rather than they should possess his country, he preferred to perish" (Keyes, 1988, p. 10). He was vocal against any treaty negotiation, which led Leschi to respond during discussions, "You are half-Klickitat; you have nothing to say; the treaty is made" (Meeker, 2018). When Kanasket did perish during a failed raid attempt, he was quoted as saying, "My heart is wicked towards the whites, and always will be, and you had better kill me" (Keyes, 1988, p. 13). Kanasket's daughter Qax̂olitsa (Western name of Annie Nason) would be on the

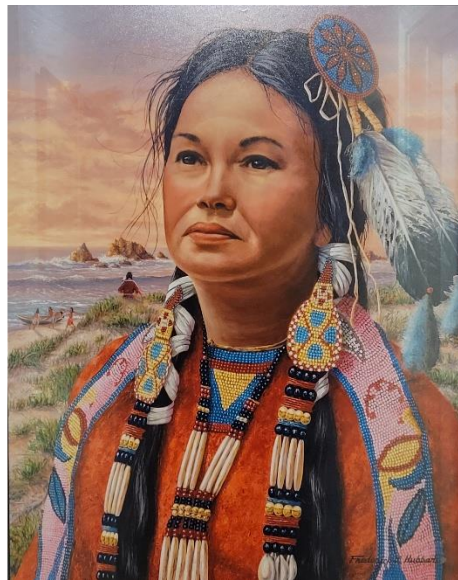
rolls during the creation of the Muckleshoot reservation, and due to signing the treaties he fought against, Qax̂olitsa would be allotted a piece of land from which my grandmother would depart.

Figure 2 Grandfather

Note. My grandfather in Hawaii, 1945. Creator unknown.

My father would occasionally go back to the reservation to visit family, but the frequency of visits would decrease as he grew up. He would tell stories about the long drive from Lake City down to see aunties, uncles, and cousins. He would compare and contrast his experience of growing up in a suburb of Seattle, with its modern conveniences a postwar middle-class lifestyle could afford, to the poor areas of pre-bingo and casino reservation life. In a general sense, the impression I received when being told about this side of who I am was unfavorable and used to justify my grandmother's departure, with a tinge of embarrassment. By the time he was discharged post-draft during the Vietnam Era, he had achieved the rank of 1st Lieutenant, but those visits came to an end. By the time I was in the picture in 1980, the talk of anything Muckleshoot was nonexistent. I distinctly remember, as a child, staring at my grandmother's oil painting of herself in regalia, wondering what she was wearing and why she was wearing it.

Figure 3 Portrait of Grandmother



Note. Portrait of grandmother by Frederick L. Hubbard (date unknown). Personal photograph from Ryan Wilson's collection. Used with permission.

The deliberate severing of my cultural attachment started with the arrival of settlers. It culminated throughout two generations, although calling it an event would not do it justice. It was the successful end objective of settler colonialism (Tuck & Yang, 2012), the systematic use of internal colonialism to disassemble Indigenous people via segregation, schooling, prisons, reservations, and abduction. The reasons baked into my grandmother's choice to move away from her home and slowly stop visiting and my family no longer speaking and sharing Muckleshoot culture were put into action long prior. However, the end result was the same: erasure of Indigenous people for the betterment of the settlers in terms of land and resources.

Talk of things Muckleshoot would return roughly 25 years later. My great aunts and uncles would begin reaching out to my father to reestablish a family connection, culminating in having my grandmother enrolled posthumously into the Tribe, which opened the door for my father, sister, and myself to enroll. While I knew that a side of my family was reaching out that I previously had no contact with, I knew nothing of my Tribe or culture when I filled out the

paperwork, except that my father wanted us to be enrolled. After enrollment, I was invited out to my first powwow, attended family funerals, met a thousand and one cousins, aunts, and uncles, and began the process of coming home.

Eventually, I learned about the concept of walking in two worlds and found it in the Indigenous research about leadership (Fitzgerald, 2006), healthcare (Kenney, 1997), religion (Durling & Local Journalism Initiative Reporter, 2022), and education (Henze & Vanett, 1993). I understood that the world I was raised in was the other world that many Indigenous people have to learn how to navigate. I'd had no idea there were two worlds to walk; I was taught exclusively in the Western world and had nothing to compare it to. My family played by those rules—my father developed ancestral lands for profit in the greater Seattle area, which afforded my sister and me the ability to attend private schools, which I did up until the 11th grade. That educational access was the largest factor in my success in the higher academic sphere. I am fully aware that I have benefited from the systems designed to erase my community, and I struggle with that reality.

During that struggle, I think about what my grandmother would say about all of this. She wanted what was best for her family, and she would have wanted me to utilize whatever I had learned for the betterment of our community. She succeeded in her choice to leave the reservation in the hopes of a better future for herself and a potential family. I had the opportunity to finish high school and live with indoor plumbing. I never had to endure racism as a result of her choice of mate, never had to shy away or hide my cultural background (instead, I did not know anything about it), and had every door open for me to walk through. In terms of what a loving grandmother would want for her grandson, she succeeded within the systems and times she lived in, for better or worse.

Figure 4 Ryan and Mom, 1980

Note. Picture of Ryan and Mom, 1980. Creator unknown. Personal photograph from Ryan Wilson's collection. Used with permission.

This leaves me feeling out of place within my community, EdD cohort, and Indigenous educational spaces. What can I offer outside of my experience being trained to participate in Western educational spaces—trained to the point where an EdD is possible? Who am I to offer my take on issues that I have not experienced? An Elder once told me that a goal for Tribal students is for them to have a foundational education that allows doors to open, for students to choose to leave the reservation, to be successful in their chosen paths, and then eventually return and give back to the community. While I have not done that entirely in the same steps, I have returned and can speak on what I have learned. Going a step further, I can attempt to help the educational systems in my Tribe so that students at least have the same choices I was afforded.

Figure 5 Ryan's Dad

Note. Dad sitting on a box after military discharge. Date and creator unknown. Personal photograph from Ryan Wilson's collection. Used with permission.

Looking for employment as an occupational therapist for my Tribe, education was not on my radar as a possibility. I have experience working as an occupational therapist in the geriatric community, and I want to serve my community in the elder's in-home program. Around the same time, an occupational therapist position opened at the Muckleshoot Tribal School, which I accepted and have served in for several years. During my employment, I have had the opportunity to provide special education services to those students in need, doing my part to assist them with expanding possibilities as they grow older. During the same time, I also was able to learn more about the historical foundations of Western educational systems, how they were used to exploit, erase, and subjugate my community and other Indigenous communities around the United States, and how, in current times, the opportunities that were provided to me during my educational upbringing are not being offered to students within my community.

Wanting to be part of a solution, when I read a Tribe-wide email introducing the second Indigenous cohort of the partnership between the Tribal College and the University of Washington Tacoma, I applied. Being part of an Indigenous EdD cohort has exposed me to the viewpoints and experiences of those who mirror the students whom I serve, providing rich and detailed histories. These stories are examples of resilience, resistance, growth, and healing. They offer me hope that there are methods to navigate institutions meant to limit successful outcomes in ways that allow Indigenous students to flourish without sacrificing their cultures.

My work at the school has linked me to the Muckleshoot Canoe Family. I feel most connected to my culture and ancestors when I am on the water. Every year, the canoes are awakened by the community gathering with prayers and blessings before placing them in the water for the new season. This connection with community and culture occurs via paddling the canoe as one, as our ancestors did, singing traditional songs, and following the leadership of the skipper. The Canoe Family also performs during cultural exchanges with other Tribes/Nations and performs as invited in the larger community across Washington state.

While on the water, we follow the skipper's instructions to keep balance on the canoe so we do not capsize into the ocean. First-timers must submerge themselves in the water by jumping into the ocean. My own feet went numb after jumping into the waters of the Duwamish Head in early April, with the water temperature hovering in the mid-40s. Prior to getting underway, we say a silent prayer, give an offering, and begin following the skipper's directions. We all work as one to accomplish a common goal.

My sister has done work with traditional plant teachings, and I have the opportunity to join her in harvesting. Across the street from the Tribal College is a wooded area with nettle plants growing within it. Once a path through overturned logs is found, the land evens out, and

there is access to new spring nettle growth. I follow my sister's directions on how to harvest, take only the tops of each plant, and act with intention, as nettle will let you know when you are not by stinging you. In her coming home journey, she has established community relationships that have taught her processing techniques for the plant, so I give her what I harvest. This relational experience with my sister, the Land, and my ancestors helps create a reality and truth that transcends time and space (Absolon, 2022) that I hope one day will include her daughter.

I would not have any opportunity to come home and participate in my own healing if it were not for those individuals in my community, those in the Canoe Family, students and their families at the school, and the many people I interact with daily on the reservation. The one healing activity I do physically alone is visiting a small cemetery on the reservation. My great-great-grandmother Isabelle, the daughter Qax̂olitsa mentioned above, is buried there. Her tombstone is an upright reddish-black slab that appears out of place compared to the horizontal tombstones that surround her. I typically grab a small offering of cedar from my truck and sprinkle it on and around her tombstone, greeting her in our language. Sometimes, I sit and experience the space together; other times, I share what is going on in my life. Sometimes, I stare at the plot of land across the street with an old barn on the verge of collapse—the plot of land her brother, William Nason, was allotted during the reservation's formation. One day, I will visit that old barn.

I am lucky that the path I walked growing up—unknowingly, I admit—was centered around my ancestral Lands (Tuck & McKenzie, 2014). Those beaches, parks, and construction sites where my dad spent all his time and those fancy private schools my sister and I attended were placed on the same lands where our ancestors managed, traveled, and educated their children. Although feeling currently disconnected, the Land has been a consistent silent witness,

be it on the sidewalks of North Seattle, the fake beaches of Alki Point, or the freeways of the I-5 corridor. It will continue to exist long after I am gone, in whatever fashion we choose to leave it. The relationships I maintain, create, and grow will impact the futures of my family and community. I am dedicated to doing what I can to empower the next generation of Indigenous community members to expand their choices.

Figure 6 Ryan and Niece

Note. Ryan and his niece during Thanksgiving, 2023. Personal photograph taken by Lisa Wilson in 2023. Used with permission.

Figure 7 Niece, Sister, and Brother-in-Law

Note. Sister, niece, and brother-in-law, 2025. Photograph taken by Erika DuBois. Used with permission.

I humbly enter these new spaces, learning my culture like the children I work with at the Tribal school. The challenges and systems most Indigenous people fight against were my upbringing. I was born, molded by it, and benefited from participating. I come back home witnessing the intended consequences of settler colonialism on the reservation, in our educational systems, and in my own life. The outcomes have destroyed the relationships that create and hold reality together (Wilson, 2008). If anything, I can begin to reestablish them to help create a more positive future for my community.

Context of Study

I was in sixth grade, sitting in my closet, attempting to memorize spelling words for my English class. My father, an English major, understood the importance of education in opening opportunities, and made it a point of ensuring that my sister and I were at least going to appreciate he was going to do his best to have us take our classes and homework seriously. As a result, my brain was wrapping itself around why the letters 'tion' sounded like 'should' in all the

words I had to memorize the spelling of that evening. After roughly 15 minutes, I trudged back downstairs to be tested, again, to spell out the 'tion' words for the spelling test. This ritual was commonplace, my parents were directly involved in the system of education in 1990s Seattle, with the assumption that I would complete high school well enough to apply for college. Their efforts were a success.

I did not know it at the time, but my family was participating in a style of education with roots in Prussia. Beginning in 1763, Prussia, under Frederick the Great, developed a state-run educational system, with its emphasis on teaching obedience and instilling a discipline to follow the rules of those in charge (Paglayan, 2024). Being influenced by Enlightenment philosophers, and a series of military defeats, Frederick II signed into law in 1762 the General Rural School Regulations, first for Protestants, extending to Catholics in 1763 (Paglayan, 2024). This law shifted all aspects of primary school to be under the control of the State, which in turn provided an increased level of control over the population, leading one of the king's educational advisors, Johann Felbiger, to comment on the internalization, without force, of obedience to the king:

> Human beings are by nature moved by kindness and reason rather than force. Despotic methods will not induce pupils to obey. They must be convinced that it is useful and correct to follow the schoolmaster's wishes. Only then will they learn to obey even in situations where force is absent. In this way, the schoolmaster accomplishes his most important task: his pupils will observe their duties not only in school, but throughout their lives. (Paglayan, 2024, p. 104)

The successes of Frederick II in the application of state-run primary educational control were great enough to gain the attention of governments from around the world. In 1843, Horace Mann traveled overseas from the United States to observe this phenomenon for himself, writing:

> …if Prussia can pervert the benign influences of education to the support of arbitrary power, we surely can employ them for the support and perpetuation of republican institutions … If a moral power over the understandings and affections of the people may be turned to evil, may it not also be employed for good? (Paglayan, 2024, p. 106)

While good and bad could be argued as subjective terms based on the topic and the intentions of those labeling actions, Mann was further quoted that children, "needed to be taught, above all, that voting, not violence, was the legitimate way to express discontent" (Paglayan, 2024, p. 258). In March of 1819, the United States government passed the Civilization Fund Act, which opened the door for the federal government's direct official involvement with providing education for Indigenous peoples of North America (Civilization Fund Act, 1819):

> ...he (the President) shall judge improvement in the habits and condition of such Indians practicable, and that the means of instruction can be introduced with their own consent, to employ capable persons of good moral character, to instruct them in the mode of agriculture suited to their situation; and for teaching their children in reading, writing, arithmetic, and performing such other duties as may be enjoined. (p. 516)

This legislation began development of direct financial support for the creation of boarding schools, the first being opened on the Yakima Indian Reservation in 1860, and the first off-reservation establishment being opened in 1879 in Carlisle, Pennsylvania by none other than Richard Henry Pratt who uttered the infamous words, "In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him and save the man" (National Conference of Charities and Correction, 1893, p. 46). According to The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (National Native American

Boarding School Healing Coalition, n.d.) from a height of 367 boarding schools within the United States since the inception, 73 remain open today, with 15 still boarding.

The scourge of boarding schools within Indigenous communities resulted in death (Ascott, 2021), kidnapping (*U.S. Boarding Schools*, 2021), and an overarching federal government attempt to assimilate Indigenous people by the erasure of language and culture through violence (Trafzer et al., 2006). Outcomes of these boarding schools were documented in The Meriam Report (Institute for Government Research, 1928), which reported poor educational outcomes that stripped culture away from Indigenous communities, forced separation of families and communities, caused a high incidence of illness and malnutrition, and had an overall focus on manual labor rather than academics.

While the federal government's involvement in Indigenous educational affairs was solidified with the Civilization Fund Act (1819), the second—and more telling of the federal government's intentions behind this relationship—was the creation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in 1824 by the Secretary of War John C. Calhoun (U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2025). Twenty-five years later, in 1849, the agency moved away from being under the Secretary of War to being incorporated into the Department of the Interior (*Act to Establish the Department of the Interior*, 1849). Up until this point the Indigenous populations' education access via state-run institutions was limited to those run by the Department of the Interior, but this changed with the passage of the *Indian Citizenship Act of 1924*. Now, being considered citizens of the United States of America, Indigenous people could take advantage of the other federally- and state-funded Prussian-modeled educational institutions that the rest of the citizenry were being compelled to attend.

The BIA continued its control and influence over Indigenous Tribes by filling the role of the federal agency that was given, and distributed, federal dollars to communities via Indian Appropriation Acts (1871), until 1934. At this time, the failure of the federal governments assimilation efforts resulted in a new path: the *Indian Reorganization Act of 1934.* This act encouraged Tribal nations to continue on the assimilation path by forming constitutions, bylaws, and elections (all subject to Secretary approval), with following to do so being granted the ability to "employ legal counsel; to prevent the sale, disposition, lease, or encumbrance of tribal lands, interests in lands, or other tribal assets without the consent of the tribe; and to negotiate with the Federal State, and local governments" (*Indian Reorganization Act of 1934*). This act continued to expand the Department of the Interior—and by extension the BIA—management of Indigenous nations, serving as a first step of the federal government to allow Indigenous self-governance, while sneaking in language defining what an Indian is defined as at the end of the document:

> SEC. 19. [25 U.S.C. 5129] The term ''Indian'' as used in this Act shall include all persons of Indian descent who are members of any recognized Indian tribe now under Federal jurisdiction, and all persons who are descendants of such members who were, on June 1, 1934, residing within the present boundaries of any Indian reservation, and shall further include all other persons of one-half or more Indian blood. For the purposes of this Act, Eskimos and other aboriginal peoples of Alaska shall be considered Indians. The term ''tribe'' wherever used in this Act shall be construed to refer to any Indian tribe, organized band, pueblo, or the Indians residing on one reservation. The words ''adult Indians'' wherever used in this Act shall be construed to refer to Indians who have attained the age of twenty-one years. *(Indian Reorganization Act of 1934)*

In 1934, the federal government also produced the *Johnson–O'Malley Act* (1934), which set up legal frameworks for the further dispersal of contracted funds for Indigenous services, including education. The *Indian Education Act of 1972* created the Office of Indian Education, and the Educational Amendments of 1978 set up Office of Indian Education Programs (OIEP). The OIEP was then elevated to bureau status in 2006, becoming the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), which remains today. The Office of Indian Education is responsible for the management and dispersal of grant funds (U.S. Department of Education, 2025), with the BIE managing and overseeing educational services to Tribal students (Bureau of Indian Education, n.d.-a).

Tribal self-governance regarding the operation of their own schools was advanced by the *Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975*, which further build upon the 1934 legislation, allowing Tribes anatomy and authority to establish and operate their own schools. This gave Tribes the ability to be approved for federal government education contract funds that state and local governments were used to collecting. These schools at this time ultimately were under the oversight of the BIE or state governments with limited Tribal authority. This idea was expanded in 1988 with the *Tribally Controlled Schools Act* (1988), which took the next step in allowing Tribally-operated schools to be Tribally controlled, entering contracts with the BIE for funds. Further Indigenous control was offered, under audit and monitoring of the federal government, by the passage of the *Tribal Self-Governance Act of 1994*. However, despite being managed and operated by Tribal Nations, these educational institutions continue to operate under federal and state guidelines surrounding educational assessments, such as the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2002), which was later replaced by the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (2015).

Interestingly, the *Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975* does carve out a method for Tribes to exercise continued sovereignty via the creation of a state–Tribal compact school. These state–Tribal compact schools exist through legislation at the state level. For example, in Washington State, Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1134 allows for the Superintendent of Public Instruction to enter compacts with Tribal nations in Washington state currently funded by the BIE. While continuing to be held to state law regarding educational curriculum standards, financial audits, and personnel qualifications, Tribes can add culturally significant curriculum and maintain some choice on how to educate their community. Currently, there are eight state–Tribal compact schools in Washington State.

Regardless of the legislation, the changing levels of accepted sovereignty allowed by federal entities, the management of funding sources, or who is formally responsible for the educational system, Indigenous communities must submit to the assessment standards, staff certification, and auditing practices, as all other schools in the United States. The fundamental foundation of how education is provided and the intentions behind why state-controlled education remains, in alignment with the original intent of the *Civilization Fund Act of 1819* and with philosophical educational foundations reaching back to 1700s Prussia.

Statement of Problem

Regardless of the intent behind supplying Indigenous students to educational systems throughout the colonization of North America, the outcomes have been poor (Bureau of Indian Education, n.d.-b; Phillip, 2021). These experiences with state-run education has left Indigenous populations with health and intergenerational trauma (Nagaiah, 2023; U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2022; Wilk et al., 2017). Today, approximately 42,000 students are enrolled in 183 BIE schools, including 128 Tribally-operated schools (Bureau of Indian

Education, n.d.-b). While there is truth in what my father instilled in me at a young age—that educational attainment has been linked to several positive outcomes, including increased health (Raghupathi & Raghupathi, 2020), a higher standard of living (Tamborini et al., 2015), and higher social mobility (García-Mayor et al., 2021)—the current approach is not yielding positive outcomes for Indigenous students on the whole. Higher education is not the only way to achieve the goals previously stated; individuals can achieve similar mobility in trade work (Borillo, 2023). Interestingly, my father achieved a degree in higher education and then had a successful career in trade work through real estate development, showing another path.

Any participation in the educational process has been linked to lower unemployment rates, as unemployment rates correlate inversely with the level of education one has attained (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025). Completing K–12 education at a satisfactory level ensures that basic literacy and computational skills are acquired, a prerequisite for achieving further educational goals, or trade work if pursued. The result of this accomplishment offers student choices and the ability to choose the direction of their lives. As Indigenous communities assert their sovereignty to self-educate their children, the utilization of the *Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975* to create Tribally-operated compact schools has been more common.

In this exercise of sovereignty, Tribes are recreating narratives surrounding education, which each Tribal government being able to choose based on their cultural perspective how and what will be included in each student's experience. For example, the Muckleshoot Tribe implemented the Mountain to Sound: The Crystal Mountain Project where students travel to a 2000 square foot yurt on the mountain to participate in outdoor learning of cultural and academic concepts (Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, 2023). The Tribe has also developed a monthly Plant

Teaching curriculum, linking cultural lessons surrounding plants to language, academic, and social emotional learning. These choices will shape students individual educational and life goals and begin to reshape attitudes of what the educational experience can hold.

Due to the variability of Indigenous Nations across the United States, each community will hold distinct perspectives regarding education—including its overall importance, the role in shaping Tribal members' individual educational goals, and the extent to which each Tribal community supports its members' access to it. Working via the *Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act* of 1975, individual states have begun passing legislation to facilitate Tribal compact schools. For example, Washington state with Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1134 (Washington State Legislature, 2023), New Mexico with Senate Bill 13 (New Mexico Legislature, 2025), and Alaska with Senate Bill 13 (Alaska State Legislature, 2025). Though Tribal governments will have to follow state guidelines surrounding curriculum standards, for example RCW 28A.715 in Washington State (Washington State Legislature, 2013), the opportunity for increased involvement and control over the educational process opens doors that have been shut since the passage of the *Civilization Fund Act of 1819*.

So, here we are. In the absence of standardized criteria for creating Tribally-operated schools, apart from the pre-existing Western success metrics, Tribes determine the extent to which culture is integrated into the educational process. The pertinent question then becomes: with the opportunity to include Tribally-controlled culture and curriculum within K–12 educational environments, in what ways does the inclusion of culture improve the outcomes for Indigenous students, including academic achievement, employment prospects, cultural preservation, and Tribal identity?

Purpose of Study

The aim of this study is to provide insight into how Tribal compact schools impact student outcomes within the K–12 setting in the United States. These outcomes include academic, work, personal, and cultural identity. Considerable research has already been conducted demonstrating the need for incorporating Indigenous culture within curriculum (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Demmert, 2001; McCarty & Lee, 2014), and the need for high-quality professional development tailored for Indigenous students (Emmons, 2020), but there has been limited research around what the student outcomes were post-graduation from Tribal compact schools in the United States. This existing gap hinders progress in developing educational practices that advance culturally significant, Tribally operated schools, which can contribute to the development of the next generation of Tribal leaders.

In a mixed methods research design, I aim to interview both graduated students and staff, all of which have at least two years' experience within the Muckleshoot Tribal School, either attending classes or teaching. Within these interviews, discussions reflecting on their experiences and outcomes post-graduation will be collected. Surveys will be filled out surrounding students' and teachers' opinions on the implementation of Muckleshoot culture within the Tribal compact school. These stories will contribute to the evolution of Indigenous educational practices; help rewrite, reframe, and heal from the collective trauma of weaponized educational systems implemented by the federal government; and critically examine the epistemology, methodology, and praxis currently imposed by Western educational systems onto Indigenous communities.

Theoretical Framework

It is difficult to parse out a theoretical framework from everyday experience. A framework will help guide how research is conducted, but a framework is not enough when entering Indigenous spaces. It is like attempting to separate a cup from the liquid it holds—they

both need each other to exist—without each other the liquid will be all over the place and the cup will be empty. To put it another way, "The construction and purpose of the conversation should become clear through the conversation itself" (Wilson, 2008). Or, to put it yet another way, Wilson (2008) explains a relational accountability, research, and I would argue, the nature of reality in a wonderful analogy of a net from his friend, Peter:

> You could try to examine each of the knots in the net to see what holds it together, but it's the strings between the knots that have to work in conjunction in order for the net to function. So any analysis must examine all of the relationships or strings between particular events or knots of data as a whole before it will make any sense. (p. 120)

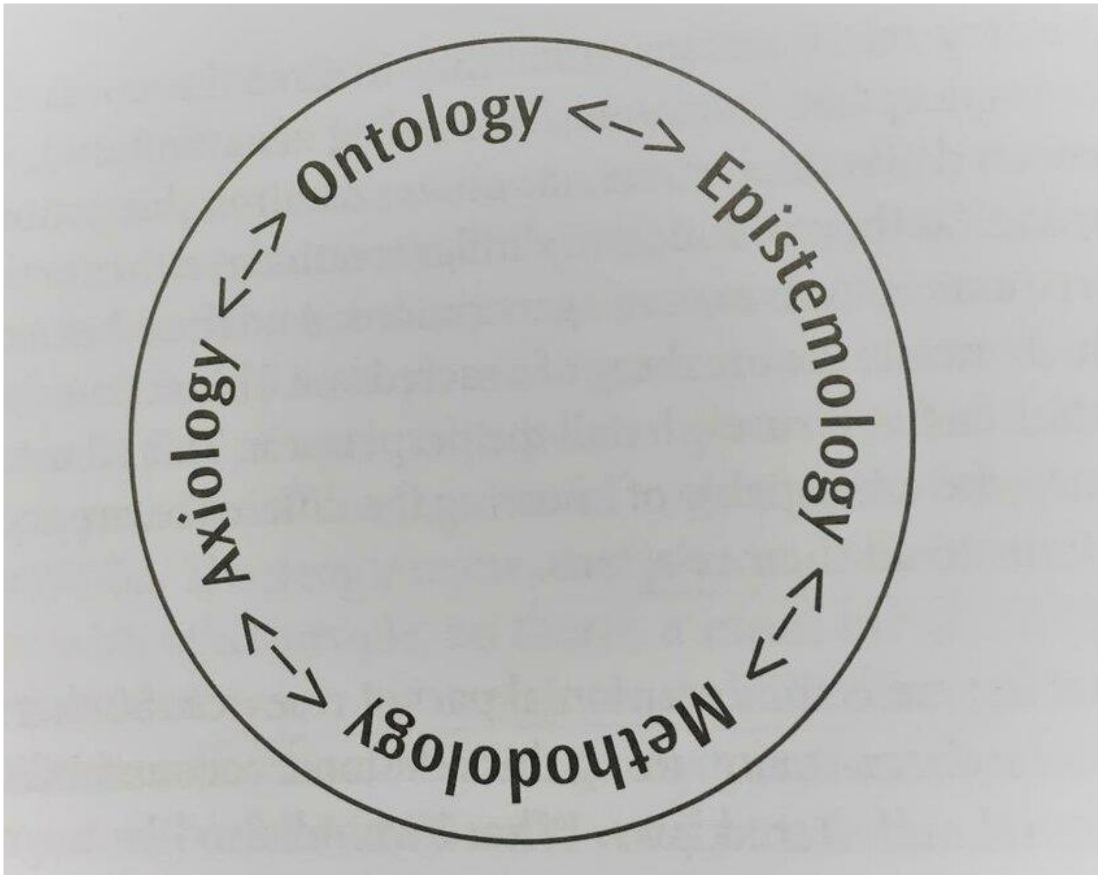
Everything is connected, and these relationships of interconnectedness end up creating the reality we all share and experience. Hyper-fixating on knots can help you explain knots well, but a knot by itself is not going to explain much. Context matters. I could provide a set of interviews and surveys for this research, run a few averages, document how many times individuals say, "culture is a good thing in education," but it would not provide any sort of context.

One framework I will be using in this research is Wilson's (2008) concepts of relational accountability. My hope is that by following the guidelines of "realizing both context and content/analysis that you will reach a deeper understanding of what the chapter is all about" (Wilson, 2008, p. 99). Taking a step backward to follow this framework of relational accountability, you must also follow Indigenous methodology and axiology in the context of an Indigenous research paradigm. Wilson (2008) explains:

- Research is a ceremony.
- The Indigenous research paradigm is made up an interconnected ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology.

- Ontology and epistemology are based on relationships. The thing itself is not as important as your relationship with it. Wilson gives the example of a chair being used to sit or stack books on; it is still a chair.
- Axiology and methodology are based on maintaining accountability to relationship.
- Relationships include ones with animals, nature, plants, and the cosmos.

Figure 8 Wilson's Relational Circle



Note. Wilson (2008), p. 70.

As Wilson (2008) explains, I have a vested interest in the methodology and integrity of the research done, as a Muckleshoot Tribal member researching my Tribe's own school for purposes to help move forward successful educational practices for my people. Some call this reciprocity. I will be asking people to share their own lived experiences in educational systems

under control of our community. Moving forward with relational accountability, it is the opposite of standard academic theoretical frameworks in such that, discussed in a conversation with his friends, Wilson (2008) explained that Indigenous frameworks build relationships, while academic frameworks break them down under the ruse of objectivity.

Under this framework, analysis of data collected must consider how the data will be used to help build relationships. Answers will only be found when taking into account the relationships surrounding those being asked to share; at the point where information starts being broken up into small pieces, those relationships start falling apart, and while you might find a conclusion, it might not make much sense (Wilson, 2008). Going back to nets: After understanding the role and relationship between each knot and the whole of the pieces of rope connected to construct the net, is it being used to catch salmon on a river to nourish a community, or is it being used to ensnare people? (Yes, this is a metaphor concerning education).

Wilson (2008) implements the three R principles of Respect, Reciprocity, and Responsibility, which will be adhered to in my research as they not only mirror my own community's values but also help explain my views on data in general. I operate under the premise that all data collected with participants' consent is ultimately the property of the Muckleshoot Tribe. My role is to collect, synthesize, and report my findings to Tribal leadership. I respect the concerns of Tribal leadership surrounding the data collection and its use; consequently, I am committed to providing complete transparency with all Tribal and community members involved in this process. The aim is to deliver a proper, comprehensive, and valuable dissertation that benefits the Tribe, fulfilling the responsibility bestowed upon me and ensuring this work is conducted from an ethically sound foundation and follows the appropriate

permissions have been obtained not only through the Muckleshoot Internal Review process, but also the University of Washington (UW) Institutional Review Board process.

The second framework I have chosen for this work is named Etuaptmumk, or “two-eyed seeing.” This framework, developed by Albert Marshall in 2004, is described as viewing from one eye Indigenous strengths and ways of knowing and from the other eye western strengths and ways of knowing (Bartlett et al., 2012). These two ways of knowing come together for the betterment of all via meaningful collaboration. This framework legitimizes Indigenous knowledge as “a distinct and whole knowledge system side by side with the same for mainstream (Western) science” (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 335). Utilization of two-eyed seeing involves weaving between the two worlds, switching as needed or as the situation calls for. Within educational spaces, there is no way of getting around Western mindsets. Teachers coming to Tribal schools are trained in them. If Indigenous students, having gone through whatever Tribally controlled educational curriculum they have experienced, desire to pursue degrees in higher education, they will be entering those same Western spaces. Even if Indigenous communities controlled the entire pipeline of education, birth to higher education, what then of the students who want to utilize their education in Western spaces? Will their degrees be accepted as relevant and as important as their Western counterparts? Inclusion of this framework is an admission that only through working together to improve the lives of all people will progress be accomplished.

In the utilization of this framework, Bartlett et al. (2012) posit eight lessons to help guide its implementation:

1. Acknowledge that we need each other and must engage in a co-learning journey.
2. Be guided by Two-Eyed Seeing.
3. View “science” in an inclusive way.

> 4. Do things (rather than "just talk") in a creative, grow forward way.
>
> 5. Become able to put our values, actions and the knowledges in front of us, like an object, for examination and discussion.
>
> 6. Use visuals.
>
> 7. Weave back and forth between our worldviews.
>
> 8. Develop an advisory council of willing, knowledgeable stakeholders, drawing upon individuals both from within the educational institution(s) and within Aboriginal communities. (p. 335)

Due to the inherent nature of each Indigenous and Western perspective, both are respected and considered valid. This framework emphasizes the importance of recognizing that the knowledge held by community Elders and Knowledge holders is essential. There exists no monopoly on understanding or one epistemology that holds supremacy overall. Indigenous epistemologies, which value connection to land, relationality, and orally shared lived experiences, hold equal weight to Western epistemologies of objective measurement and generalizable truths. Expanding on this, Bartlett et al. (2012) say:

> Two-Eyed Seeing is hard to convey to academics as it does not fit into any particular subject area or discipline. Rather, it is about life: what you do, what kind of responsibilities you have, how you should live while on Earth … i.e., a guiding principle that covers all aspects of our lives: social, economic, environmental, etc. The advantage of Two-Eyed Seeing is that you are always fine tuning your mind into different places at once, you are always looking for another perspective and better way of doing things. (p. 336)

This framework aligns with my positionality as an individual who has walked in Western worlds throughout my life, later entering Indigenous spaces to gain knowledge. As I navigate my decolonization journey, this framework challenges and resists Western paradigms of thought and knowing. This framework also enables healing to occur by legitimizing Indigenous epistemologies and by allowing them to work in conjunction with, rather than being assimilated into, academic research spaces. One of the most important lessons of two-eyed seeing is that a new way of thinking is not created by the attempt to merge Indigenous and Western ways; instead, through the appreciation of and co-learning, understanding can be achieved (Bartlett et al., 2012).

There is one last framework I would like to add. Within conducting interviews, I will also implement Archibald's (2008) concepts of storywork, with its ability to facilitate healing, resonated with me. Archibald (2008) states, "Synergistic interaction between storyteller, listener, and story is another critical storywork principle" (p. 33). She extends this relationship principle to gathering appropriate permissions, learning relevant protocols, and responsible use of the information obtained, as well as guidelines surrounding appropriate interviewing processes, such as remaining quiet and listening to what your interviewee is saying without interjecting (Archibald, 2008). These tenants weave together well with the frameworks Wilson (2008) explains under relational accountability.

Archibald's (2008) core principles of Indigenous storywork include respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy. Respect, responsibility, and reciprocity are stated above, mirroring philosophical guidelines Wilson (2008) mentions. The idea of holism, interrelatedness, and synergy mirrors Wilson's (2008) words surrounding relational accountability, as Archibald (2008) states:

> holism refers to the interrelatedness between the intellectual, spiritual (metaphysical values and beliefs and the Creator), emotional, and the physical realms to form a whole healthy person … extends to and is mutually influenced by one's family, community, band, and nation. (p. 11)

Because they overlap well, weaving in both Archibald's and Wilson's frameworks when engaging in this work fits well into my positionality and subject matter of this study. As a Muckleshoot Tribal member, working in my Tribe's school and entering into research of how the school's incorporation of culture into the curriculum made logical sense.

Figure 9 Holism as Developed by Archibald (2008)

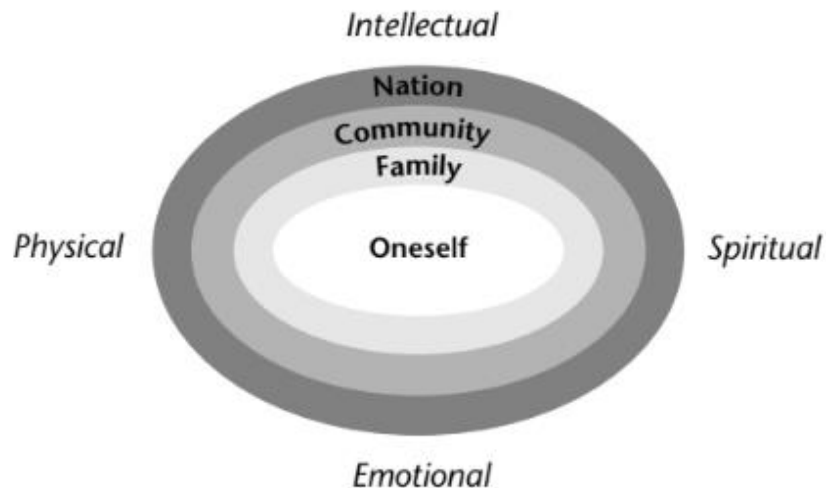


Figure 1 Holism: A context for Indigenous storywork

In Archibald's conversation with Lorna Mathias, she said, "a good story can reach into your hear, mind, and soul, and really make you think hard about yourself in relationship to the world" (2008, p. 140). All Indigenous research can be healing if done properly. Unknown to me at the time, as I applied to this EdD program, I would be undertaking a healing journey of my

own; I want to extend my work as an opportunity for healing to all those who participate in it. As history unfolds Indigenous communities have an opportunity to exercise educational sovereignty more than ever before.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review will examine the current state of knowledge surrounding research about the implementation and outcomes of Indigenous curriculum in classroom and school programs, and the theory surrounding Indigenous curriculum development. Due to the various governmental attitudes, beliefs, reconciliation attempts and histories surrounding Indigenous peoples' and education, articles will be region specific to include articles based in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and areas found outside of the previous list. For example, in Australia, the 1999 Adeliade Declaration's 18-point plan advocated for socially just education for Indigenous students (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004), stating also that the parents of Indigenous students were to be the primary educators and thus required cultural support to ensure positive outcomes. In New Zealand, the *Treaty of Waitangi Act of 1975* created a new relationship between the Māori and the New Zealand government (New Zealand Government, 1975) that, via the new powers invested in the Waitangi Tribunal, developed programs to improve many facets of Māori life—including education (Waitangi Tribunal, 2024). In 2008 Canada, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established as an outcome of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement—an agreement to document the abuses of the Canadian boarding schools (Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, 2006). To date, the United States does not have any sort of legislation mirroring the ones above and thus led to the separation within this literature review.

Articles will be scrutinized for who was studied, what interventions were attempted, how long these interventions were attempted, who ended up participating, the types of research studies conducted, the locations these interventions occurred, and the outcomes. Tying it together, themes will be developed to compare and contrast the findings to develop gaps within

literature. This process will be conducted again in articles that include student voices. The reason for the separation of articles found with student voices and without student voices is to align this dissertation with my own theoretical frameworks of relational accountability, two-eyed seeing, and storywork, in attempts to locate studies that may align.

I utilized the University of Washington's library, Google Scholar, JSTOR, the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) and basic Google searches to locate research articles, dissertations, and state and federal legislation. The search terms included 'Indigenous education,' 'Indigenous education in classrooms,' 'Outcomes of Indigenous education in K–12 settings,' 'Indigenous Educational outcomes in USA/Canada/Worldwide,' 'Implementing Indigenous curriculum in K–12 classrooms,' and 'Outcomes of Implementing Indigenous curriculum'. Swapping the word 'Indigenous' to 'Indian' to may expand results, producing older articles as contemporary language is replaced by new words. In each search, the phrases 'student voices,' 'student interview,' and 'student questionnaire' were added to capture those articles that would utilize a robust qualitative data set. With regards to theory, the selections were of books read during coursework within the Educational Leadership Doctorate program.

These founding theories surrounding the reasons for implementation of Indigenous culture within classrooms, as without foundational understandings of 'why' no course of action would be worth moving forward. This paper will explore three theorists, their views on Indigenous epistemologies, the implications of how Indigenous education differs from standard Western educational structures, and how Indigenous education can be ethically created.

Also included in this literature review are contemporary Indigenous student outcomes from around the United States and Canada. This was accomplished to provide a baseline of how

current Indigenous students are doing to provide a larger picture to support the direction of this study.

Contemporary Indigenous Student Outcomes in the United States

Within the United States, data from all schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) are collected and published on their website in a report card (Bureau of Indian Education, n.d-d). Data are broken down into overall enrollment, percent of on-track attendance, graduation rates, proficiency in English Language Arts/Mathematics/Science, English Proficiency, and number of staff. An independent study by ProPublica (Philip, 2021) reported that results of Standford's Educational Opportunity Project, analyzing 200,000 standardized test scores found that students in BIE-operated schools continue to underperform when compared to public schools, they do learn at a faster rate. Regardless of the rate of learning, students typically fall two grade levels behind. A partnership between the BIE and the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) found in their report (Bureau of Indian Education, 2018) an overall decline in student performance over the 2014–2017 time span studied, noting below average test scores across all subjects and grade levels. When comparing BIE-operated schools with public schools of similar size, Rampey et al. (2021) found consistent underperformance in reading and mathematics for BIE students.

Looking at specific studies, Marchand et al. (2005) found a gap of 17 points between Indigenous and non-Indigenous fourth grade student's math proficiency, with 37% of Indigenous students falling within the "low level" in New York State assessment testing. In eighth grade, Indigenous students continue to fall behind, with a gap of 25 points and 31% of Indigenous students at a "low level." These findings were echoed in an Alaska study by Jones and Ongtooguk (2002) that showed white students pass high school exit exams at twice the rate as

Alaska Natives, with scores in reading at 78 vs. 37, writing 56 vs. 23, and math at 53 vs. 22. Further evidence of Indigenous students falling behind academically in the United States includes that Indigenous populations graduate from four-year universities at a rate of 37%, the lowest of all ethnic groups (The American Indian College Fund, 2025), and in Oregon a study found that only 55% of Indigenous students graduate on time (Jacob, 2017). Finally, in the National Advisory Council on Indian Education to the United States Congress in 2024 (National Advisory Council on Indian Education, 2024) reported a higher dropout rate than non-Indigenous students (14% v 6%), an overall lower college enrollment rate, and an overall lower reading and math proficiency.

Guiding Theory in the Implementation of Indigenous Curriculum

Looking at academic outcomes of Indigenous students, one question that Dr. Montgomery asked several times throughout the academic coursework in this academic program was: “What does justice demand?” While still continuously grappling with that question in all aspects of Indigenous life, going back to foundational theory concerning Indigenous education was needed to sort out if my curiosity was warranted that inserting Indigenous culture into curriculum was even a good idea pursuing in this research. So, what does justice demand?

Justice demands a refocus on Indigenous knowledges via assertion of Tribal sovereignty in the educational process. As discussed above in the introduction, Western educational systems have been inserted as means of control and erasure, and any step forward must be towards Indigenous epistemology. The guiding theory surrounding movement towards this goal is found with Cajete (1994), Deloria and Wildcat (2001), and Smith (2012). Cajete (1994) posits how Indigenous learners learn. Deloria and Wildcat (2001) compare and contrast Western and Indigenous educational systems, their basis and relationship to reality, and Smith (2012), while

writing more on the act of research, does reinforce the perceived supremacy of Western thought, and the ways to ethically develop Indigenous curriculum via proper research methods.

If moving toward Indigenous curriculum that implements culture, the curriculum must first and foremost come from the communities in which the school is located (Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). Establishing curriculum outside of where these communicates are located makes little sense when looking through an Indigenous lens, as the Land (or place) is the source of the education (Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001), where students, in relationship to all of our plant and animal relatives, experience the examples of reality as they are, not as people think they are (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). Experiential involvement with the curriculum is favored over discussion about read texts, allowing a direct link and relationship between the student and the material (Cajete, 1994). Ultimately there would be no separation between the student and the curriculum, as the student would be walking through the curriculum on a daily basis, being taught a plethora of different subjects linked together via experience. Experience is the source of all education, with Western education ultimately stating that experience is unknowable (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001).

Indigenous curriculum is rooted in reciprocal relationships (Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001) with all of creation, allowing the student to experience their own personal connection (Cajete, 1994). These relationships exist between teachers/students, students/reality, and students/place. The curriculum would not be based on K–12 state or federal standards, as test scores do not show each student's personal progress with their own learning at different points in their own lives (Cajete, 1994). Indigenous language would be incorporated as much as possible within the developed curriculum as traditional spoken language is used more than written language to communicate experience (Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). Ritual or

ceremony would also be included in the curriculum, since spiritualism equates to power resting in place (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001); if place is a primary source of education, then spiritualism cannot be separated from the educational experience. Appropriate ceremonies would thus be folded into the student's educational experience. As Deloria and Wildcat (2001) explain, the discord we see in Indigenous students' lives stems from, in part, Western education's disconnection from place. This disconnection results in students being able to understand concepts for application in the Western world, creating 'professionals,' sacrificing their connection to their community, place, and identity. Cajete (1994) also speaks of this discord in discussing the development of personal and group myths. As an Indigenous student travels through a curriculum, whether Western- or Indigenous-based, they begin to develop their own types of myths to explain the nature of reality and their place within it. If the individual's developed myths, influenced by the educational systems they experience, match the Tribal communities' myths, you achieve a type of congruence that leads to assimilation into the group. If a student experiences educational systems that lead to the development of myths that do not match their Tribal community, one outcome is alienation. Developing Indigenous curriculum to assist with myth-making to match Tribal norms and beliefs will help create tranquility and understanding within Tribal communities.

Indigenous education would not be rooted as a vehicle for indoctrination. As Cajete (1994) explains, this education's role is one of example setting. If education is place-based, learning via experience your whole life in the areas in which you live, then passing this experience via story to the next generation would be a legitimate transmission of culture and education. Therefore, Tribal Elders would have an important place in any developed Indigenous curriculum. There would be a marked movement away from curriculum that could be easily

tweaked without direct experience to place to meet the whims of anyone with power, funding, or outside authority, to meet their own agenda. There would be a responsibility given to each student as Indigenous education does not separate individuals from nature, and this inclusion into the whole adds an overall meaning and context that Western education lacks, resulting in a mindset that humans can use nature for any reason for anything they want (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). This would also include a movement away from appeasing state and federal testing rubrics, scores, or reporting of general educational standard (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001), as while important, they are not the singular focus of the educational experience. This form of education would incorporate not only Tribal Elders but also members of the community to help plan and execute (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001).

This curriculum ultimately is empowering for Indigenous students as it develops the whole person—mind, body, and spirit—to know yourself as fully as possible (Cajete, 1994). This development allows students to understand that they themselves are responsible for their own learning and contributions (Cajete, 1994). This all-encompassing development mirrors what traditional Indigenous education accomplished, creating individuals who placed relationships with creation at the center with a strong sense of community and assimilation, not Western indoctrination (Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). This development fostered empowerment and ultimately Tribal sovereignty as it touched the individual, family, and community. In this empowerment, each individual sovereign Tribal community would implement curriculum mirroring their own place, and thus their own experiences. While having similarities, the content and approaches would be tailored to each Tribe (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001).

In the development of Indigenous curriculum, as Audre Lourde is quoted in Linda Tuhiwai Smith's book *Decolonizing Methodologies,* "The master's tools will never dismantle the

master's house" (2012, p. 21). In any research surrounding the development of Indigenous curriculum, it needs to come from and be accountable to first the communities in which the curriculum is going to serve (Smith, 2012). By weaving in the community and Elder's knowledges, you are then able to enter into and develop reciprocal relationships with Elders, curriculum developers, administration, teachers, community members, and students. These reciprocal relationships create a basis in which a shared responsibility is created, one where all share and learn together as a community (Smith, 2012). This methodology of research begins to pushback and deconstruct the entrenched Western educational methods leaving open a space for actual decolonization is, in whatever shape it may take, depending entirely up to the communities in which this action is going to be taken (Smith, 2012). These include cultural protocol, values, behaviors, languages, and community building. At a minimum, it echoes and builds upon the ideas from Deloria and Wildcat (2001) about Tribal sovereignty with regards to creating educational curricula that mirror the values and relationships held by the Tribe creating them.

Moving forward, these theories will help answer the question whether or not, if Indigenous communities were to do anything regarding the education of their people, how, what, and why should they act, as an alternative to continuing to rely on Western metrics and systems of education that have been shown to provide poor outcomes for Indigenous communities.

Integration of Indigenous Culture in School Curriculum Outside of the United States

As previously mentioned, governments outside of the United States have begun to address historical realities concerning around the treatment of Indigenous populations via colonization. As a result, there has been more movement and focus on how Indigenous education is done. The lion's share of research comes out of Canada (Ahmed et al., 2022; Ball & Pence, 2001; Ezeife, 2011; Kanu, 2007; Roy, 2024; Schwab, 1998; Shaw, 2000; Snow & Obed, 2022;

Walker et al., 2023), New Zealand (Borland et al., 2025; Hynds et al., 2016; Macfarlane et al., 2012; Rubie, 1999; Rubie et al., 2004; Papp, 2016; Webber & Macfarlane, 2020; Whitinui, 2010; Tamati et al., 2021), and Australia (Brown, 2019; Burgess et al., 2022; Krishnamoorthy et al., 2024; Schroeder et al., 2022;) with a few articles from the rest of the world (Duaso, 2023; Govender & Mudzamiri, 2022; Näslund-Hadley et al., 2025).

For those research articles based in Canada, the literature shows that implementation of Indigenous curriculum has positive impacts on student social emotional skills, general wellbeing, and cultural pride (Ahmed et al., 2022; Ball & Pence, 2001; Snow & Obed, 2022; Shaw, 2000; Walker et al., 2023) demonstrating the positive implementation of land based learning (Ahmed et al., 2022; Snow & Obed, 2022; Walker et al., 2023). Although not all curricula incorporated place-based learning (Ball & Pence, 2001; Shaw, 2000), students did report improvements on social emotional metrics, demonstrating that while place-based learning is aligned with Indigenous learning methodologies (Cajete 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001), incorporation in standard Western-style classrooms does show positive impacts on Indigenous students.

Outdoor learning aligns with what Deloria and Wildcat (2001) and Cajete (1994) describe as a holistic approach to education, with choosing not to separate subjects into specific categories, but to teach all subjects simultaneously via experience. This was demonstrated in several research articles (Ahmed et al., 2022; Ezeife, 2011; Snow & Obed, 2022; Walker et al., 2023) that had students participating in outdoor learning modules lasting from two weeks (Ahmed et al., 2022), three times per month for four months (Walker et al., 2023), and the majority outside on the land (Ezeife, 2011). These differing time lengths indicate that any amount of land-based learning has positive effects on Indigenous students and should be explored further. For those studies that did take place outdoors on the land, only two (Ezeife,

2011; Shaw, 2000) reported quantitative findings in specific subjects, math and overall Canadian learning standards, which showed improvements in both areas. Overall, outdoor learning has shown positive impacts on Indigenous student's abilities to engage with coursework in a meaningful way that transcends rote knowledge of the material and moves into the mind/body/spirit (Cajete, 1994).

However, we also see improvements in those studies that did not utilize outdoor, place-based learning as a methodology for Indigenous learners. Studies that did not incorporate place-based learning (Ball & Pence, 2001; Kanu, 2007; Roy, 2024; Shaw, 2000) found students meeting national standards for learning, improved overall test scores, and higher completion program rates. The only area in which no improvement was found was in dropout and attendance issues in the Kanu (2007) study; however, the overall implementation of Indigenous 'perspectives' within the curriculum was limited to the addition of Indigenous storywork, talking circles, and beliefs in one social studies class—demonstrating that when these concepts are treated as intervention only, not a fundamental epistemology shift, you may get some increased engagement from the students with an already established pattern of attendance but no fundamental belief change surrounding the role a meaning of education in Indigenous student's lives.

Language is an important part of developing Indigenous curriculum (Smith, 2012), and would need to be in place, as available, for any successful program. Research (Ahmed et al., 2022; Ezeife, 2011; Snow & Obed, 2022; Roy, 2024; Walker et al., 2023) shows that the inclusion of Indigenous language was associated with higher student engagement, higher cultural self-identity, and improvements in student learning concepts. These successes demonstrate that when language is not treated as its own separate subject but woven into the students' learning in

an interdisciplinary way, positive outcomes can occur. Interestingly, those studies that did not incorporate Indigenous language into the curriculum (Shaw, 2000) found that, during interviews, students wanted their languages folded into their daily educational experience either in the classrooms or library.

Theoretical frameworks in developing Indigenous curriculum requires a whole community approach that includes the voices of Elders (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Smith 2012). Canadian studies overwhelmingly (Ahmed et al., 2022; Ball & Pence, 2001; Ezeife, 2011; Roy, 2024; Snow & Obed, 2022; Shaw, 2000; Walker et al., 2023) demonstrate the practice of Elder involvement in Indigenous curriculum development, with the only outlier being the Kanu (2007) study in which Elders came into the classrooms as experts to share knowledge but were not involved in the planning of the curriculum. However, within that study they utilized an already developed document called “Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into Curricula,” which, as explained by the author, did not integrate Elder knowledge. This practice tracks, as stated before they inserted Indigenous ‘perspectives,’ staying committed to the standard Western epistemological underpinnings that got us here in the first place.

Ultimately, Canadian studies implemented several of the elements that signify a change in epistemological shifts within educational systems utilizing language, place-based learning, community, and Elders to help plan and implement Indigenous curriculum in classrooms. While not all have metrics demonstrating Western-style metrics of grades, there is overwhelming evidence that Indigenous students in Canada have experiences learning and growth outside of a simple grade.

For those research articles found in New Zealand, the literature demonstrates improvements in student social emotional skills and overall resilience (Macfarlane et al., 2012;

Rubie, 1999; Rubie et al., 2004; Whitinui, 2010), improved academic success (Borland et al., 2025; Hynds et al., 2016; Papp, 2016; Rubie 1999; Webber & Macfarlane, 2020) and improved cultural pride/awareness (Papp, 2016; Rubie 1999; Whitinui, 2010). The curriculum studied occurred in part on the land (Rubie, 1999; Rubie et al., 2004; Whitinui, 2010). A reoccurring theme was the implementation of Te Kotahitanga, a Māori cultural program (Hynds et al., 2016; Papp, 2016; Whitinui, 2010) that implements the following: caring for students as Māori and acknowledging their mana, having high expectations, managing classroom to promote learning, using a range of dynamic and interactive teaching styles, and teachers reflecting with students together on student achievement in order to move forward collaboratively (Bishop & Berryman, 2009). While not entirely aligned with the foundational underpinnings of Cajete (1994) and Deloria and Wildcat (2001), it does center Māori culture and treating Māori students fairly with respect, allowing heightened levels of self-determination and interdependence (Bishop & Berryman, 2009).

Unfortunately, those land-based studies (Rubie, 1999; Rubie et al., 2004; Whitinui, 2010) treated culture as a separate class, with the hopes that participation in cultural classes would improve student engagement, which would in turn transfer over to generalized Western-run classrooms. Although this cultural intervention is simply that—an intervention—without the underlying cultural generalizations that would encompass other subjects, leaves something to be desired, despite the student benefit with self-esteem. This methodology of treating culture as a separate subject to be studied is what Deloria and Wildcat (2001) warn not to do, resulting in a situation where culture can be seen as ‘other,’ leading to poor student outcomes. Despite this within the studies, Webber and Macfarlane (2020) document that Indigenous students feel that knowledge of their lands is the foundation by which other knowledges is attained, echoing the

relational epistemologies Cajete (1994) wrote about, whereby subjects can be taught under the lens of culture, rather than being taught as a simple class.

Research into classroom-based interventions (Borland et al., 2025) is associated with improved completion rates of secondary education, improved overall relationships between students and teacher (Papp, 2016), and higher student retention rates with associated credits to graduate (Hynds et al., 2016). It is notable that the Hynds and Papp articles incorporate the Te Kotahitanga cultural program for educators, showing that, while not perfect, strides are being made to improve the educational outcomes of Indigenous students in New Zealand. According to the findings of Webber and Macfarlane (2020) based on their interviews with Māori students, any educational intervention/curriculum would have to include the ability to navigate successfully between two worlds, promote Māori culture and identity, build upon and create connection to place, and promote a feeling of importance within their families.

One unique aspect of the Māori in New Zealand is that they have established their own Indigenous school system called Kura Kaupapa Māori. This school system, formally recognized in 1999, started as a way to revitalize the Māori language (Tocker, 2015), with Māori-based curriculum being taught at least 51% of the time. The New Zealand Ministry of Education (2008) published the original 1989 document that laid out the foundations of this educational process. A recent report from the New Zealand Education Review Office indicates that Māori students who attend these schools have increased rates of enrollment into universities, higher achievement rates when compared to Māori students who attend mainstream state schools in similar socio-economic groups, and similar overall testing scores when compared to the whole (Smaill et al., 2024).

According to the published founding documents (Ministry of Education, 2008) language is critical to how one understands their existence; knowledge is relational, with the purpose to sustain culture overall, encompassing the whole student's mind/body/spirit and leaning into different ways of knowing outside of rote memorization. This includes a spiritual component, and knowledge is a lived experience steeped in culture and community and ultimately tied to place. Many of these concepts, if not all, are the same concepts Cajete (1994) and Deloria and Wildcat (2001) speak about. These founding documents, called Te Aho Matua O Nga Kura Kaupapa Māori encompass the use of language, the socialization of children, how the world impacts the learning of children, teaching practices, and overall teaching goals lay out the framework in which the Kura Kaupapa Māori schools were to be run. Please refer to Appendix A for the full document in English.

When culturally relevant Indigenous curriculum is placed into classrooms in Australia, research articles show improved teacher confidence to build meaningful relationships (Burgess et al., 2022), increased reading and math scores with lower associated behavior (Krishnamoorthy et al., 2024; Vaughan & Caldwell, 2017), improved self-concept (Prehn et al., 2021), improved reading scores (Chandler et al., 2008; Kennedy, 2021), and improved attendance (Lee-Hammond, 2014; Vaughan & Caldwell, 2017). Following appropriate Indigenous methodologies during curriculum research and creation (Smith, 2012), research found that community involvement from parents (Vaughan & Caldwell, 2017), community members in a mentorship style (Burgess et al., 2022), and community members (Kennedy, 2021; Krishnamoorthy et al., 2024; Lee-Hammond, 2014). Some researchers (Chandler et al., 2008; Prehn et al., 2021) did not employ this methodology; however, they did see positive results due to the inclusion of community and Elders within the curriculum, just not with the overall development.

The inclusion of Indigenous language within developed curriculum is important, and while some studies (Burgess et al., 2022; Chandler et al., 2008; Kennedy, 2021; Krishnamoorthy et al., 2024) included it with positive outcomes, other studies (Lee-Hammond, 2014; Vaughan & Caldwell, 2017) did not, highlighting the interwoven, complicated, dynamic nature of Indigenous epistemologies (Cajete, 1994) that cannot point to one metric to view what would be beneficial or not, as there are many different factors working simultaneously. Another factor to note is whether the study included place in its design, since Indigenous knowledge is place-based (Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). Reviewing the Australian studies, only one (Lee-Hammond, 2014) incorporated place into its design, while the rest do not (Burgess et al., 2022; Chandler et al., 2008; Kennedy, 2021; Krishnamoorthy et al., 2024; Prehn et al., 2021; Vaughan & Caldwell, 2017), demonstrating a clear disconnect with the importance place has within education for Indigenous students and their communities.

Looking outside of Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, I have found three articles: one from Zimbabwe (Govender & Mudzamiri, 2022), one from the Philippines (Duaso, 2023), and one from Panama (Näslund-Hadley et al., 2025). While from completely different areas of the planet, there are several commonalities that adhere to what Cajete (1994) and Deloria and Wildcat (2001) speak about when discussing Indigenous educational learning and curriculum development. In this curriculum development, all three (Duaso, 2023; Govender & Mudzamiri, 2022; Näslund-Hadley et al., 2025) recruited the use of community Elders to assist in guiding how the curriculum was set up and what it contained. In more community-based attempts to bring culture into the classroom, Elders themselves were brought in to speak to share direct experiential knowledge or provide appropriate teaching tools to highlight their points (Govender & Mudzamiri, 2022). In school-wide initiatives, Elders were brought in to assist with curriculum

development and teacher training but did not actually share their knowledge to students (Duaso, 2023). In Panama, nationwide initiatives were established to work with state educational agencies to establish Indigenous curriculum metrics and modules for widespread use (Näslund-Hadley et al., 2025). In the end, Elders from Indigenous communities were included in setting up what is important and how it was going to be taught within the curriculum.

Interestingly, all three research studies circled around the teaching of sciences, two in math (Duaso, 2023; Näslund-Hadley et al., 2025) and one in physics (Govender & Mudzamiri, 2022). This runs counter to the Indigenous learning methodologies discussed by Cajete (1994) and Deloria and Wildcat (2001) saying that Indigenous learning is holistic in design and experience. Western subject-specific educational design, breaking knowledge into bits and pieces to be examined from an outsider's perspective in order to be manipulated, is the trend seen within all three of the articles, as they do not speak of any other subjects within the study, or if the curricula developed were part of a larger, overarching plan.

The use and incorporation of Indigenous language is an important part of any curriculum development, appearing in two of the three: Bantu in Zimbabwe (Govender & Mudzamiri, 2022), and Ngabere in Panama (Näslund-Hadley et al., 2025). In the Duaso (2023) study, within the recommended intervention plan to improve the Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP), the author states the curriculum needed to incorporate more of the Indigenous students' real-life experiences, including cultural heritage, equity, and social justice. Whenever possible, Indigenous language needs to be woven into the Indigenous students' experiences. The use of Indigenous language improves student understanding (Govender & Mudzamiri, 2022; Näslund-Hadley et al., 2025) as it aligns with the students' everyday experience, how ideas are conveyed, and how they experience the world (place) around them.

The incorporation of Indigenous curriculum should impact the students' whole being, mind, body, and spirit (Cajete, 1994). In looking at outcomes of implemented curriculum, we should see at the very least an impact and measurement of the social-emotional effects of student participation. Within the qualitative data collected, having learning spaces incorporated with communities rather than separated from the impacted students' perceptions of self-worth and importance of their culture (Govender & Mudzamiri, 2022), making the content of the classes more accessible and relatable to the students. This accessibility demonstrated how culture can be a vehicle to explain concepts students initially thought were coming from the colonizer (Govender & Mudzamiri, 2022). In collected quantitative data, results show that students expressed a higher score in cultural identity (Näslund-Hadley et al., 2025), with the Duaso (2023) study focusing entirely on rote math scores with no mention of the social-emotional/cultural relationality impacts for students participating within the class.

Overall, evidence collected here from sources outside of the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand shows an association between these Indigenous curricula and improved student outcomes in the areas of math and physics (Duaso, 2023; Govender & Mudzamiri, 2022; Näslund-Hadley et al., 2025). While some studies only focus on the grades obtained in the subject (Duaso, 2023), others (Govender & Mudzamiri, 2022; Näslund-Hadley et al., 2025) take a whole-student approach on the appropriateness of Indigenous culture inclusion within subjects (Govender & Mudzamiri, 2022), and others incorporate both student performance via test scores and student thoughts and feelings of inclusion of culture woven into curriculum (Näslund-Hadley et al., 2025).

Integration of Indigenous Culture in School Curriculum Inside of the United States

There has been no formal reconciliation between the federal government of the United States and the Indigenous people living within it. As a result, the progress within the United States has moved along a different path when compared to countries that have begun reconciliation efforts. The research based in the United States has found positive outcomes in the areas of student self-esteem/confidence (Ellington et al., 2024; Dubosarsky et al., 2011; Green, 2010; Johnson et al., 2014; Lino, 2010; O'Rourke et al., 2018; Ward et al., 2025), mirroring what Cajete (1994) spoke of with educating the whole student rather than just their mind via separated classes. However, the research does find progress when controlled for subject specific coursework, with gains in grade level math/reading assessments (Top, 2024), Indigenous culture (Ellington et al., 2024; Green, 2010; Lino, 2010; O'Rourke et al., 2018), reading (Butt, 2014), math (Lipka & Adams, 2004; Van Ryzin & Vincent 2017; Ward et al. 2025), and science (Johnson et al., 2014). To contrast, in the development of an Indigenous school, Fenimore-Smith (2009) showed, attempts to fold in Indigenous curriculum fell flat; results show poor standardized test scores, with a 79% non-passing rate of state standards after two years spent attempting to establish the school. Also, in research by Butt (2014), while there was progress made with math in those classrooms where Indigenous culture was placed daily, there was little progress achieved in reading, in which the researcher found questionable use of culture on a daily basis.

When discussing the role of place/land-based learning in the development and implementation of Indigenous curriculum, the results were mixed overall in the studies reviewed. One would hope that there would be portions of place-based learning as it aligns with stated theory (Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001), moving away from the Western educational frameworks associated with the educational failures for Indigenous students. The research shows

that while some interventions in curriculum (Dubosarsky et al., 2011; Fenimore-Smith, 2009; Johnson et al. 2014; Lino, 2010) implemented an aspect of land/place within the curriculum, the majority (Butt, 2014; Green, 2010; Henderson Smith et al., 2025; Lipka & Adams, 2004; Ngai & Koehn, 2016; O'Rourke et al., 2018; Van Ryzin & Vincent, 2017; Ward et al., 2025) were found to lack associations to centering place within curriculum. Interestingly, two studies (Ellington et al., 2024; Top, 2024) mentioned the importance of centering place within any curriculum developed, but it was unspecified whether these were actually included within the study.

The inclusion of Indigenous language within developed curricula is important and should be associated with positive outcomes. While some studies (Dubosarsky et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2014; Lino, 2010; Ngai & Koehn, 2016; O'Rourke et al., 2018; Van Ryzin & Vincent, 2017) included Indigenous language that had associated positive outcomes, other studies (Butt, 2014; Ellington et al., 2024; Lipka & Adams, 2004; Ward et al., 2025) did not include language as part of the curricula, demonstrating that, while ethically preferable when developing Indigenous curriculum for use with Indigenous students, it is possible to see positive outcomes when language is not implemented. Two studies looked at the outcomes of language classes (Top, 2024) and a language immersion program (Green, 2010).

With any curriculum development, Elder and community participation in that development is needed to ensure cultural validity, alignment, and sovereignty (Smith, 2012). Those research articles (Dubosarsky et al., 2011; Ellington et al., 2024; Fenimore-Smith, 2009; Green, 2010; Johnson et al., 2014; Lipka & Adams, 2004; Ngai & Koehn, 2016; Top, 2024; Ward et al., 2025) that employed Elder and community participation reported positive results in several areas such as math and reading proficiency, science concepts, and cultural competency. While aligning to ethical curriculum development within Indigenous communities should be the

norm, those studies that did not either mention how the curriculum was developed or did not employ Elder and community participation (Butt, 2014; Lino, 2010; O'Rourke et al., 2018; Van Ryzin & Vincent, 2017) found improvements in the same categories.

Thus far, research has been centered around those articles that have not included student experiences in their education when Indigenous culture is placed into the classroom. The remaining articles take that piece into account and are separated into two categories: those found outside of the United States and those found within.

In studies that occurred outside of the United States, six (Crooks et al., 2015; Highfield et al., 2025; Highfield & Webber, 2021; Jones, 2018; Kanu, 2007; Savage et al., 2011) were found l, all with varying levels of student voices within the research. The theoretical frameworks by Deloria and Wildcat (2001), Wilson (2008), and Smith (2012) establish and provide guidance on how to conduct Indigenous research appropriately, with two (Jones, 2018; Savage et al., 2011) being better examples of how to include student voices. The three (Highfield et al., 2025; Highfield & Webber, 2021; Kanu, 2007) articles that do include student voices relegate them to snippets that come across as quotations to help prove a point, rather than to provide an assessment of the whole student, encompassing the body, mind, and spirit (Cajete, 1994). This usage of qualitative data is helpful to help advance study outcomes but fails to follow the theoretical frameworks established by Deloria and Wildcat (2001), Wilson (2008), and Smith (2012). Finally, the Crooks et al. (2015) article attempts to combine both qualitative and quantitate data, allowing student and teacher voices to be heard while also incorporating survey data.

For those studies appearing within the United States, two articles (Jeffries & Singer, 2003; Peters et al., 2024) were found that included publication of student voices in the research.

While other studies previously cited did include qualitative data in their findings, it was interesting to see that few researchers actually published what the students had to say; allowing students the space and opportunity to speak their experience provides an opportunity to see the importance of relationality, relationships, and what the students' experience of the interventions were. This inclusion follows the theoretical frameworks used in this dissertation (Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Wilson, 2008;), especially when both quantitative and qualitative data are utilized (Bartlett et al., 2012).

Peters et al. (2024) do a good job incorporating both ways of data gathering, providing a good example of how this kind of research can be done. From the beginning, where they cite the Dakota Wicohȧŋ Community as authors of the study, it is clear that the authors incorporate Indigenous theory into their research. One should then expect that appropriate protocols were followed, allowing the Dakota Wicohȧŋ students voices to be heard and included as an important part of this research surrounding their own sense of belonging pre- and post-intervention of a cultural month, where cultural facts, figures, and protocols were introduced into a predominately white public school with a roughly 25% Indigenous population. The experiences of the students pre-intervention paint an already well-established pattern of shame, ridicule, and racism. The addition of the student voices offers a more holistic approach into the outcomes of the study, humanizing the research and stepping closer to an Indigenous way of knowing that is more relational (Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). While the students did report an increased sense of belonging and more positive relationships with faculty, the study does not go into depth about what this intervention entailed, stating that it was developed by the Dakota Wicohȧŋ Community, with input from community members and Elders. The second study (Jeffries & Singer, 2003) relies entirely on three students' and one administrator's direct experiences with an

alternative school format, developed by “American Indian professionals, parents, and affiliated entities” (p. 45) with guarding the exact name and location of this school behind anonymity. The absent qualitative data does not align with the two-eyed seeing approach that helps guide this dissertation’s research study format and offers a gap. Again, the incorporation of student and administrator voice within the study provides a depth and breadth to the data that quantitative data simply cannot achieve, as quantitative data collection limits a thematic analysis. While the results of the study are positive, as reported by students, the addition of quantitative data metrics surrounding dropout/graduation rates and overall achievement would have been extremely valuable and reinforced the qualitative data collected. In addition, if the study had included the experiences of students who graduated from the alternative school, it could better frame and establish relationships between those students who were currently in attendance and those who benefitted from the school. While the study provides interesting evidence that the alternative school is providing a space for those Indigenous students to graduate high school, what are the long-term outcomes? What becomes of them after graduation?

The current research describes various approaches to engaging Indigenous youth in their educational pursuits. Although existing theories and methodologies have shown success, limited research that includes student voices in terms of post-graduation outcomes. Most studies have focused on establishing curriculum in schools in an effort to increase student achievement, with a space open for both teachers and students to share their experiences and thoughts on how Indigenous culture has impacted student outcomes after graduation. Given the United States’ relative lag in reconciliation initiatives between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, combined with the potential for Tribes to implement culturally significant curricula and

methodologies within their operated schools, there exists a valuable opportunity to contribute to the current research gap.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore the outcomes of Indigenous students whose educational experience incorporates their culture into classroom settings. The overall goal is to provide an example of Indigenous theory put into action, provide students a voice to speak about their experiences and impacts in their own lives, and to explore the thoughts and opinions of this educational method from the viewpoints of both teachers and students. I aim to add what knowledge I can to the growing literature of Indigenous education put into action, and to fill the gaps of limited student voices pertaining to outcomes. This chapter will describe the research design, the participants, and research questions the study aims to examine; review a methods justification; discuss how human participants were protected during the study and the sampling methods utilized; and discuss the validity of the data collected, potential limitations to the study, and the protections provided to Tribal data.

This study will focus on one K–12 Tribally operated school that is run by the Muckleshoot Tribe. My research design will be a mixed methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data. This method of data collection follows the concept of Etuaptmumk (Bartlett et al., 2012) or “two-eyed seeing.” This method views information both via Indigenous and Western lenses, allowing each to be practiced while allowing the space and legitimacy to move as needed between the two to gain a holistic perspective. This method is not a way to combine both ways to create something new; it is a way to separate both methods to add legitimacy to Indigenous knowledge without getting engulfed in Western science. The data will be derived from conversations between graduated students at the Muckleshoot Tribal School (MTS), current teachers, demographic questionnaires, and Likert survey data. The goal was to collect the voices, demographics, and outlooks of graduated students and teaching staff to

provide a picture of how Indigenous Culture within the classroom setting impacts student outcomes.

Research Design

This study incorporates mixed-methods convergent parallel design (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017) utilizing three different data sources: semi-structured interviews lasting roughly 60 minutes, demographic questionnaires, and Likert questionnaires. A mixed-methods convergent parallel design allows for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time separate from one another. This approach allows for different types of data to be collected concerning the same phenomena to be eventually brought together to be interpreted with a chosen analytical framework (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). This method affords the opportunity to utilize Etuaptmumk as data sets can be collected separately and analyzed through whichever lens deemed appropriate (Indigenous or Western), allowing the space and time to gain a larger picture of how the qualitative and quantitative data is related to each other. While other approaches offer some benefits, like a sequential approach with quantitative data first being collected and then following up with qualitative data (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017), the Indigenous frameworks I am using (Archibald, 2008; Bartlett et al., 2012; Wilson, 2008) would not align ethically or philosophically to the data being collected and the spirit in which this study is going to be conducted. Not placing one type of data or data collecting method over another in importance or priority allows breathing room for natural relationships to be observed and commented on.

This study has not set out with any hypothesis to prove or disprove. From the underlying Indigenous theory of Cajete (1994) and Deloria and Wildcat (2008), one could infer that Indigenous educational systems that target the whole Indigenous student would create positive

outcomes for those students. This study is taking a more bottom-up approach whereby collected data is used to explore themes, relationships, and connections. The semi-structured interviews will use 10 questions for educators and 11 questions for graduated students. The choice was made to have in-person, semi-structured interviews because not only does this approach follow the methods described by Wilson (2008) regarding relationship and relational accountability, it also allows participants the freedom to say what they want in the ways they choose. These interviews provide the space and freedom to move off the scripted questions if need be. The interviews are conducted either on MTS property, available Muckleshoot community locations (Muckleshoot Tribal College, community library, Muckleshoot Community Center, participants' homes), or over Zoom, with questionnaires provided at the same time.

Those individuals who do not participate in semi-structured interviews but want to participate in the questionnaires will be afforded the chance to do so by delivery of questionnaires to the location of the participant's choice. Demographic questionaries will have six questions, and Likert surveys will have 11 questions. The choice was made to include survey and demographic data to be collected to help analyze, frame, and make connections between themes found in the interviews. The utilization of both quantitative and qualitative data in literature reviewed provided the most robust and rich data (Peters et al., 2024) and will offer the most comprehensive data set to answer the research questions. Qualitative data collected through interviews will be analyzed using a relational understanding and accountability approach (Wilson, 2008), with the understanding that these stories collected occurred in a specific time in history surrounding Indigenous sovereignty in education and at a specific location and place. In addition to attempting to establish themes within participants' stories, the analysis will attempt to understand the relationships participants share—classroom, school community, greater

community, and culture. Quantitative data collected via demographic survey and Likert questionnaire will be analyzed via mean, median, and mode. Survey data will be grouped into several categories: self-Identified Indigenous (both non-Muckleshoot and Muckleshoot), self-identified Indigenous (non-Muckleshoot), self-identified Muckleshoot, and non-Indigenous, to be compared.

Research Questions and Participants

Reading the literature concerning Indigenous student educational outcomes, I grew increasingly frustrated that there were limited data surrounding the outcomes of those students who participated in the various interventions conducted. It was like a story without an ending, reading about the plight of colonization with the implementation of boarding schools, the resurgence of Indigenous community-led education from around the world, the theories and methods in which to promote positive outcomes, and after all of work and dedication, there were not many stories of what became of these students, this next generation of Tribal leaders. I sought to find a glimpse of what a small sample of students were experiencing going through current one Tribally Operated school system. My first research question, *What are the observed outcomes of students attending the Muckleshoot Tribal School (MTS)?,* focuses on the outcomes the students experienced once they exited from the school system. Did they move on to university, and if so, how was that experience for them? Did they jump into the workforce within or outside of the Tribe? These data were going to be collected via sit-down one-on-one semi-structured interviews. (Please see Appendix B for the full list of guiding questions.) The goal of the questions was to have a starting point on which participants could choose to share, as comfort allowed, about their full experience once they graduated.

The second research question, *How does the teaching staff incorporate cultural elements into the school curriculum?,* revolves around those who have provided this educational experience to those interviewed students. Again, with semi-structured interviews, with a separate set of guiding questions (Appendix C), conversations were the starting point for teachers to express their own experiences teaching Indigenous students. Allowing teachers' voices to be heard is an important part of this puzzle, as they have been charged with helping to implement Indigenous culture within the classroom and hold a responsibility to do so. Within both interview groups, graduate students and teachers, demographic questionnaires and Likert educational surveys will also be provided to participants to collect quantitative data to compare, contrast, and help establish themes and patterns in the collected data. In addition to those who participated in the interviews, the demographic and Likert educational surveys will be offered to graduated students and teachers that may not want to participate in long format interviews to help aid data collection. (See Appendix D for full list of questions.)

The third research question, *What is the influence of culture on the educational experience?,* is answered via synthesis of the collected data, both outcomes and themes developed by the interviews, demographic questionnaires, and Likert survey. This question attempts to uncover themes of both student and teacher, with the backdrop of demographic, attitudes, and beliefs surrounding the importance and implementation of Culture within the classroom.

Twenty interviews will be conducted with teachers at MTS, five from the K–5 cohort, five from the grade 6–8 cohort, five from the 9–12 cohort, and five from the Special Education program. This breakdown of teachers from different cohorts was chosen to provide a large as possible sample size from across the whole school. While some teachers have taught several

different grades throughout their careers at MTS, this was not taken into account during recruitment; however, their experiences may be discussed during the interviews. Overall tenure was not a factor as well, as long as the teacher had spent at least two years teaching at MTS. Twenty interviews from graduated students will be conducted from those students who graduated from MTS. While it was hoped that a wide array of graduates from different cohorts would want to participate in the study, only volunteers with at least two years attending classes who graduated with an MTS degree were considered. All participants were over the age of 18 at the time of the study. This was chosen because the focus of the study revolves around outcomes, and those students who were currently enrolled at MTS would have not reached that point—interviewing students currently enrolled would have been an entirely different study. Every interview participant will have the opportunity to fill out the demographic questionnaire and Likert survey. Those graduated students and teachers in the community who want to fill out only the demographic questionnaire and Likert survey will also have the option to do so without participating in the interview portion.

Methods Justification

Regardless of the progress made in educational spaces to Indigenize, decolonize, and shed light on the historical realities that do not benefit Indigenous students, I continue to operate under the same Western educational systems that I began with 40+ years ago when I entered preschool. While there are valid critiques (Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Smith, 2012) of Western views on the educational process, data collection, and the use of data to understand phenomena, I do believe that both Indigenous methods and Western methods can be utilized to gain a clear picture and understanding of the world around us. While following Indigenous ethical guidelines (Smith, 2012) regarding research within Indigenous communities, when

incorporating the qualitative and quantitative data to make sense of the world, I utilized Etuaptmumk (Bartlett et al., 2012) or a "two-eyed seeing" process, to gain as broad of a perspective as possible to understand the data. The current state of Indigenous education was not created in a vacuum, and I wanted to utilize all tools at my disposal to understand how Indigenous education and student outcomes were linked. All the data were analyzed and studied via an Indigenous and Western lens following the work of Bartlett et al. (2012), Wilson (2008), Archibald (2008), Mason (2002), and Edmonds and Kennedy (2016).

Incorporating both Indigenous and Western methods allows those Indigenous students who have made their way through the educational process to share their stories (Archibald, 2008), creating and sharing the relationships they developed (Wilson, 2008). One could argue the fixation on student outcomes is a Western way of approaching this work. While that may be true to a certain extent, there is no escaping the reality these outcomes have real world implications; Indigenous people walk in two worlds, with successes and failures in each impacting the other.

Protection of Human Subjects

The Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979) provides ethical guidelines to protect human subjects from harm in research, which include Respect for Persons, Beneficence, and Justice. Following the guidelines found in Smith (2012) for Indigenous research practices, as well as Wilson's (2008) 3 Rs of Respect, Reciprocity, and Responsibility, provides an ethical foundation to protect those individuals who chose to participate in this research. All willing participants in this study were provided with their rights and the study was fully explained to each participant, who were able to withdraw their consent at any time for any reason. All participants were recruited from the Muckleshoot Tribal School and Muckleshoot Tribal community. All

participants signed an audio recording consent. Upon transcription of audio interviews, each participant was given an opportunity to edit their responses for use in the study to ensure that what they attempted to communicate was communicated in the way they wanted it to be, clarify any statements, and make any necessary edits to the transcription. While the overall risk to human subjects was low, counseling resources were available to all participants in case the subject matter discussed caused any psychological stress or injury. Audio recordings were chosen as a method to collect data over video recordings since being video recorded could cause some participants an undue amount of stress. All participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identities. All demographic and Likert questionnaires were number coded together to assist in data synthesis, with no names being collected. All data were stored on a secure, password-protected personal laptop, which was backed up to a secure, password-protected cloud storage server. All hard copies of survey and consent forms were collected by this researcher and locked in filing cabinet in a locked room until completion of the study. Upon completion of the interviews, individuals were provided with a $50 Amazon gift card as compensation for their time. Those who completed both demographic and survey questionnaire were entered into a raffle for a basket valued at $400.00.

Sampling Procedures

Once the study was approved by the governing bodies, a talented graphic designer assisted with the development of flyers to notify the community that the study was going to occur and recruit participants via email and physical posting of flyers at MTS. A website was created to establish an online presence and further expand recruitment for the study. Those individuals who wanted to participate in the study could do so by reaching out to me via the phone number and email provided in the study flyers or filling out and submitting their contact

data on the website to request follow up. Individuals who work at MTS could contact me directly in person, as I was employed there at the time of the study. I approached people whom I knew personally who met the requirements of the study with study information for the purpose of recruiting participants. Study participants had to have spent at least two years attending classes prior to graduating from MTS as a student or have taught for at least two years at MTS as a certified teacher. Once an individual qualified for study participation, an interview time and place was scheduled where the participant was interviewed and provided demographic/survey questionnaires for completion. Due to time constraints within the Educational Leadership Doctorate program, a cross-sectional sampling design was chosen over a longitudinal sampling design. While collecting data from the same individuals over years would yield rich data concerning their experience, there simply is not enough time allowed in the program to run that ambitious of a study.

Validity

As Mason (2002) explains about qualitative research, “the established measures of validity, generalizability, and reliability for assessing the quality, rigor, and wider potential of research … are sometimes seen as irrelevant or anathema to the qualitative research endeavor” (p. 38). This, of course, comes from the seeds of the Western lens of research. She goes on to say, “If your research is valid, it means that you are observing, identifying, or ‘measuring’ what you say you are” (Mason, 2002, p. 39). That echoes what Wilson (2008) thinks about validity: “An Indigenous axiology is built upon the concept of relational accountability. Right or wrong; validity; statistically significant; worthy or unworthy: value judgements lose their meaning” (p. 77). His friend Peter says, “rather that it being valid or reliable, I thought that maybe it’s authentic or credible, and rather than focus on being reliable, it is relational” (Wilson, 2008, p.

101). Walking that line between Indigenous and Western lenses of understanding, in this research study I attempted to ask questions that led explanations to the established research questions based off the perceived gaps in the literature. These questions were aimed at providing a basis to enter relationships with students and teachers within my community to highlight their experiences within my community's school. While their experiences may not be generalizable to other experiences from other schools, the data is valid in the sense that it (a) establishes relationships, and (b) is measuring what I intended to measure.

Limitations

Limitations to this study include the number of participants, the types of questions asked, and the attitudes of participants who chose to participate in the study. The number of participants may have included not enough, or too many, primary vs. secondary teaching staff at MTS. Classes are taught in the traditional Western style with one teacher in grades K–5, and multiple teachers for grades 6–12. The relationships developed between students in grades K–5 would be assumed to be closer than those in grades 6–12 due to the amount of time spent with each other. While this may or may not be the case, it is one limiting factor within this study. Another limitation was, despite this researcher's best efforts, the questions asked in all areas of data gathering did not get close enough to attain the necessary data to adequately address the research questions. Another limitation would be that those who volunteer to participate in a study concerning their educational experience would harbor emotions that would skew their attitudes toward their experience—either positively or negatively. Finally, another limitation of this study is the overall trust community members would have in the researcher. While I am an enrolled Muckleshoot Tribal member and worked at MTS during the time of the study, I did not grow up within the community. This relational separation may have impacted overall trust that I had

permission or appropriate credentials to initiate this type of study in a way that would do justice to the community, despite moving through appropriate Muckleshoot government approval protocols. In addition, this study focus on one Tribally-run school in one Tribe. The histories of Tribal Nations across the United States differ, and one experience in one snapshot of time cannot be generalized to any other, or even itself, as attitudes, beliefs, and systems can change at a rapid pace.

Protection of Tribal Data

All data collected are assumed to be property of the Muckleshoot Tribe. All institutional review board policies and procedures were followed per Tribal protocol, resulting in Tribal Council Resolution 25-139 approving collection of Tribal data for use in this study. In addition to Tribal protocol, University of Washington institutional review board protocol was followed, and approval obtained, to ensure that all entities involved in this study were made fully aware of the scope and intent. All data collected, once the study has concluded, will be turned over to the Muckleshoot Tribe for use and archival. Publication of any Tribal data, including data found in this study, is at the sole discretion of the Muckleshoot Tribe.

Chapter 4: Results

Going into the data collection, I anticipated more participation from staff and graduated students, however despite my best efforts there were many individuals who politely declined participation, requested additional information then declined participation, or those who simply did not want anything to do with the study. At the time of the study, I had been working at the Muckleshoot Tribal School for five years and observed that those teaching staff that had been working when I first started were the individuals often less likely to participate, have misgivings, or simply did not want to engage. After obtaining the proper approvals from Tribal Government and school administration, study flyers were posted all throughout the Tribal School and Tribal College. The flyers had a QR code that linked to a website that was utilized by several participants; however, most participants were recruited by either word of mouth or via independent, personal conversations with those whom I already had a relationship with.

My experience in this section yielded mostly interactions with two types of individuals: those who were excited to share their experiences and be heard, and those who were skeptically reluctant to share anything despite explaining that participation was voluntary and anonymous. Some individuals were more open to completing a survey over an interview, and vice versa. Some individuals completed both options.

Data Analysis: Survey

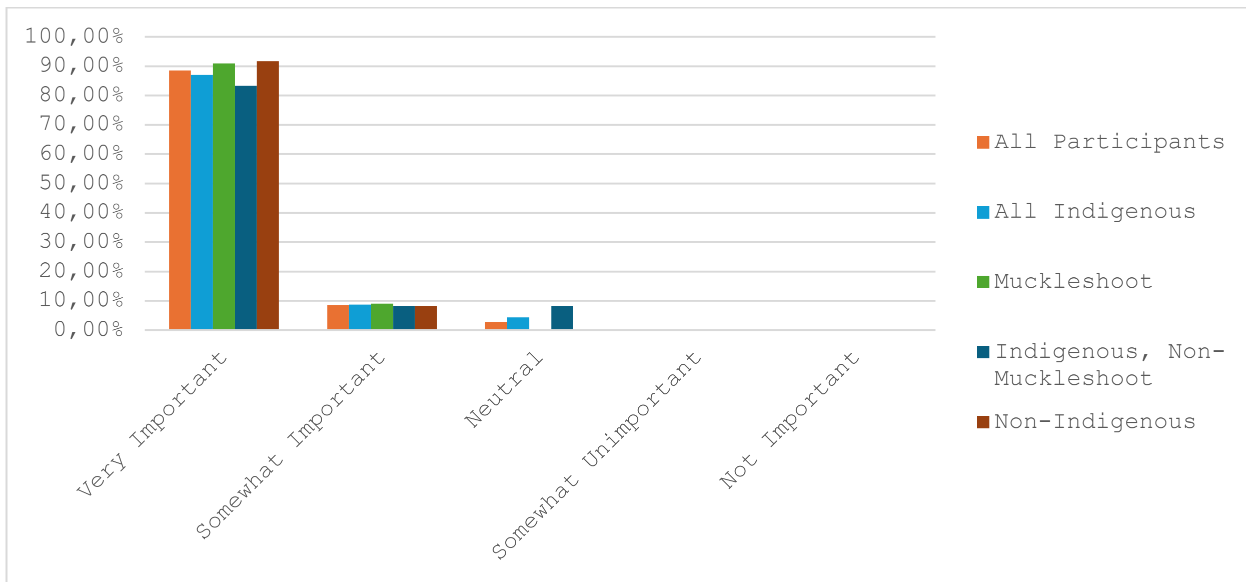
Thirty-five individuals accepted the invitation to complete a survey. These surveys were not linked to interview data, which opened the possibility of obtaining more information as some individuals only chose to fill out the survey as they did not participate in the interview portion of the study. This also aided in the overall anonymity of the data collection process, which did quell some participants' fears of participation. Participants could fill out as many or as little questions

as they were comfortable answering. All participants completed all survey questions, with some participants skipping questions within the demographic section.

The survey consisted of questions concerning the participants' attitude surrounding culture in curriculum, placed-based learning, the amount of time that should be dedicated to both, and perceived benefits of doing so. In the demographic portion, it asks participants to fill out self-identified roles, which grade bands participants were familiar with, the amount of experience in each self-identified role, and whether the participant identifies as Indigenous. If the participant self-identifies as Indigenous, they had an opportunity to provide their Tribal affiliation. The survey results will be presented one question at a time, broken down into all respondents, all respondents who self-identify as Indigenous, those who self-identify as Muckleshoot, a non-Muckleshoot Indigenous group, and those who are non-Indigenous. There were 23 total Indigenous respondents (n = 35), of which 11 self-identified as Muckleshoot. There were 12 non-Indigenous respondents.

The demographic results will not be broken down into subgroups, like the survey section. This was chosen to maintain anonymity, as linking Indigenous/non-Indigenous self-identification, employment/role, and age could provide enough data points to ascertain an individual's identity and show that they did participate in the study. While it could be an interesting data stream to follow and analyze to establish interesting connections, some streams are meant to be left alone.

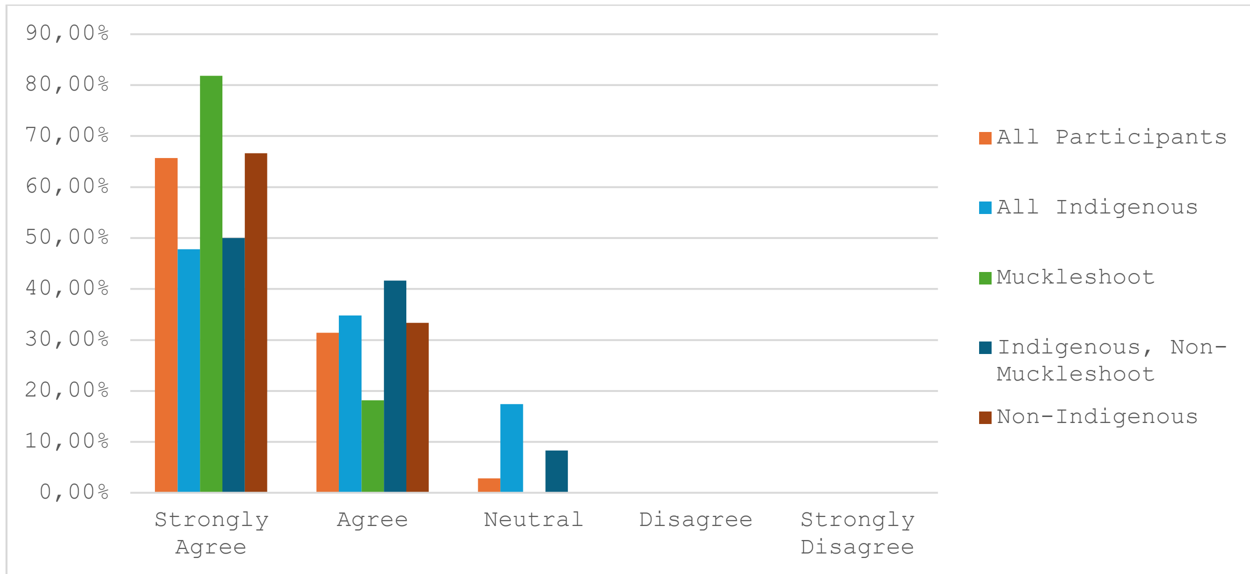
Figure 10 Survey Question #1: Importance of Indigenous Culture in Curriculum



Note. Responses to the item: “How important do you think it is to incorporate Indigenous culture into the curriculum?”

Most participants reported favorability to the question, across all demographics, that incorporating Indigenous culture in the classroom was important. One individual, who self-identified as Indigenous, was neutral in their feelings surrounding the importance of Indigenous culture in the classroom. There was a slightly higher favorability percentages in the Muckleshoot demographic (90.91%) and non-Indigenous demographic (91.67%), when compared to the group total (88.57%), all Indigenous respondents (86.96%), and the Indigenous, non-Muckleshoot group (83.33%). Mean = 1.14, Median = 1 (Very Important), Mode = 1 (Very Important).

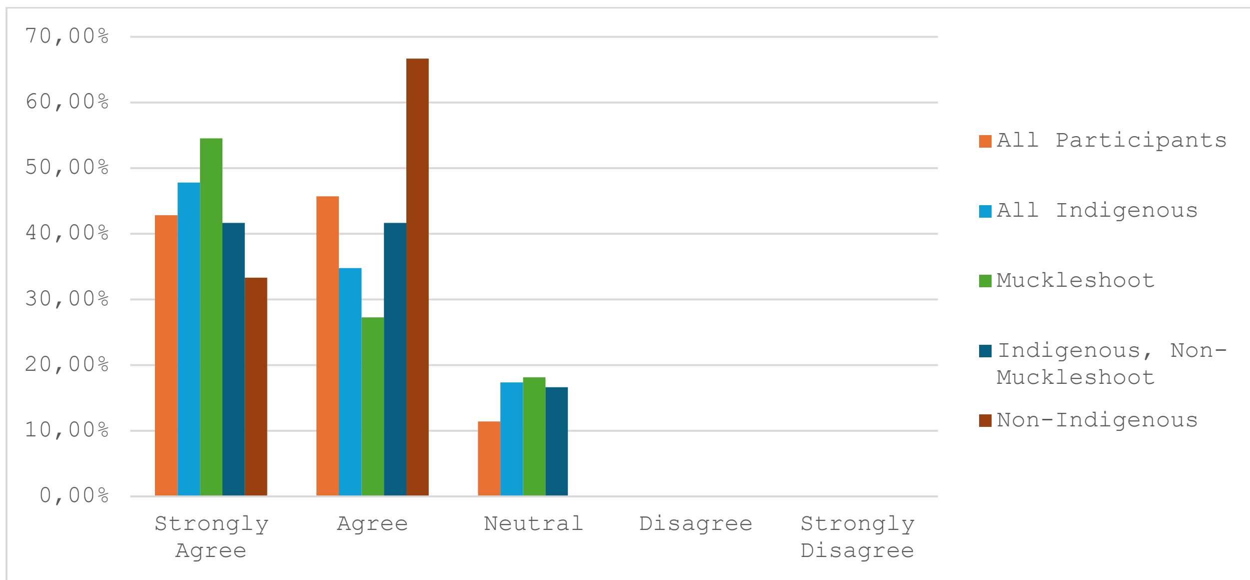
Figure 11 Survey Question #2: Perceived Impact of Indigenous Culture in Curriculum on Student Outcomes



Note. Responses to the item, "I believe incorporating Indigenous culture into the curriculum improves student outcomes (including academic success, engagement, and cultural awareness)."

There were higher favorability scores in the Muckleshoot demographic in the Strongly Agree (81.82%) category compared to all other self-Identified Indigenous groups at (50.00%), with more non-Muckleshoot Indigenous respondents falling under the Agree (41.46%) category. No participant disagreed with survey question #2. Curiously, the only individual who felt neutral on this question were non-Muckleshoot Indigenous (n = 1). Mean = 1.37, Median = 1 (Strongly Agree), Mode = 1 (Strongly Agree).

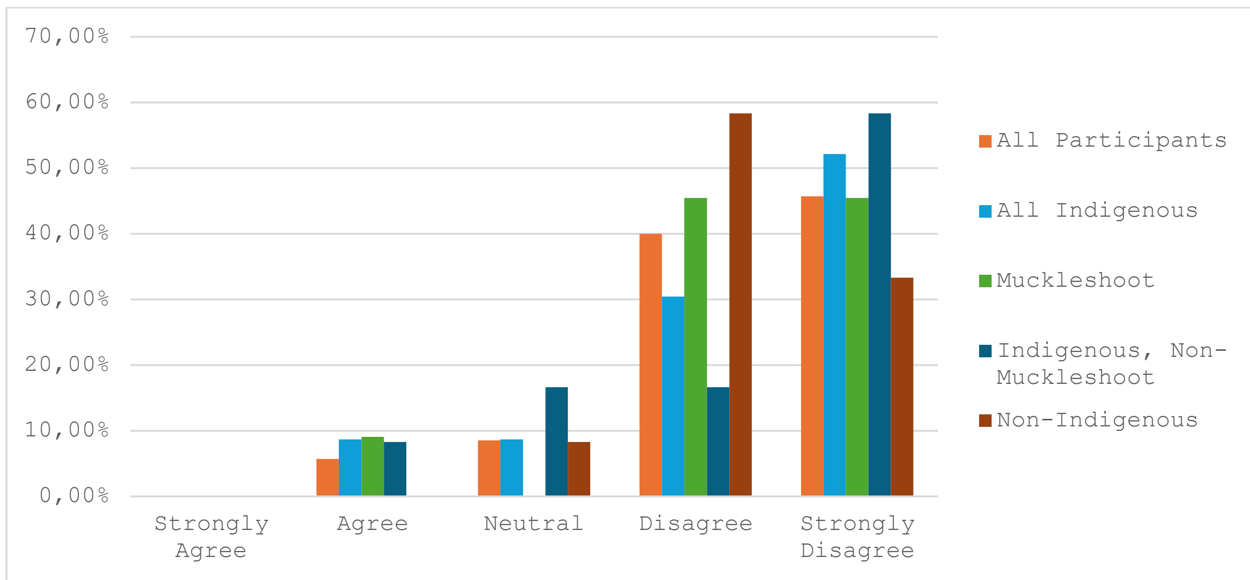
Figure 12 Survey Question #3: More Time for Cultural Education



Note. Responses to the item, “More time should be allotted for cultural education.”

No participant felt negatively around adding additional time in the classroom for cultural education, with the Muckleshoot participants strongly agreeing (54.55%) with the statement. The highest response was from the non-Indigenous group at 66.67% Agreeing and 33.33% Strongly Agreeing with statement—the only group that felt entirely positive about adding additional time to cultural education. The Mean = 1.68, the Median = 2 (Agree), and the Mode = 2 (Agree).

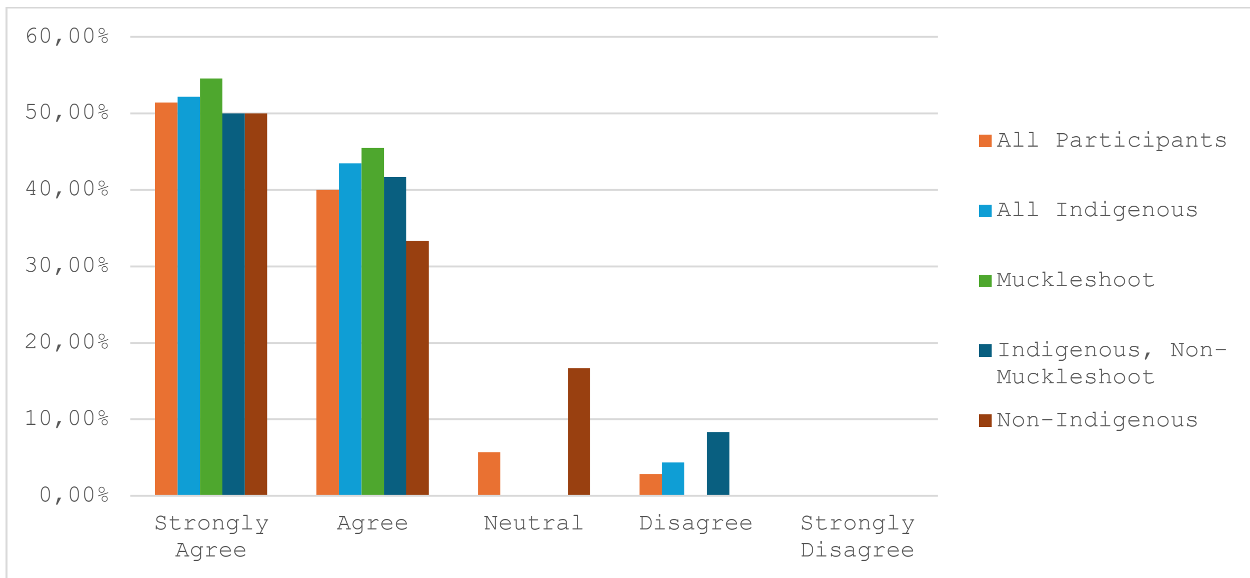
Figure 13 Survey Question #4: Less Time for Cultural Education



Note. Responses to the item, "There should be less time allotted for cultural education."

This result was a bit confusing as there were Indigenous respondents (n = 2) who agreed with reducing the amount of time spent on cultural education in the classroom, however in the previous question no one disagreed with increasing time for cultural education. The total percentages of Disagree and Strongly disagree are 82.60% for all Indigenous respondents, broken down into 75% of the non-Muckleshoot group and 90.9% in the Muckleshoot group. The non-Indigenous group totaled 91.66% in Disagree and Strongly Disagree for this question. The Mean = 4.25, the Median = 4 (Disagree), and the Mode = 5 (Strongly Disagree).

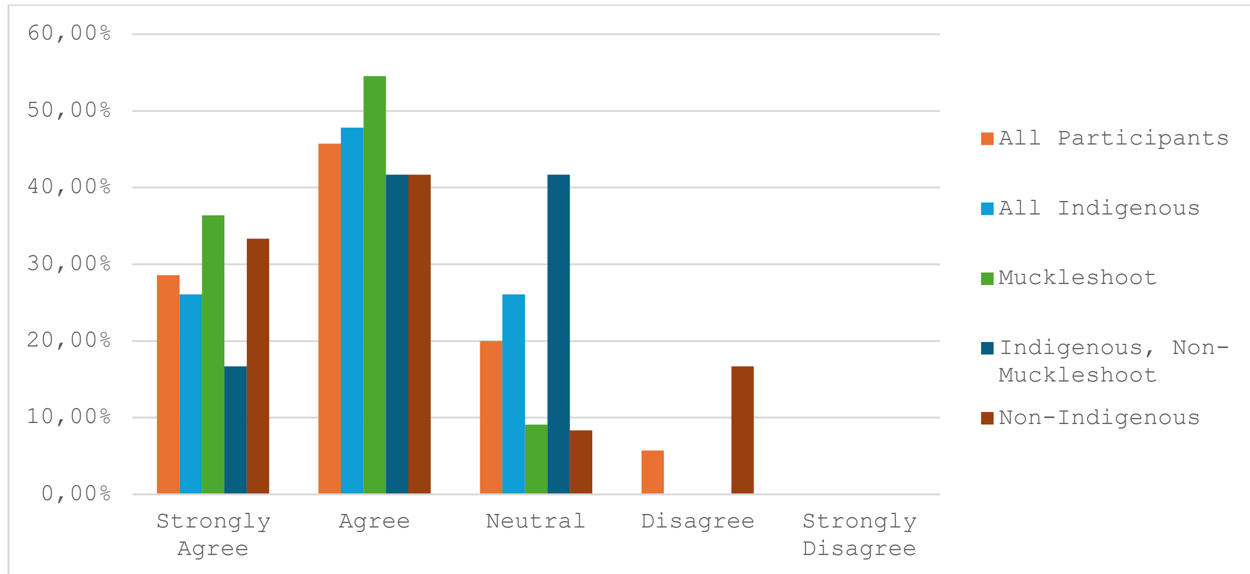
Figure 14 Survey Question #5: Culture as Foundational Component of Curriculum



Note. Responses to the item, “Culture should function as a foundational component of how curriculum is taught, not just a stand-alone class.”

The responses to question #5 were overwhelmingly in agreement, with the most coming from those self-Identifying as Muckleshoot, with 100% of respondents either Strongly Agreeing or Agreeing with the statement. The next group at 91.67% was all other Indigenous participants, then non-Indigenous respondents at 83.33%. There were a few non-Indigenous respondents who felt neutral, and again curiously one individual who disagreed with the statement. Thet Mean = 1.60, the Median = 1(Strongly Agree), and the Mode = 1 (Strongly Agree).

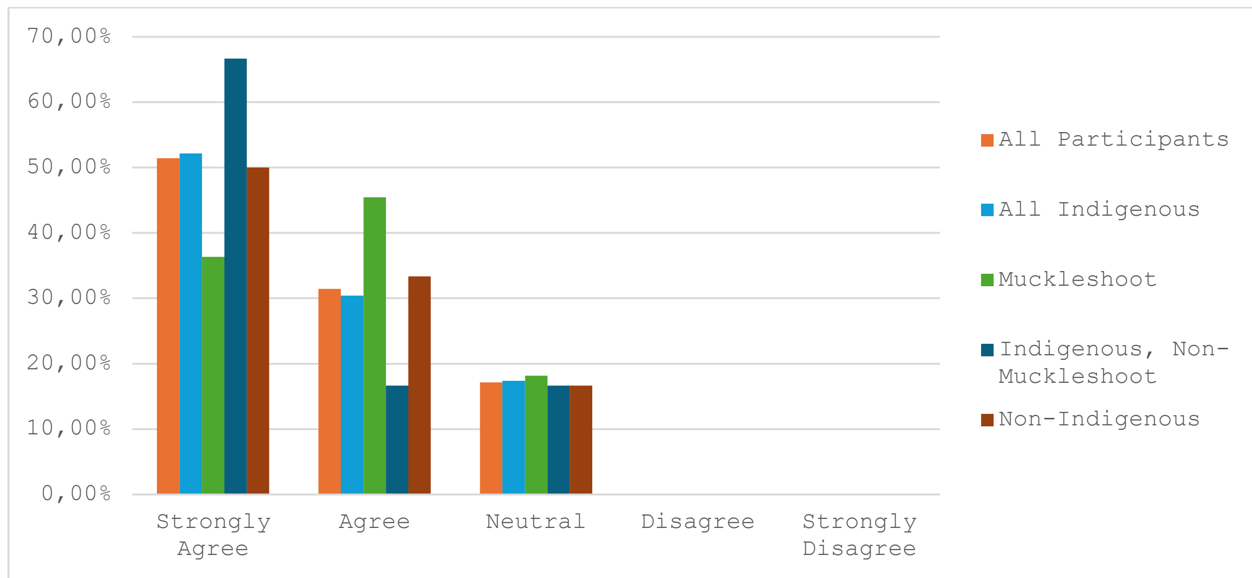
Figure 15 Survey Question #6: Place-based Learning has Been Essential in Education and Culture



Note. Responses to the item, “Place-based learning has been an essential part of educational practices and cultural development.”

This question received the most questions for clarification by participants, typically revolving around what ‘place-based learning’ meant. All but non-Indigenous participants (n = 2, 16.67%) Agreed or felt neutral with their feelings surrounding place-based learning. Most respondents either Agreed or felt Neutral, with those self-identifying as Muckleshoot at the highest rate of either Strongly Agreeing or Agreeing (90.91%). The next highest group being non-Indigenous (75%), then non-Muckleshoot Indigenous (58.34%). The mean = 2.02, the median = 2 (Agree), and the mode = 2 (Agree).

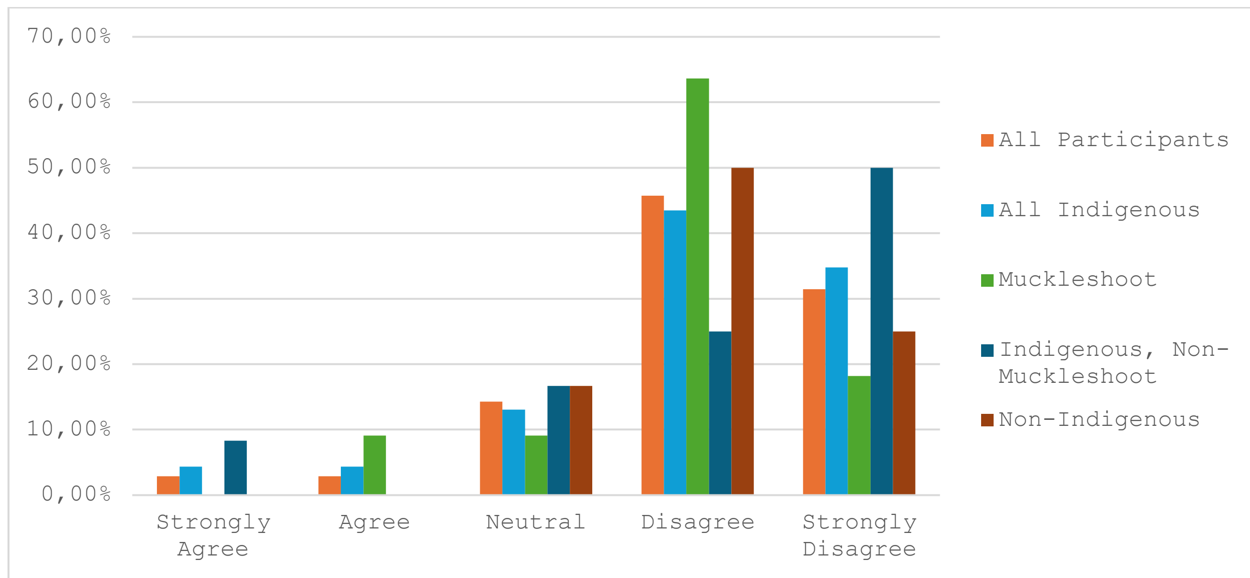
Figure 16 Survey Question #7: More Time for Place-based Learning



Note. Responses to the item, “More time should be allocated to place-based learning.”

These results appear to follow the trend of being for additional time for place-based learning in the curriculum, as no respondent reported they disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. Across non-Indigenous, non-Muckleshoot Indigenous, and Muckleshoot cohorts, neutral feelings concerning the statement were recorded, 16.67%, 16.67%, and 18.18%, respectively. The largest gap was between non-Muckleshoot Indigenous and Muckleshoot cohorts within the Strongly Agree category, at 66.67% and 36.35%, followed by the Agree category, at 16.67% and 45.45%. Non-Indigenous participants scored between, at 50% and 33.33%. The mean = 1.65, the median = 1 (Strongly Agree), and the mode = 1 (Strongly Agree).

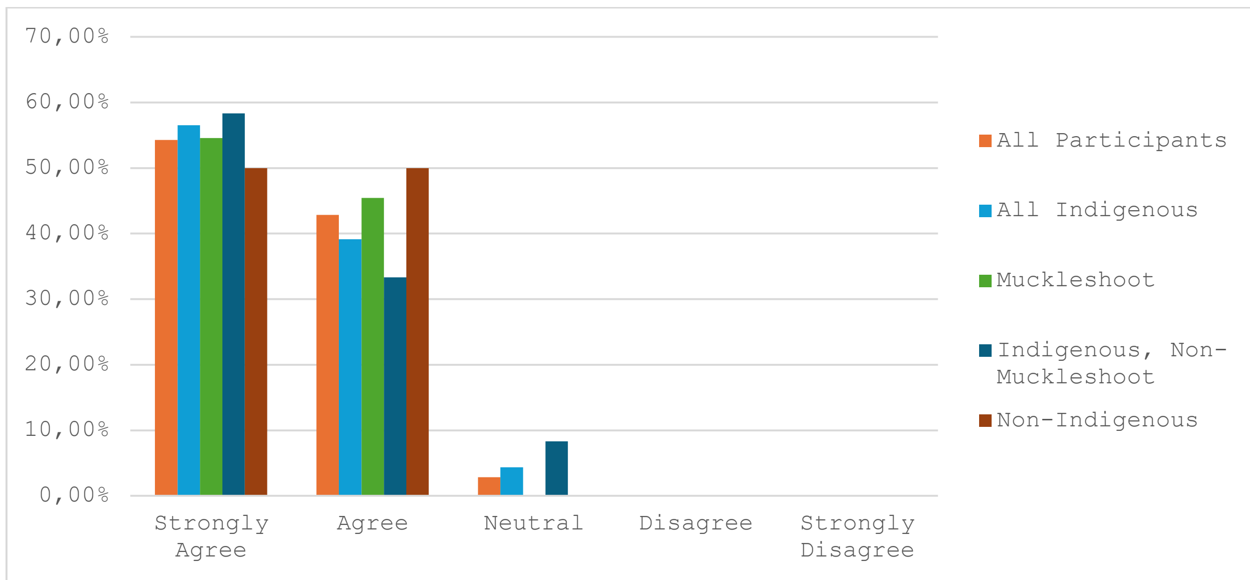
Figure 17 Survey Question #8: Less Time for Place-based Learning



Note. Responses to the item, “It is recommended to allocate less time for place-based learning within the classroom and school environment.”

The trend of conflicting survey results continued with question #8, as there were individuals who either Strongly Agreed or Agreed with the statement of less time for place-based learning, while in question #7 not a single respondent disagreed with spending more time. This may be due to the confusion surrounding the terms, or perhaps those who were neutral fell more towards the disagree category than the neutral category. No non-Indigenous participants felt favorably with spending less time, with the majority (50.00%) Disagreeing with the statement. The most disagreement came from the Muckleshoot cohort at 63.64%. The mean = 4.08, the median = 4 (Disagree), and the mode = 4 (Disagree).

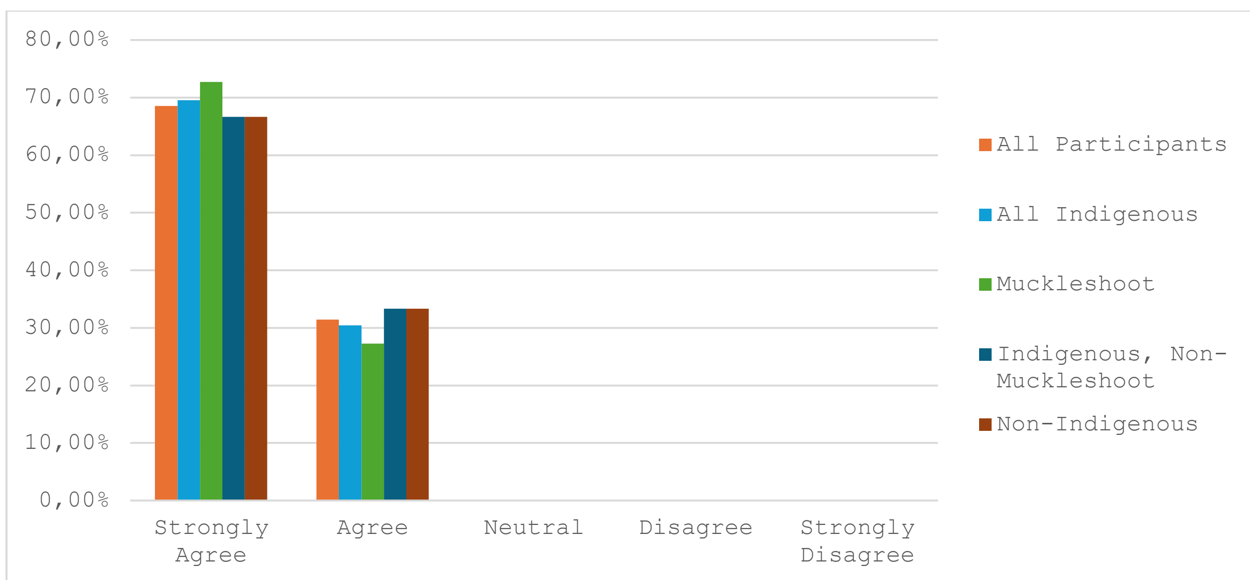
Figure 18 Survey Question #9: Teaching Culture in Classrooms is Beneficial



Note. Responses to the item, “Teaching culture within classroom environments has a beneficial influence on one’s life.”

The overwhelming majority of respondents either Strongly Agreed or Agreed with this survey question, with all but a single participant feeling neutral about the benefits of including culture within the classroom. The mean = 1.48, the median = 2 (Strongly Agree), and the mode = 1 (Strongly Agree).

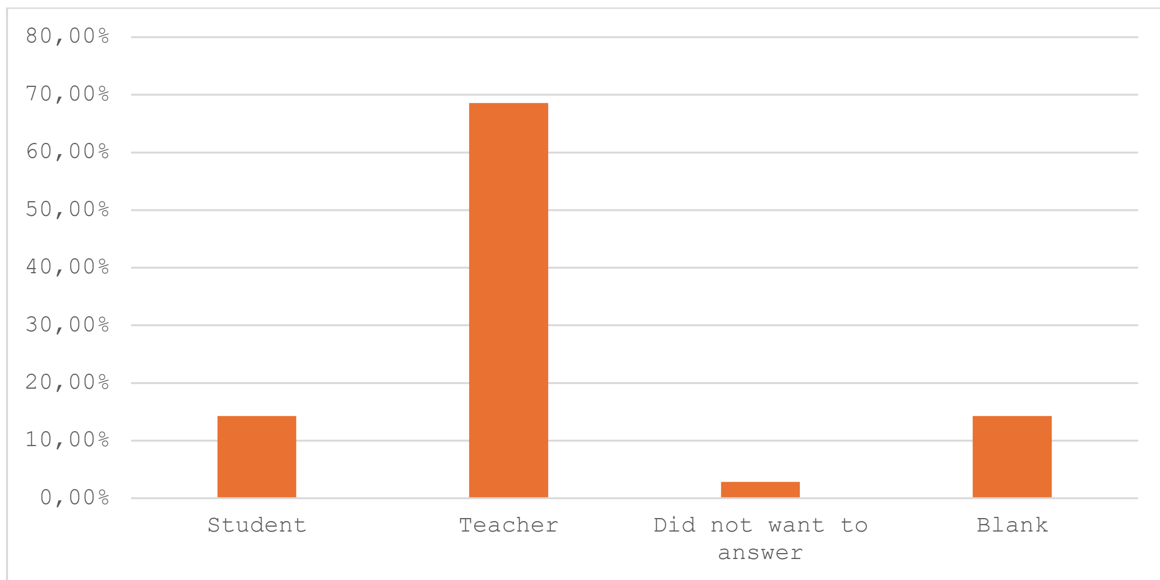
Figure 19 Survey Question #10: Teaching Culture on the Land has Positive Influence



Note. Responses to the item, “Teaching culture on the land exerts a positive influence on your life.”

In an even stronger display of agreement, the vast majority of participants Strongly Agreed that teaching culture on the land is a positive influence. The mean = 1.31, the median = 1 (Strongly Agree), and the mode = 1 (Strongly Agree).

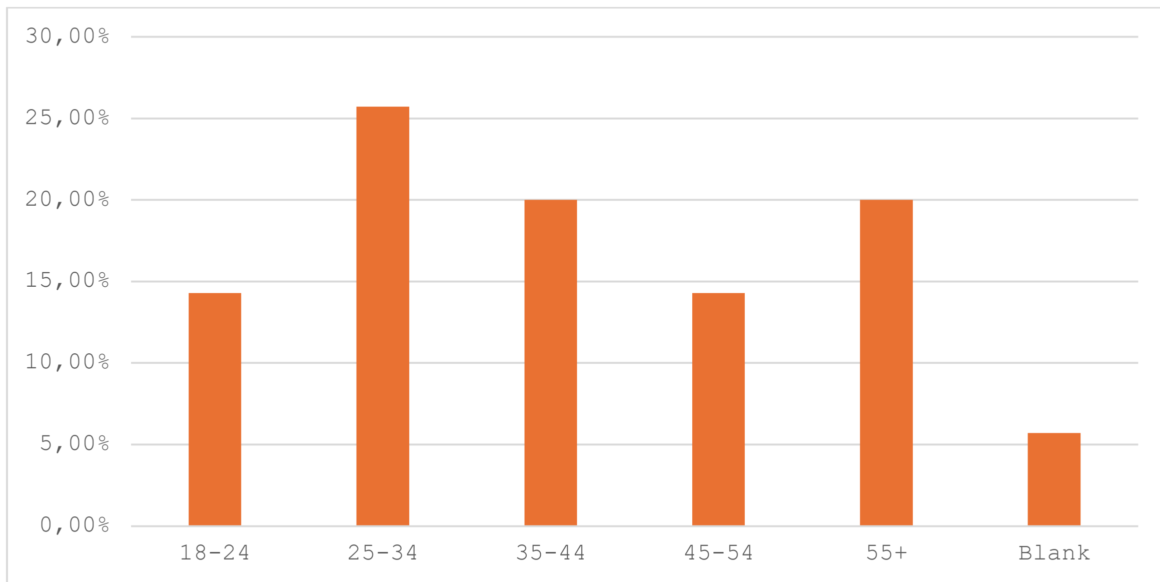
Figure 20 Survey Question #11: Participant Occupation



Note. Responses to the item, “Please select the option that most accurately describes you.”

Within demographic data, the overwhelming participants were teaching staff (n = 24), then graduated students (n = 5) and those who left the field blank (n = 5). Teaching staff were more open to quickly filling out a survey than to sit down for an interview, citing both time and privacy concerns. Graduated students were provided with surveys during the interview process, however again due to time constraints many were not filled out or returned.

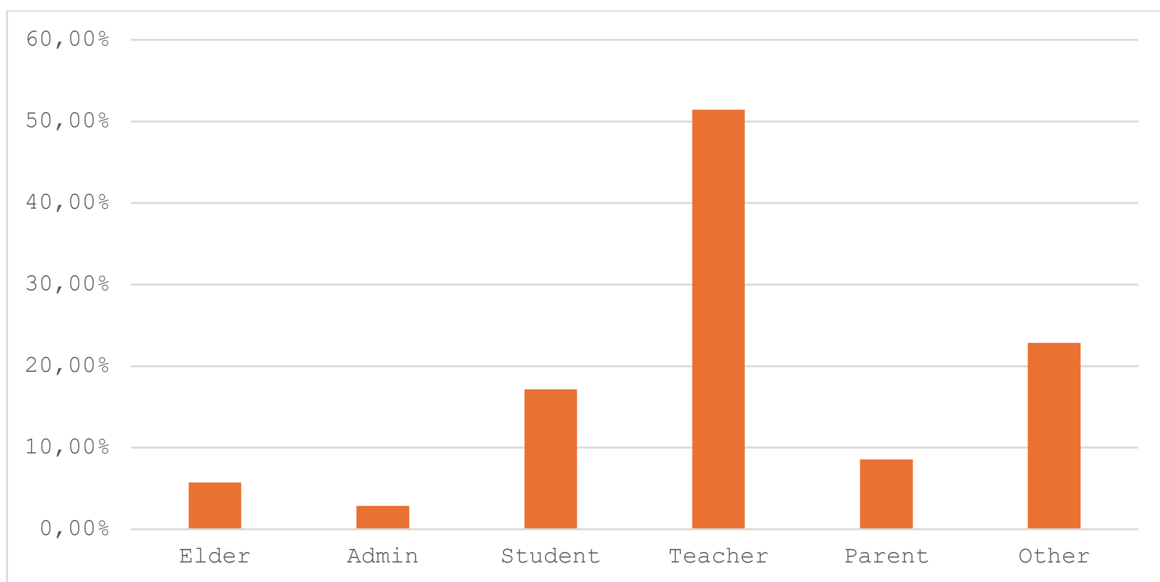
Figure 21 Demographic Question #1: Participant Age



Note. Responses to the item, "What is your age?"

The highest age range of respondents fell within the 25–34 category (25.71%), followed by both the 35–44 and over 55+ group (20%). The next two groups, both 18–24 and 45–54, had 14.29% representation, with 5.71% not wanting to divulge their age in the survey.

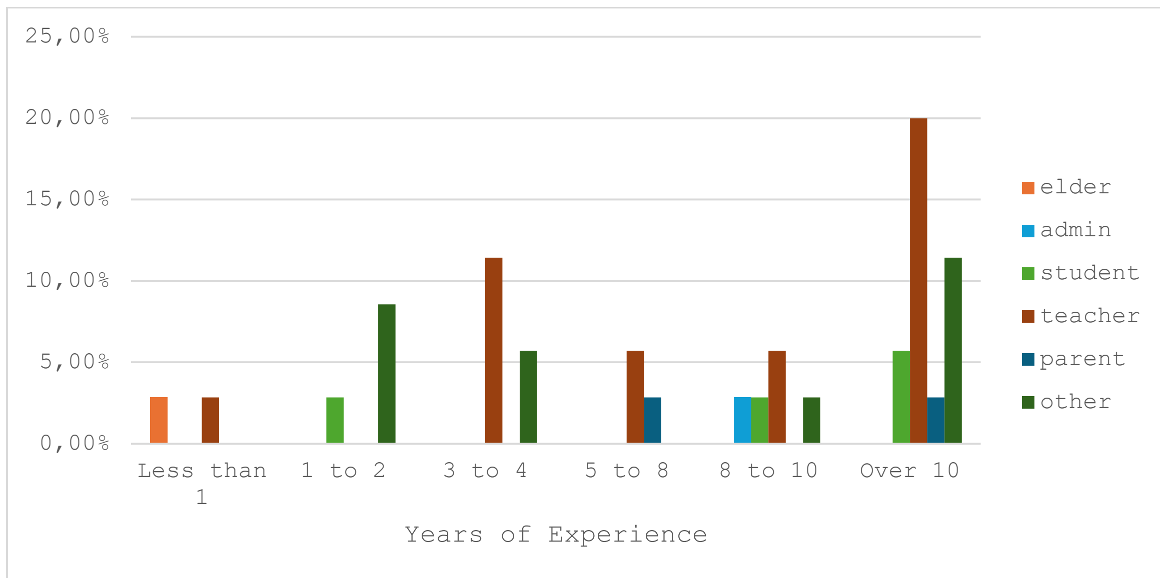
Figure 22 Demographic Question #2: Participant Roles



Note. Responses to the item, "Which roles do you occupy?"

Again, showing the majority of teaching staff participating, over 50% of those who filled out the demographic questionnaire were teachers. Next were in the ‘other’ category (22.86%), followed by students (17.14%). Please note, individuals had the opportunity to check off as many roles they occupied. For example, you might have an individual being both a parent and a student, or teacher and other.

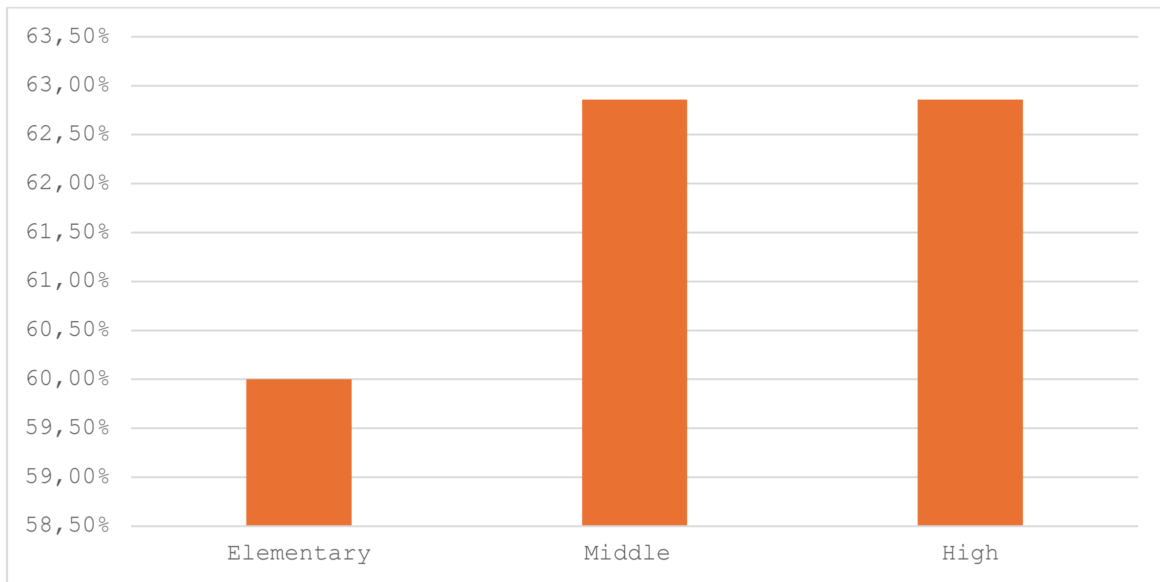
Figure 23 Demographic Question #3: Years of Experience



Note. Responses to the item, “How many years of experience do you have in your stated role? If more than one is noted, please write down each role next to the year count.”

Respondents had the opportunity to fill in how many years of experience they had in each of the roles in question #2. Teachers with over 10 years of experience occupied 20% of respondents, followed by the other category at 11.43%. Graduated students with over 10 years’ experience fell at 5.71%, then 2.81% for both 8 to 10 and 1 to 2 years’ experience. Participants could claim several roles but not fill in all years of experience for each.

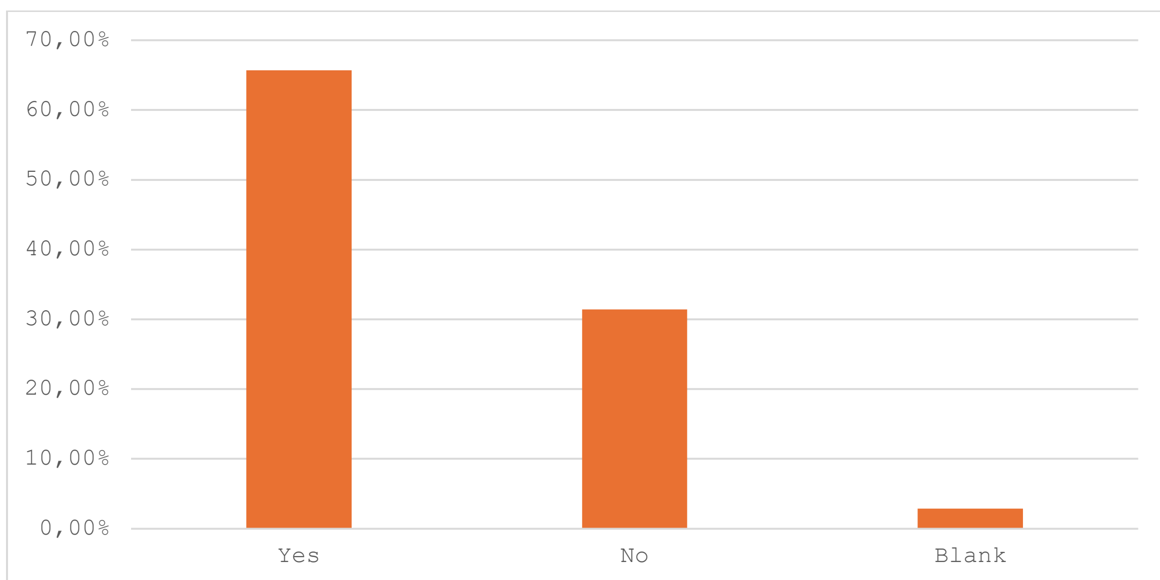
Figure 24 Demographic Question #4: Grade Levels Taught or Attended



Note. Responses to the item, "Which grade levels have you taught or attended?"

Respondents could select all grade bands if they applied to them. This information shows that most respondents attended either middle school, high school, or both, but not by a large margin, as those who attended/taught in elementary were only 2.86% behind the other options.

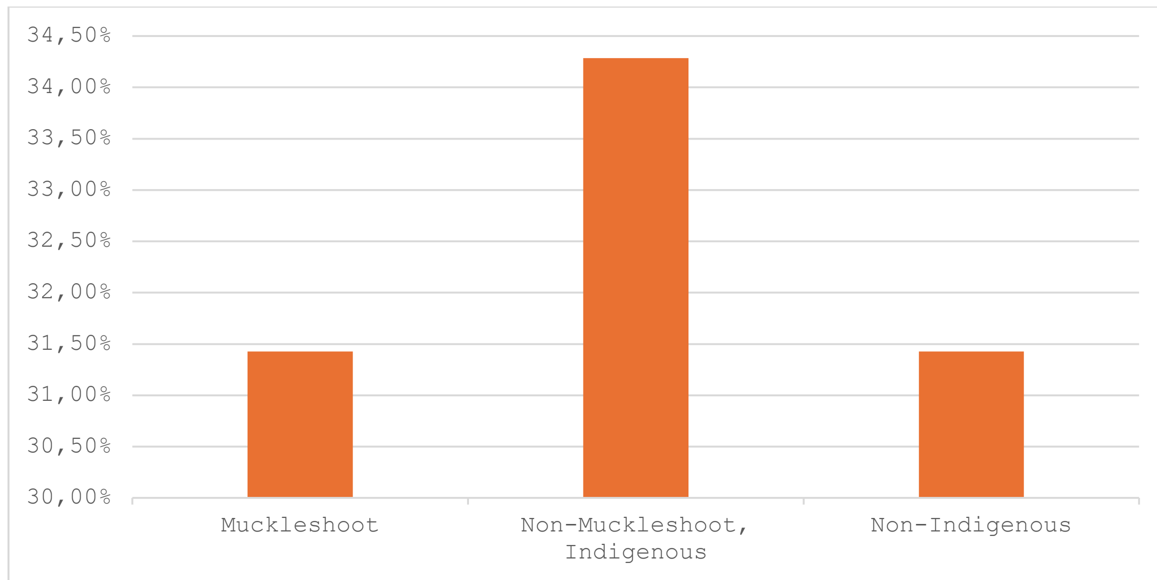
Figure 25 Demographic Question #5: Indigenous Identity



Note. Responses to the item, "Do you identify as Indigenous?"

The majority of respondents, at 65.71%, self-identified as Indigenous, against 31.43% saying they do not. One person left the field blank.

Figure 26 Demographic Question #6: Tribal Affiliation



Note. Responses to the item, "If you answered 'yes' on question #5, please feel free to share your Tribal affiliation."

Of those identifying as Indigenous, 34.29% were non-Muckleshoot, with 31.43% self-identifying as Muckleshoot, mirroring those who were non-Indigenous.

Data Analysis: Interviews

Upon completion of the data collection timeframe, a total of 12 teachers and 10 graduated students accepted the invitation to participate. Teacher's experience ranged from 2 to 20+ years, some having a career prior to working at the Tribal School, others just starting out their own career. Graduated student's experience also ranged from having gone to the Tribal School their entire K–12 educational experience, to transferring in at 10th grade to obtain their high school diplomas.

While 60 minutes were scheduled for the interview, the length of the interviews also varied greatly. Some individuals were to the point, getting through the interview process in 20

minutes, despite follow up questions, with others willing to speak for 60 minutes. Most interviews ranged from 30 to 45 minutes in length. Most interviews occurred face-to-face in a location that was comfortable for the interviewee, and a few were held over the phone. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, with a transcription and audio recording being offered for review to all participants. Participants were instructed to review the transcription for errors, to delete all information they did not want to share, and to inform me of the changes. If no feedback occurred in a week, it was communicated to all participants that the interview would then be included in the study. All participants were over the age of 18, consented to the interviews being recorded.

The audio files were uploaded and transcribed utilizing NVivo software. Once transcribed, the transcriptions were reviewed for accuracy when compared to the original audio file. The transcripts were then uploaded into the NVivo software. Next, each interview was coded manually. Themes were developed based on several different factors. First, interviews were read with an attempt to understand larger connections, as I kept returning to the net analogy that Wilson (2008) mentioned—not to get too focused on the individual knots of the net, but to try and see the broader picture being presented. Next, I went through and coded the interviews individually, following the ideas presented by Marshall (2004) of Etuaptmumk, "two-eyed seeing." Through the broad interpretation attempting to establish connections, and the micro coding process, themes were developed. This section will be broken down by those developed themes discussed by interview participants.

Theme 1: The Power of Relationships in Education

This theme was established by participants' discussion of the importance and impact of relationships in educational settings. Both teachers and graduated students discussed and

reflected their experiences of developing strong relationships as a vehicle for the transmission of both cultural and rote western academic knowledge. These relationships are found between teachers and students, and teachers and students' families, highlighting how these relationships extend beyond the typical idea of the classroom and a student's educational experience, encompassing life outside of the school setting, including and beyond extra-curricular activities. Both groups highlighted the importance and benefits of taking the time needed to develop, sustain, and maintain these relationships.

As graduated students reflected on their experience, they shared examples of the impacts of these relationships, as Student 06 shares the time and emotional investment of their teachers into their futures:

> And that genuinely at the very least changed the course of my senior year, in my senior year was very impactful for my future. So that kind of like time and like emotional investment in individual students, I think is very unique to Tribal school. It doesn't happen at public schools as much. Especially ones that have a small, staff to student ratio. There's tons of students, like double in schools, they don't have time to do that. Specifically, people who felt like they had a relationship with me. They were invested, in my success or have seen me in different in different lights. My track coach, who said, "you're going to go really far." (Student 06)

Student 01 reflects on their experience in public schools, and contrasts their experience with the Tribal school, the time available to establish relationships, and those relationships that continue to this day:

> The tribal school is very unique. Coming from public schools, you don't really get to build that kind of relationship with your teachers and the staff like you do. Because we're

> so well-connected and we're such a tight knit community, you kind of get to build not just teacher student relationships, but it also becomes kind of like more of a role model and really respecting somebody because you're not just seeing them, for 30-minute class. So, it's very unique in that way that you get to build deeper and long-lasting relationships. I have teachers who were one of my really strong role models in school. He had taken me to go do all these clubs and, you know, outside help do yard work everywhere. So that relationship has sustained and lasted up till now.

One crucial factor in developing these relationships is time available to do so. Time is needed to nourish and sustain any relationship; graduated students reported on the ability of the school to allow this to occur due to low student to staff ratios:

> I think MTS allowed me to explore just like, different kinds of success other than academic, in the sense that, I could do running start, but also, we got a ton of one-on-one attention. Having a lot of adults around gave them more capacity to invest in the students, maybe more than they would if they were a ton of students or less adults. (Student 06)

Likewise, Student 08 said:

> I felt like it was a lot easier to be taught than, public school. You know, less students for the teachers to worry about. And then there it could be more one on one. So, my math teacher was pretty like one on one with me and my friends. (Student 08)

Student 04 offered:

> I think MTS was very eye-opening and perspective-shifting for me. The school was very inclusive from the beginning; our classroom sizes were maybe ten students at most. And because of that, I was able to see clearly that while we all came from the same community, we came from very different backgrounds. (Student 04)

Teaching staff also echo this opportunity to spend time one on one with students, remarking on the time needed to create relationships with whole families, cross-generationally: "Well, for one-on-one support. Obviously, (to provide) encouragement. The time to spend one on one. You know, just because if you don't have that, you're not going to get it" (Teacher 06). This was echoed by Teacher 04, who said "Yeah, huge difference. So having those that background I think that helps me understand our students here at Muckleshoot. And making that connection with them." Teacher 09 said:

> It's a small community too. So it's like, and you've been here for a long enough time where you've taught, I would argue, generations. And I think I would hope there's a level of trust established… And I always talk about that, even with the kids. I'm like, hey, I taught you, you know, this cousin of yours? I taught them, you know this person? Yep, I do. What about this? I know that person, too. That was my uncle. (Teacher 09)

On the topic of community, Teacher 05 said:

> And then being there, I just, I had like, I loved it, you know, and I love the people and I love the kids and getting to know the community like it's very different than a public school. And once you're in the community and you know the kids and you know the families and you know the staff, it's like a little sort of family like. And even though we have the staff that come and go, you still have like your core group of people, and you still have the families, and the kids are still there, and you know that they need you. So, I think that's why…You have to call with good news and bad news to start developing that relationship, and then you start getting that trust. And then I would I would hope it gets easier. (Teacher 05)

Ultimately, Teacher 06 sums up the importance and power of positive relationships in education: “You know, just because if you don't have that, you're not going to get through. If you have a student struggling, whether it's behavior or academics. If you don't have that relationship, they're not going to do it.”

Interviews with graduated students and teaching staff described experiences building relationships. Both groups also describe how the structure of the school, with low student to teacher ratios, provided a hospitable environment to do so. Teaching staff also commented on the importance of, and ability to, create relationships with students’ families over time.

Theme 2: Cultural Foundations of the Educational Experience

This theme encompasses both graduated student and teacher experiences surrounding cultural components taught at the school. This describes not only culture embedded within the curriculum, but also place based learning, and ideas surrounding Tribal sovereignty. These aspects of purposefully implementing a cultural curriculum are one aspect of separating what a Tribally operated school is from a publicly ran one.

Students discussed the importance of land and field trips. Being out on Tribal lands learning culturally appropriate lessons remained in their minds as they reflect back on their experiences:

> Yeah, I like that. We're actually on the Muckleshoot Reservation. There's a whole bunch of plants nearby, like traditional plants. And I like that they plan field trips where we go out to visit our land and, to show that there's more to it than this, the that you could that we actually have land out in the hills in the forest and show how we take care to take care of that land, it’ll take care of us. (Student 05)

Similarly, Student 10 said:

> … because especially on the field trips, you can learn while you're on the field trip. Just do a lot of culture things, or you can have a class or like for art, you can say, we're gonna do something like culture room. (Student 10)

Student 03 reflects that even in coursework they did not initially enjoy or have interest in, when placed into an Indigenous lens and experience, that drew them into increased participation:

> There was this program that I got to go to. It had most of my science credits, which I was thankful for because I didn't like science. I still don't. But as you know, going to college now, too, is actually pretty interesting, all this stuff I learned. But this program was for Natives all over. They all came together, like, you know, from Yakima. Uh, Tulalip. Lummi. I've met Relatives I didn't even know I had. It was like a month and a half program. We got to stay up in the mountains for a couple weeks, and we got to learn how to skin deer, cooked deer and all that. And then when we came out here, we even got to stay at the campus for a couple weeks. And we learned a lot of stuff, like about fish relatives, even clam dig in oysters. (Student 03)

Student 03 continues to talk about cultural experiences on campus:

> That one was a lot of learning. Uh, we got to learn all the songs, dances. We even got to learn to sing around a big drum. Oh, wow. So, uh, to me, the culture there, it was a lot like we had our elders there even teaching us the language. And it was just to me, it felt very sacred. (Student 03)

Student 04 had several thoughts on how Tribal school fulfils its role of teaching students' appropriate cultural knowledge, the importance of teaching it, and the idea of Tribal self-governance, also commenting on the difficulties of walking in two worlds of the freedoms running a Tribally operated school and following state and federal standards:

> To me, that alone is the prime example of our sovereignty, our self-sovereignty, and the right for us to establish, serve, and provide an education. It's not easy or accessible for just anyone to open a school that meets state requirements, ensures standards, and follows the policies needed to guarantee students receive a proper education. So, to say that we've had the opportunity to establish and do that… it speaks to our sovereignty, our treaties, and everything our ancestors worked so hard for. When you put it in perspective, it's inspiring. It's motivating. Especially knowing that during that time, we were able to negotiate to have the school, our education, right here on the reservation. (Student 04)

Student 04 continues with thoughts surrounding the responsibility and ability of Tribally operated schools to independently teach history in a culturally meaningful way, while maintaining accuracy:

> I think that's where the school really excels, and honestly, it's the sole purpose of why past leaders wanted to develop, implement an education within the tribe. It gave us the opportunity to ensure that students are being exposed to the culture, the ancestry, and the full, accurate, 100% truth of our history. (Student 04)

Student 04 comments on the differences between cultural learning and things typically taught in public schools, with the utilization of the Land as a learning opportunity:

> From the food students eat, which has traditional grounding, to the music, to the language their learning. The arts aren't your typical piano, violin, flute, or cello. It's tribal cultural instruments, our drums, our rattles, knowing how to sing the songs. Even the plants around the school are traditional plants used to teach students about tribal medicine and herbs. The whole foundation and curriculum are strongly rooted in culture. (Student 04)

Student 04 ends with their feelings on place-based learning on Crystal Mountain, reflecting that their ancestors would use the routes for trading, with the juxtaposition of participating in skiing lessons:

> But the last experience I got to be a part of, and probably the most groundbreaking, was when we were brought up to Crystal Mountain. I was part of that first cohort, and to actually live that experience… at the time, I honestly thought, oh cool, they're introducing us to a new sport. But now, being more mature and thinking back on it, I realize how much bigger it was. That sport, for one, is a more elevated, high-end experience that not everyone gets access to. But more than that, when they set up that yurt up there and we started asking questions, the deeper meaning started to come through. We were learning about our ancestors' usual and accustomed places, where our people once gathered, the trails they walked, the stories tied to that land. Someone mentioned it was once a major trading route, and just asking those questions in that space opened everything up. (Student 04)

Teachers also gave their thoughts on the effects and importance of teaching Tribal culture within Tribally operated schools, and the differences between in person versus online learning:

> I think the Crystal mountain project; this is our third year doing it. And I have learned a lot from teaching staff, like knowledge and teaching standards. But we're still kind of building the program in my grade. This is our second time going out multiple times, so we're building in the classroom stuff, like animal reports that tie to Crystal Mountain animals that we might see like finding tracks while we're up there. And then tying it to the plants that we see while we're up there and bringing them back to school and then making medicine that school and gifting them to the Crystal mountain staff. So, tying a

> lot of it to the mountain but also bringing it back into the classroom and then really trying to tie it to like when I fell, I got back up—do that on this math problem. I tried again, like trying to make the connection with it to an eight and nine year old is hard because they don't quite get the concept of it, but I did see a difference this year with them, and we will come back and have 15 minutes before we have to get on the bus. We would shout each other out, and every single one of them by the end would have something positive to say about their friends. Which was really cool by the end. So, they were noticing like, hey, I saw, you know, a student fell and got back up, or I saw so and so, you know, cheering on her friends. It made a huge impact. When you're so freakin exhausted that it makes your heart happy when you see them being nice to each other. (Teacher 05)

Similarly, Teacher 09 said:

> The most important parts were the like the cultural pieces, those are great. Especially the ones that were taught by teachers from that work in the school but also have the cultural background. The plant teachings are always really fun, they're really helpful. Getting trained is great. Though there has been this huge push to do everything online, though, and that's not been helpful. (Teacher 09)

Teacher 02 offered:

> Any time we can incorporate things, bring the bringing the things like in another one, they are really the sit and spot, you know where you're learning a particular. You know place-based learning, let's talk about if we're learning about symmetry in mathematics. That's one of the standards for this grade. And we go out and we do a sit in spot, you know, at this place on campus and they try to find symmetry or we're going, you know, just trying to incorporate as much of the outdoors into the indoors and then getting, away

> from just sitting at our tables, but actually, doing things and being involved and smelling and tasting and just the whole body learning. (Teacher 02)

Students described how experiencing a curriculum designed to transfer cultural knowledge in the classroom—both in a physical space indoors and outdoors—impacted their learning, and how important the ability to do so reflects treaty rights and overall sovereignty. Several students commented that having learning space on Tribal land is especially important and is one facet that ties us back to our ancestors. Teaching staff reported that, though physically draining at times, having students be able to get out on usual and accustomed Tribal lands to learn cultural knowledge noticeably provides students with skills and abilities to overcome challenges, and provide a learning experience that encompasses more than just listening to lessons—it is experiential.

Theme 3: Development and Support of Student Identity through Cultural Education impacting Student Outcomes

This theme combines how cultural education supported graduated students, and how that support impacted their choices post high school. Instead of having two different themes, these two ideas were combined intentionally to highlight the unique link between attending a Tribal school and the support provided to the development and/or reinforcement of personal identities with the outcomes of graduated students.

Several students comment on how their experiences attending the Tribal school impacted their identity and compared to how they were treated in public schools. These experiences paint a picture of a typical experience—one of not fitting in, not knowing who they were, being out of touch with an aspect of themselves. Once they were exposed to the culture and climate of the Tribal school, these students began to feel more at home and part of their community:

> It's just because I've experienced public school in this school. Uh, and I felt very isolated at public school where they were really hearing me. My voice. And then when I came over here as, like, smaller classrooms and like, they were listening to everyone in class. Okay. And it helped me as a native student, identify myself, too. (Student 09)

Student 01 goes from not knowing what his Tribal identity was to gaining self-confidence through cultural practice:

> Coming from out of state, I didn't even really know who I was as a tribal member. I didn't know what tribe I belonged to. So when I came up here and I started learning about it, I started learning about the medicines, the plants, the processing of animals, doing it yourself. It really kind of changed my perspective. As far as just general perspective. I kind of got to feel a little bit more in touch with my people and myself, even like it gave me an air of, I have confidence because I was able to start doing these things on myself and feeling confident in the abilities and the cultural abilities that I've gained… This is what I'm supposed to be doing this. It feels right. (Student 01)

He continues:

> …[the teacher] took a lot of our kids down to the canoe building, and he showed us how to process deer and elk and gave us the opportunity to actually pick up the knives and, you know, kind of try to learn that process ourselves. And that really stuck with me because not only are we hunters gatherers here and Muckleshoot. (Student 01).

Student 02 says:

> …but it made me happy because song sound of the jam singing like that, just or, I don't know, it just gets my like for me in my, like, inner self. Like it just makes me happy. Like feels really good for the songs to come out. (Student 02)

Student 05 discussed traditional medicines:

> I want to continue my education with learning about the traditional types of medicines. Like trying to give back community and show that you don't need to go to pharmacies and depend on whiteman Medicine. If you go out onto your own land and get plans and like make your own medicines, your own clothing and everything. (Student 05)

Student 06 speaks to their lived experience not being valued in public school, and the resulting feelings of being out of place. Upon attending the Tribal school, they were able to not only mentor younger kids, taking on a leadership role, but also find literature that resonated with their own lived experience.

> …those experiences weren't valued in a public school. Whether it's being on the canoe, or whether it's doing song and dance or being able to speak little pieces of the language. Not only were those things not valued at a public school, but they actually made me stand out… they gave me a position of connection or leadership within the school because I could lead that circle or teach some of the songs and dances to the younger kids. (Student 06)

They continue:

> …and it was so important for me to read that book because it was a biography from a native woman who I felt like I could relate to. I was learning history. She was involved in the American Indian Movement. She talked about her experiences with police brutality and Missing and Murdered indigenous people, like in Seattle. I was getting like the social studies, I was getting history, I was getting English, and most importantly, like I was actually for one of the first time seeing myself like reflected in literature and like my experiences reflected in literature…So I would say at a public school, I was much more

> likely to be bullied or harassed. By classmates. Especially for you know, demonstrating like my cultural connection or cultural heritage. (Student 06)

Student 07 reflects on ideas on knowing yourself, their parents stories of poor treatment in public schools, and continued bullying when you do not fit in:

> And then, just being with other Native Americans is cool, too, you know? I mean, like my parents, they all went to Auburn. They didn't have the best school experience. I think that having a good school like that where you could be yourself and learn about your culture is really beneficial to like who people are. I was like, you know, a person, you know what I mean? Yeah, cause, my girlfriend, she went to public school and she was, the only Asian girl there and she got bullied for that. So, it's not just native. It's just like every race in general. I feel like it's nice that we have a place where it's like, not strictly, but, just natives, everybody understands each other…It's a part of who you are and where you're from. It's a part of you. You know what I mean. And if you don't know that part of you then who are you? (Student 07)

Speaking to the graduated students, questions were asked about what plans they had prior to, and after graduating high school. Several students took college level classes, others graduated from college and pursued even higher degrees, and others found work in and outside of the Tribe. Student 01 says:

> …my goal was to become, um, engineer. I haven't followed through with that, but there's never. It's never too late. It's never too late. I'm actually starting to go back to classes now…I see how important it is to give back. To provide and hope for the people. (Student 01)

Student 02 brings up the role of Culture Aides, saying, "I ended up having the interview and got the position here. And this is when Culture Aides were a new position for the school" (Student 02). And Student 03 remembers:

> When I was in high school, I didn't know what I was doing. It took me a while because after having my child is when I think the courage to go back to college started. And then now I'm back again. And I took another long break, so. But I'm almost done. (Student 03)

Student 04 discusses their success in HR:

> About four to five months after graduating high school… I was appointed Tribal Development Coordinator for the Tribal Development Human Resources team at Muckleshoot Casino. Straight out of high school, jumped into a full-time office role. Suit and tie, business professional…My long-term goal at the time was to eventually run the operation, so I made it a point to learn other departments, food and beverage, banquets, sales, marketing. I explored broadly. But I found that I was most naturally successful in Human Resources, which surprises a lot of people. And I've continued to build on that. Where I am in this journey right now is focused on understanding the full operational picture of a luxury property: not just the hotel itself, but the private equity, the commercial real estate, the bigger machinery that actually generates and sustains the wealth behind it. (Student 04)

Student 05 shares about their experiences in higher education:

> I went to college for a little bit for natural resources, then I started working at the Tribe, now I'm taking classes to become a teacher… So I'm doing my classes for that, to learn the language. Go and teach that at schools and continue online helping with the traditional plants. (Student 05)

Student 06 also went to college, stating, “I graduated with my bachelor's and then went back for my masters. I’m going back again in the fall” (Student 06). Student 07 also went to college, and noted underrepresentation of Indigenous students: “I went to college you know what the craziest thing is? They didn't even know that we existed. Native Americans, they did like, there are like two or three in my classes” (Student 07).

Student 09 says: “I was looking around and I was kind of nervous to go back to like the public aspect. So I attended college for a little bit. After that I was like, okay, I think I can do this” (Student 09).

Not all students ended up attending college. A few students moved into the workforce, either taking time before employment opportunities presented themselves, or finding work that requires additional certification outside of the typical college path. Student 08 went into a job rather than to college: “I didn’t—I don’t have nothing for a couple of years, I just floated and then a job opportunity came. So I took that and ran with it” (Student 08).

Student 10 says:

> I was when I first started working on this, when I was consistently, the supervisor talked to me saying, we want another employee here. And now seeing it's like you would try and like I was like, oh, yeah! I was working, So I gave the two weeks’ notice. And if you're serious, I'm serious too…Right now I’m doing the practice exam to get certified. (Student 10)

Students comment on the importance of being exposed to and taught traditional Muckleshoot culture within the curriculum had a positive impact on their identity—with some students learning for the first time who they were, and others’ Indigenous identities being strengthened. The majority of students after graduation either attempted college credit, graduated

from college, or are continuing to work on their degrees, with others finding work in and out of the Tribe.

Theme 4: Classroom Cultural Implementation

This theme explores in what ways teaching staff incorporate cultural knowledge into the learning environment. Teachers report on utilizing in-house culturally based curriculum, discussing how to implement culture with the support and guidance of Culture Aides, and linking what is learned in the classroom settings to place based learning. Teachers comment on the desire to increase collaboration between Culture Teachers and staff, with staff commenting that they wish more time was available to focus on culture.

When asked how this is accomplished in the classroom, teachers report:

> It's always, always plant teachings. I’ve got all my herbs. I'm getting ready to make tea for somebody. And the February's willow—flexibility. I mean, I just love the plant teachings and how it's not just a plant. It ties back to the culture and into, self-identity or community identity and how it's a very fluid thing, but it's also it’s, it's very well rounded. And I never, ever had looked at plants like that before. And I had such little Tribal knowledge of my own Native identity that when I came up here, I was like, oh, wow, this is this is so cool. And so, I just really love that. It's such a huge part of the community. And I find teaching that there's a lot more. I find a lot more passion in that than teaching... When you take the plant teachings, it can be like, you know, like what was last month? Well, spring, you know, who am I? Where do I come from? How do you know when you think of Cottonwood and, well, spring, who would think to put those two together? But you have those are the cultural teachings here. I just think it's amazing. And I think it's awesome because I never had that growing up. And I just think it's so cool…

> Like I say, I think for February, I always say we're flexible like the willow, but I say that all year long. Let's be flexible like the willow, you know. And so it's cool that, you know, that I can always go to it and use it as a source for, uh, teaching moment for the kids and, and myself." (Teacher 01)

Teacher 07 describes how they take the cultural teachings and find new ways to teach students, highlighting the use of cultural lessons not only as a separate subject to teach, but as a vehicle to teach other lessons and concepts:

> …into some of these kids with their posture and everything. And so how do I talk about posture? I ask the kids about cottonwood and how do they become big trees and how what's their contribution to that? Because I wanted to teach them about posture. And so, we talked about the root system being planted and then breathing in. And so that and then I show the videos of, you know, people playing, they play this way, they play this way. And so, what is so with the plant teaching? What is strong about the tree? And so how are we going to do that and have good posture and breathe in this? So that's just been a real, connection. (Teacher 04)

Teacher 07 echoes the use of plant teachings in the classroom, highlighting some of the problems when you attempt to separate both subjects and culture as completely different areas in which to teach, rather than what was described previously by Teachers 04 and 01:

> We've been doing the plant teaching. All of the posters and stuff we get from the language department, and I've tried to put all that up. Sometimes in my lessons, if I'm able to find the words, I'll add them like we do notice and wonder a lot…so I'll put the language in with those, too. But sometimes it's hard to find those resources to do that kind of stuff, and the time. Also trying to add questions in our work that relates to culture,

> too. It’s a little interesting because we don't really have a curriculum, so we have to create our own stuff. So sometimes it can be difficult to also take the time to add in the culture too. (Teacher 07)

In support of the implementation of having culture in the classroom, the Tribal school hired separate Culture Aides to assist teaching staff. These Culture Aides help provide the authority and knowledge to support teaching staff incorporate cultural teachings and language to weave together Indigenous and western ideas for students. Teacher 01 continues speaking about the role of Culture Aides in educational spaces:

> I have—I'm very, very fortunate because I have a Tribal member as a culture aid. So I very rarely say this is what I want to do, I say, I ask, what should I do out of respect for the community and the Tribe? I want it in as much as possible because I feel, being a Tribal school, it's hard when you have the Common Core standards. All these questions how to integrate the culture without them taking away from the standards because you have to, have all we have—what I would call you've got your red road, and then you have your cement road and trying to navigate both of those with, I have to take care of this, and I have to take care of this because the culture is just as important as learning to read and write and add. And so I'm very, very fortunate that I have somebody to help me be able to implement it, and it can go to every standard that I touch… I wish we had more time. I remember when we used to have a half hour every day and we don't have that anymore. But a lot of times I'll just veer away from the schedule just so they can have hands on activities with, with culture. Making medicine, making plant medicine. We've made smudge sprays. We've made all sorts of stuff. But anything that I can do to get culture. And teaching colors. And the culture aide using any teaching opportunity that she

> can help me. Like, I'll ask her, how do you say this? Or how do you say that? Or should we do whether in the language, should we. What else? What else can we do. And so, I feel like I'm a lot more fortunate that I'm able to implement culture in the classroom, because I have a culture aide and who knows a lot of language. (Teacher 01)

Teacher 02 also comments on the importance of Culture Aides:

> I had a Culture Aide with me. And she brought a lot of, you know, her knowledge in and would suggest, activities that we could do to integrate it. She didn't have the language component, but then I integrated the language. And then we used to have a lot of opportunities to go out on the landscape and integrate our science and math. (Teacher 02)

Place-based learning is an important facet of implementing culture into the curriculum. Teachers report on the impacts they witnessed on their students as a result of place-based learning:

> Place-based learning, I'll always remember the year that we got to go off campus four times in that year, and that just watching the change in the students over the course of the year. Like the first time we went out, they just were not focused and just, they're just having fun, just running and everything like that. The second time we went, they were listening better, participating more, doing the activities that we were doing. Then by the third time we went out, it was just phenomenal at how much like really advanced stuff they knew. And we're learning, I mean, like talking about culture and how they were connected to the plants and the animals around them. Then the fourth time we went out, I don't know why it was even there because they could just carry on without me, it was phenomenal. (Teacher 02)

Teacher 03 agrees:

> We went out to the forest. And so I knew about the forest. And when school started, set up a field trip to take the kids out to the forest and we did the project where they would take planting and for tips, and they sketched and they labeled. And then we looked at what users they had, and then they created posters. So that was our writing project. (Teacher 03)

On top of hiring Culture Aides, the Tribal school also employs culture teachers to teach culture classes. Teacher 06 reports on the importance of the culture staff to implement culture within classrooms:

> I've taken teachings and, you know, applied those to my classroom. We've made one before, but the culture teachers support us with that, too. Come in and done that with us. We have the plant teachings, we've we teach weekly and embed activities that they've shown us at trainings… and of course, that's been supported from teachings that the trainings we've received in the culture department. (Teacher 06)

Time and scheduling are one area that has been at the forefront of the balance between having culture being taught as a separate subject versus as a means in which subjects are taught. Teachers report on the importance of culture and the need for additional time and the opportunities to collaborate:

> And then the kids are culture hungry. We hear it all the time. I'm like, I would love to teach you more. But unfortunately, the scheduling was not our decision. And when you ask, it's just some higher up. And we don't know who the kids asked to and they don't know either. like nieces and nephews, I don't know, I'm like, I don't know either, honey…But now we have AI and chatGPT3 and so many things that you could do the work for you. Unfortunately, with culture, you can't do that. Can't have a cedar hat made

> digitally for you. You could try to 3D print it, but it's not the same as actually going out and gathering the cedar. Processing the cedar. Gathering the medicines. Putting it together to help heal one another. Or even understand that history concept that you're practicing your sovereignty rights. (Teacher 12)

Teacher 11 says:

> …there's a couple others I'd probably be really excited about it. I was trying to make kind of almost like a curriculum way back during Covid of covering these different topics. But I can't teach science. I don't know the science. You know your subject. This is the information. What can you take from this to apply to you? We kind of started doing it a little bit last year with teachers and a little bit with them, and they think I would really benefit like the other teachers, and we are trying to make it into our schedule. But, the admin didn't really follow through with it. Is making like a sign-up system for us and we can come help co-teach whatever lesson you have and help it fit whatever lesson you have…that's actually what the original plan for the coach aides were like when I was hired on. That's what we're told we are supposed to do is supposed to be helping the teachers bring culture into the classroom, helping them form their lessons into whatever. And the problem with that is some of them don't know how to do that, right. They just become glorified paras, whatever. And so that kind of fell through. That was their original intent…We grew up living off of the land and said we could have like co-taught, and that would have been cool, and they would have pulled in all over the place and go missing during those seasons hunting season, fishing season, whatever fishing season was about to start. (Teacher 11)

Teaching staff report on the ways that they implement culture into the classroom, typically by utilizing in-house plant teaching curriculum, Culture Aides, or working directly with Culture teaching staff. Staff report that while an important part of the educational experience, there are issues around time, scheduling, and opportunities to collaborate with the appropriate individuals to place more culturally relevant teachings into the classroom.

A Word About COVID-19

In January 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provided an alert that a new illness was discovered and later that month the first official case of COVID-19 in the United States was found in Washington State. In March of 2020, the World Health Organization formally declared a pandemic, ending the state of emergency in May of 2023 (Northwestern Medicine, 2025). The public health crisis yielded several different responses, changing the typical ways students accessed their education.

An interesting development in the interviews was the perspectives and experiences surrounding COVID-19 between both students and teachers. Out of the 22 interviews conducted, 10 teachers spoke about their experiences during the outbreak, with only two students even mentioning the word. Theme 5 explores this historical worldwide milestone through the lens of the teachers and students who lived through it.

For both teachers and students, the term *covid* appeared to be more of a milestone by which to delineate the passage of time. This occurred more for the teachers, working in their chosen careers as educators, typically comparing what education was like prior, during, and after the pandemic. The lived experience of all participants paints a picture of what education was like during those pandemic years, as well as offering insights about the long-term outcomes for students through the eyes of teaching staff.

Teacher 01 reports that when they started working, it "was an interesting experience too, because I was over in middle school. I was a para. That was right after Covid, so kids stayed in the room and the teachers rotated." Teacher 04 reports, "I retired from public school right before Covid… I started missing the students during Covid, it was just not the place for me to be. So I told my husband that I am going to go in and substitute."

When speaking about their experience "during Covid" and what the largest shifts were over time, Teacher 11 reports:

> A lot of people I've talked to said Covid changed a lot of things. It was during Covid that hands changed. There was a huge decline in what they were able to do with their hands, and we really saw it with their hand-eye coordination. The hand function went way, way down, there is no stamina in the hands, and they are quick to give up. (Teacher 11)

Teacher 12 reports the same phenomenon:

> I just need to see your hands work. That's where Covid hit hard. We lost a lot of our culture, muscles, and skills. They can't hold the pencil for more than maybe 10 minutes. Their focus is within the first 30 seconds. Before Covid they're about to do more hands-on projects. They were able to thread their needles. They understood the concept of how to be a good student, how to ask a question, how to be kind to our friends and help one another, understanding the materials and the process that goes into it…everyone's stuck with these laptops or a Chromebook, your hands start to atrophy. (Teacher 12)

When speaking how culture curriculum was changed during the pandemic years, Teacher 02 reports:

> …the (Muckleshoot) language program, learning from the teachers that were in the classroom because, you know, up until Covid we had language teachers come every

> single day of the week and they were in our classrooms for half an hour. You learned along with the children. (Teacher 02)

Teacher 03 also used Covid as a time marker and as a change in how teacher training surrounding culture shifted from going out to more controlled environments:

> …they had a lot of training here on the campus. We would spend a week, and we'd go up to the mountains and we'd go berry picking, and we'd go to Vashon Island. This must have been before Covid. It got less once 2020 came, but then the plant teachings started.

The plant teachings Teacher 03 is referring to are the in-house monthly plant teaching curriculum that spans the entire school year, entirely focused on Muckleshoot culture combining with social emotional learning.

Summary of Findings

Research Question 1: What Are the Observed Outcomes of Students Attending the Muckleshoot Tribal School (MTS)?

The findings show that students report an increased sense of identity attending a school where culture is implemented in the curriculum. Students report an increased sense of belonging, less mistreatment from staff and other students, and improved sense of self. This was demonstrated in Theme 1: The Power of Relationships in Education and Theme 3: Development and Support of Student Identity through Cultural Education Impacting Student Outcomes. In the interviews with graduated students and teachers, it was reported that there were time and willingness to create and sustain positive relationships in the educational arena. Most students interviewed participated in some level of college coursework, with some graduating and pursuing additional degrees, some attempting classes, and others continuing their studies. Students report finding employment inside the Tribe and elsewhere.

Research Question ***2: How Does the Teaching Staff Incorporate Cultural Elements into the School Curriculum?***

The interview data show that teachers implement cultural elements into the school curriculum via in-house created cultural curriculum and programming. In Theme 4 – Classroom Cultural Implementation, interview data show that place-based learning across Tribal lands is woven into students educational experience, encompassing traditional lessons in hunting and gathering. Culture aids, imbedded in the classroom, support teaching staff to properly include cultural elements. Culture staff also provide direct cultural lessons to students during the school week. Teachers report additional time to collaborate with appropriate Culture teaching staff, and direct engagement with students with culture, would be beneficial in curriculum development and delivery.

Research Question 3: What Is the Influence of Culture on the Educational Experience?

Findings suggest, as demonstrated by Theme 3: Development and Support of Student Identity through Cultural Education Impacting Student Outcomes, that students' identities are found and strengthened because of participation in the culturally designed curriculum. In Theme 2: Cultural Foundations of the Educational Experience, graduated students and teaching staff report that place based learning was impactful and an exercise in Tribal sovereignty, with teachers reporting that the whole-body experiential learning that occurs during place-based learning was positive. Survey results show that there is support for the incorporation of culture in the classroom, with respondents reporting agreement with its importance (Question 1), belief it improves student outcomes (Question 2), that additional time should be allotted for in class and place based learning (Questions 3, 7), and that engagement with culture in the classroom and on the land has positive benefits (Questions 9, 10).

In an additional note, the data also show that through cultural teachings staff noticed a change in student capabilities when comparing students before and after the pandemic, with noticeable changes in student attention and fine motor skills, impacting their ability to engage with culturally relevant teachings.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Purpose of Study

The most important purpose of this study was to allow Indigenous voices to be heard in this research area. All throughout my academic career, I read study after study, article after article, around how to establish and operate a Tribally operated school, but time and time again the inclusion of Indigenous voices were limited, especially when it came to Tribes found within the United States. I was told the how and the why, backed up by academic theory, but I was not provided with what experiences were had when put into practice. Ultimately, I wanted to allow a space to be opened for Indigenous people to say, this is what happened, and those teaching at the school to say, this is how it is done here.

Another purpose of this study was to explore the outcomes of students that attend a Tribally operated school, more specifically, the Tribally operated school of which I am an enrolled member. I have attended several Tribal school graduations over the years, and while I do know a little about what some of those graduated students ended up pursuing after obtaining their diplomas, I continued to have questions and curiosity surrounding what students from different graduation cohorts ended up doing. Also, I wanted to know how they felt about their experience attending the Tribal school. This study attempted to satisfy that curiosity.

Another obvious reason that I conducted this study is that it was required of me by the institution where I am enrolled. The educational systems and institutions in power that dictate what and who are allowed to participate in these programs directly create cohorts of individuals who will be the next generation of qualified workers who will manipulate, change, and be subject to the rules and regulations of the systems being participated in. In this time at this institution, these studies are the norm. Perhaps in the future there will be a time in which wildly

different methodologies and types of presentations will allowed to be taken into consideration as legitimate as the written dissertation, but in our current era I will take solace that I was able to follow the theories of Indigenous thinkers, take classes taught by Indigenous individuals, and be a conduit to allow Indigenous voices to be heard within these systems.

Research Questions

Three research questions were developed to explore and guide the purpose of this study:

1. What are the observed outcomes of students attending the Muckleshoot Tribal School (MTS)?

2. How does the teaching staff incorporate cultural elements into the school curriculum?

3. What is the influence of culture on the educational experience?

In developing these three questions, student outcomes, student experiences with culture in the classroom, and the ways the school and teaching staff implement culture within the curriculum were aimed at exploring. Through semi-structured interviews and survey questions, those willing to participate in the study uncovered themes surrounding the Power of Relationships in Education, Cultural Foundations of the Educational Experience, Development and Support of Student Identity through Cultural Education impacting Student Outcomes, and Classroom Cultural Implementation. Teaching staff also had comments surrounding their experience during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the effects they observed on students.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What are the observed outcomes of students attending the Muckleshoot Tribal School (MTS)?

Two different themes were found that helped answer this research question were The Power of Relationships in Education and the Development and Support of Student Identity through Cultural Education impacting Student Outcomes.

In the theme, The Power of Relationships in Education, students expressed the importance of relationships between themselves and teaching staff to assist with their engagement in coursework and additional time to focus on areas they struggled with or were interested in learning more. Teaching staff echoed their appreciation of time to spend building relationships with not only their students, but with the student's family and community, adding that the educational process becomes more difficult when these relationships are absent.

These findings show that the educational process does not occur in bubble, and that students will remember those relationships in tandem with the curriculum taught through the relationship. While relationship is important to the human experience, these findings highlight the power of relationship within Indigenous communities. This phenomenon points to a need of not only time management in a micro sense, but in a macro sense making extremely important leadership choices concerning the structure and format of what a typical school day looks like—to question if the typical constructs of a K–12 school maximize the ability for students and staff to establish and maintain these relationships. This extends from how the daily schedules are created, how the school year schedule is created, the role of community within the school and vice versa, and the importance of extracurricular activities.

The literature mirrors the findings surrounding relationships, as Cajete (1994) and Deloria & Wildcat (2001) mention that Indigenous curriculum being based in reciprocal relationship needs to be accomplished to be considered Indigenous. These relationships extend past the personal and into the land itself (Cajete, 1994), with several students reporting impactful

memories of learning on the land. This also aligns with Papp (2016) citing improved overall relationships between students and teachers when cultural programs are implemented in classrooms. Finally, the two articles from the United States, Jeffries and Singer (2003) and Peters et al. (2024) both align with the outcomes of this study: that the inclusion of student voice within the educational spaces correspond with reports of increased sense of belonging and positive relationships with teachers.

Leadership needs to appreciate and prioritize the development of relationships at Tribally operated schools, not only between the students that attend classes, but also to their families and community. This prioritization may look like community outreach, hiring practices that find like-minded individuals who also appreciate and are dedicated to relationship building, as well as ensuring that staff have the time and opportunity to develop these important relationships. Making intentional decisions surrounding the limited daily resources (time, attention) is an investment for the future of not only the students, but the community as whole.

Within the theme Education and the Development and Support of Student Identity through Cultural Education impacting Student Outcomes, study participants shared their experiences how the educational curriculum and environment at a Tribally controlled school impacted their sense of identity. This support in the development and maintenance of this identity then influenced the choices the students made after obtaining their high school diplomas.

These stories show the impact of culturally appropriate curriculum within educational settings on future outcomes of students. A possible explanation of the outcomes of the students—going to college, obtaining higher degrees, working for Tribal enterprises, even when the students themselves did not have examples in their own lives to follow—could possibly be tied to their experiences receiving an education in a place specially designed to meet their needs as

Indigenous individuals. Without a culturally relevant educational environment, these students may have associated their educational experiences negatively, growing more disdainful about pursuing anything to do with higher education, or completing a high school diplomas. The survey results surrounding the importance of inclusion of culture within curriculum, dedicating time to culture- and place-based learning, and the perceived positive outcomes of doing so support these findings.

The findings align with several studies of increased cultural pride (Papp, 2016; Rubie, 1999; Whitinui, 2010). These results also align with what Deloria & Wildcat (2001) talk about when speaking of the separation of Indigenous students from place when enrolled in western educational systems with the resulting sacrifice of their identity. It would make logical sense, then, when Indigenous students are placed into culturally relevant educational systems, their sense of identity would be strengthened. Additional research concurs that students have a higher cultural self-identity when culture, especially language, is placed into the curriculum (Ahmed et al., 2022; Ezeife, 2011; Roy, 2024; Snow & Obed, 2022; Walker et al., 2023).

If academic student outcomes are to be changed surrounding grades and proficiency, as reported on by Philip (2021), the Bureau of Indian Education (2018), and Rampey et al. (2021), having a place that fundamentally supports the growth of Indigenous student's identity is a solid opportunity to start with. With students exposed to an educational experience whereby they are excited to show up and engage with the curriculum being presented may lead to a positive experience where students could demonstrate their knowledge. To put it bluntly, if student's identities are being supported and they feel connected to the school they attend, I would argue that they will be more likely to continue attending classes.

These findings are important for educational practices because it demonstrates that the work done to create culturally significant curriculum is a positive in the development of Indigenous youth. This development helps students engage with the education in a meaningful way outside of a western paradigm. These findings reinforce the need for and importance of continued development of culturally centered curriculum, demonstrating to educational leaders the value of such work.

Research Question 2: How does the teaching staff incorporate cultural elements into the school curriculum?

In the theme Classroom Cultural Implementation, teaching staff shared how the Tribal school and teaching staff embed cultural lessons into the students' learning experiences via developed cultural curriculum, place-based learning opportunities, Culture Aides' support within classrooms, and culture teaching staff.

These reports indicate that the implementation of culture in the classroom is not an impossibility, can be accomplished with the appropriate assistance from trained individuals, and that teachers will in fact do it. This opens the door for conversations and curriculum development possibilities that extend beyond what typical Western-style classrooms offer, from rote memorization in overcrowded classrooms to a rich, culturally embedded experiential experience that nourishes the students' minds, bodies, and spirits. Teachers are open, and some excited, to implement these concepts within their classrooms. This excitement can be used as a building block to start discussions on how best to support teachers—either by trainings on daily implementation, to continued support on already existing curriculum, to trainings on newly developed curriculum. There is an opportunity to fill the gap reported of not knowing exactly how to go about this implementation, and with support and guidance from the appropriate staff,

this can be easier to achieve. The survey data supports the findings here, showing that more time should be dedicated to cultural teachings, and woven into the educational experience of the student.

The findings of teaching staff following the lead and having respect for Cultural knowledge keepers align with Smith (2012) as she explains that any Indigenous curriculum would have to be accountable to, and come from, the communities the curriculum was designed to educate. The attitudes and behavior of deferring to both Culture teachers and Culture aides reinforce Smith's (2012) ideas of having community members choose what is appropriate and not appropriate, depending on Tribal protocol, to share at any given time. Moreover, it speaks and follows the ideas of Tribal sovereignty surrounding the development of creating education by Deloria & Wildcat (2001). The study did not center around specific classes or specific student grades for comparison, such as those studies like Ahmed et al (2022), Krishnamoorthy et al (2024), or Vaugh & Caldwell (2017), so the study results cannot add to that body of work and leaves open that opportunity for future research to be done.

For those educators in the classroom, these findings show the power of teaching culturally appropriate curriculum to their students, advocating for additional training, continued development, and scheduled classroom time to teach these important lessons. It shines a light on different methods of how the work can be accomplished, and for educational leaders highlight the need for both a Culture department with a dedicated teaching staff who can assist with lesson planning and co-teaching, but also the hiring of Culture aids in the classroom to assist with the day to day incorporation and teaching of appropriate cultural lessons and language.

When speaking of culture elements within the school curriculum, the survey results support the overall importance of the practice, showing agreement or strong agreement that

doing so improves overall student outcomes. Furthermore, survey participants support increased time for cultural education and a belief that culture should be foundational piece of any curriculum provided. Place-based learning has broad support throughout all participants, with 40% non-Indigenous individuals feeling neutral about the practice. Interestingly, the majority of respondents would like to see more time allotted to place-based learning, agreeing with the belief that teaching culture on the land is a positive influence. In total, the survey results show broad overall support for and belief in the importance of teaching staff incorporating cultural elements into the curriculum.

Research Question 3: What is the influence of culture on the educational experience?

The most applicable themes that address research question 3 were Cultural Foundations of the Educational Experience, which looks at more of the *what*, culturally speaking, is implemented in the classroom and its impacts on students, and the theme Development and Support of Student Identity through Cultural Education Impacting Student Outcomes, which includes ideas, as stated above, surrounding student identity but also touches on how that reflects student outcomes. Ultimately there is a daily influence of students as they are exposed to culturally relevant curriculum, and that daily exposure builds to assist what occurs once a student matriculates out of the educational system. Unfortunately, the scope of this study only included those students who graduated and does not include data surrounding test scores and the like that would shed light on academic progress or achievement, resulting in conversations surrounding outcomes once students were finished with high school.

At the macro level, educational leadership can find benefits from incorporating place-based learning curriculum into student's schedules. Tribal leadership can observe that the utilization of such teaching methods and curriculum development is an act of Tribal sovereignty,

taking a necessary step to reclaim those educational institutions from western-centered thought that has dictated how education was to be imagined and delivered to generations of Indigenous youth. For educators, the findings reveal the benefits of consistent place-based learning on student participation in their education, highlighting that time and dedication is required to increase meaningful engagement, with impacts on not only the identity of the student, but on the teachers themselves. This impact on identity was discussed above in Research Question 1.

The Cultural Foundations of the Educational Experience theme focused more on how the school itself positions culture within the curriculum with place-based learning, curriculum development, and teacher training. These building blocks create an atmosphere and environment in which students are exposed to, differing from how exactly teaching staff, independently, implement culture within classrooms, or the impacts of this environment on the student experience. These decisions are made at an educational leadership level, that point the whole educational system in a direction. What occurs for those in the educational system is one tailored to an Indigenous perspective, an inclusive-community based engagement where not only typical western subjects are taught, but also what the community values to be taught, in a way the community chooses to do so. Ultimately, the Tribe decides the epistemological and ontological direction the educational space is moving towards. If we think about exercising Tribal sovereignty, controlling those spaces and directions is a foundational piece and must be implemented. As discussed previously, the foundations of western education are rooted in control (Paglayan, 2024), and if Tribal communities do not exercise that control for the benefit of their people, another educational system will be utilized with its own agenda to educate future generations.

The data results of this study do reflect an exercise of Tribal sovereignty in the establishment of cultural practices in education. While still working in conjunction with state and federal entities, Tribal leadership has taken steps to incorporate appropriate cultural teachings into classrooms. Indigenous people walk in two worlds, and this study demonstrates that educational systems not designed for, but can be utilized by, Indigenous communities to shape educational experiences that fit the needs of the community.

The findings of this theme align with the work of Cajete (1994) and Deloria & Wildcat (2001) that state whatever culturally based curriculum is used, it must come from the area where is school is located, as that is where the land is. The findings also follow Cajete's (1994) theories surrounding experiential involvement, as hands-on learning was beneficial to the students, and observations of the teachers. The place-based learning findings align with previous studies (Snow & Obed, 2022; Walker et al., 2023) demonstrate increased cultural pride and wellbeing. The findings also align with the literature surrounding the use of Indigenous language (Ahmed et al., 2022; Ezeife, 2011; Snow & Obed, 2022; Roy, 2024; Walker et al., 2023) and the associated improvements with engagement. This weaving of curriculum within the classroom staying away from the temptations of treating culture as a separate subject to be studied follows the recommendation of Deloria and Wildcat (2001), who warn that if systems begin to treat culture as an *other*, students will internalize it, leading to poor outcomes. The findings of this study unfortunately do not support or contradict studies that look at achievement scores as it fell outside this studies scope.

These Tribally controlled schools offer an opportunity for increased sovereignty, educational control, and curriculum development flexibility. It offers the creation of spaces tailored to the needs of the community, an opportunity to change historical narratives of what and

how educational is for Indigenous people, and continues to add examples to show that Indigenous educational theory is legitimate, applicable, and defiant.

Study Limitations

There are limitations to what can be achieved and uncovered in any study, and this work is no exception. When first envisioning how best to go about addressing a problem that was interesting enough to commit a significant amount of time researching, the types of research questions that would suitably address that area, and the means in which to address the research questions themselves, I had all had best intentions behind them. When put into practice, those intentions only offer a solid foundational point to begin—reality will supply plenty of challenges that test and push back on what you intended to investigate. While hopefully this study offers a glimpse into what was intended to examine, there are several areas that limited the outcomes of this study.

Sample Limitations

This study collected survey and interview data from one Tribally operated school. The findings cannot be generalized to any other school district, Tribe, or population. The findings only reflect the thoughts and feelings of those individuals who either teach at or graduated from the one school. While attempts were made to obtain voices that span across time, such as interviewing teaching staff from different grade bands, and who have taught for various amounts of time, due to the limited participation of interviewees, a deep cross section of teacher experiences and thoughts were only roughly half of what the goal was when creating the study. This also applies to graduated students, half of the stated goal was achieved, limiting the breadth and depth of potential experiences and voices.

The original sample sizes, as stated above, were ultimately not achieved. Despite flyers, word of mouth, approaching with personal invitations, and a web presence, the participation reception typically fell on two different paths: either a polite request for additional information followed by either no further interest or a conversation that the individual was uncomfortable with participating, or genuine excitement for participation. Granted, there were always exceptions, as some who were skeptical at first ended up filling out a survey, or those who appeared excited as the study was explained to them falling back into the shadows as time went on. While themes were extracted from the collected data, I would have preferred a larger sample size in both survey and interview data.

Researcher Bias

Despite my best efforts to steer clear of any potential personal bias I have, the fact of the matter is that I am an enrolled Muckleshoot Tribal member, and I want to produce work in a good way that reflects my Tribe. Several decisions had to be made surrounding how to frame and speak about the phenomenon discussed by research participants, how to create the most objective research, survey, and interview questions to limit my personal bias while at the same time allowing participants to express how they feel about what is being asked of them. My Tribe values highly the pursuit of education and the success of members of the community. I attempted to walk a path that raises my community while at the same time adhering to the academic rigor of the Muckleshoot Tribal College and University of Washington – Tacoma.

There is a potential for confirmation bias within analyzing the interview questions. There may have been an unintentional promotion of responses that painted a picture of more positive outcomes, while de-emphasizing statements that would show my community in a more negative light. This confirmation bias could not only manifest while analyzing the interview questions,

but also in the creation of the questions themselves, the conversations with potential participants, and even the prose and style in which this study is written.

Recommendations

The results of this study show that the implementation of culture within the curriculum has positive benefits for students and teachers. It is recommended that continued work be done to create culturally centered curriculum that is the vehicle in which to teach subjects. Participants expressed frustration and concern of the overall time allotted to teach culturally relevant concepts to students, at the same time expressing the positive effects of curriculums (plant teachings), and field trips (place-based learning to Crystal Mountain) that center Indigenous concepts. By continuing to place culture as a means of which, not a standalone subject to be taught, friction surrounding daily schedules of where culture teachings should be placed would be lowered as students would be exposed to culture in every subject. Collaboration with Culture teachers, Culture aids, and curriculum development teams, in partnership with appropriate Cultural knowledge keepers, with educational leadership must continue to develop custom, high quality educational lessons to not only meet whatever federal and state mandates each Tribally controlled school is choosing to adhere to, but also to meet Tribal goals on how and what they want their Tribe's school to teach their children.

It is also recommended that the collaboration in development of curriculum extend out of those traditional spaces and extend into place-based learning opportunities for all students. While these outings may be logistically difficult at times, depending on the location, students and teachers did share memories of utilizing the spaces around campus to employ these teaching methods. With anything, little planning and foresight goes a long way into making these methods a reality in the daily lives of students. I would encourage all educational leaders to seriously

question the typical delivery methods of education we are used to from classrooms, desks, to even the ideas of segregating students into like aged grade levels. I am not advocating for scrapping the way education is done currently, but to rethink and leverage the relationships in communities to bring people together.

Finally, the last recommendation of this study is to carefully rethink the use of technology in the classroom. The introduction of massive amounts of technology during the COVID-19 pandemic has led to unintended consequences observed by teaching staff surrounding overall attention spans, frustration tolerances, and fine-motor capabilities—attributes that are integral to the participation of culturally important practices. In addition, the use of technology may interfere with the development and maintenance of face-to-face relationships, as students focused on a screen on their desks potentially miss out on the interpersonal events occurring around them in a classroom. While technology is an important facet in our lives and is not going away, a deliberate evaluation of its use is recommended.

It is recommended that future research continues with other Tribally operated schools within the United States to examine what works, what does not work, and how communities come together to educate their children. Additional Indigenous voices from all levels—student, administration, Tribal leadership—need to be invited to share their own stories on what solutions they have found. Tribes are working under the same federal laws and have a shared history of western educational impact on their communities. While each Tribe's story will differ, I would argue they are variations on an overarching theme of colonization. My hope is that sharing information can help educate the next generation of leaders. By raising more Indigenous voices into these spaces, we continue to communicate that we are still here.

Another gap of future research is to examine how to appropriately and successfully place culture in the center of the learning experience. While it may take an enormous amount of work to accomplish, and each program will cater to the unique needs of the Tribe it is serving, there is an opening to review the different protocols utilized by different Tribal communities. There is exciting and important work being done, and if shared intentionally and appropriately, other Indigenous students may benefit. This gap could be extended to research surrounding how these cultural curriculums impact students' scores in state and local testing metrics, graduation statistics, and college success metrics.

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of culture in curriculum on graduated students and teachers via interview and survey from one Tribally controlled K–12 school. Ten graduated students and 12 teachers were interviewed in semi-structured interviews, sharing their thoughts and experiences. Survey and demographic questionaries were also utilized to gather data on opinions surrounding the implementation of culture within classroom settings. The study revolved around three research questions, which helped uncover four themes within the collected research.

The overall findings of the research collected show that culture that is placed in curriculum has a positive influence on student's overall experience and identity. The relationships built during the educational experience also have a positive impact on both the student and teacher, which extends into the community. These factors impact student choices after high school, showing positive overall outcomes from the student data collected. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that the work of cultural implementation in traditional Western-based K–12 school systems is not only a possibility, but a lived reality for students.

Education has the power to shape the world we live in. This power has been historically used to marginalize, erase, and eradicate Indigenous communities. Through strong Indigenous leadership, this power has been taken and wielded to shape new and exciting ways to deliver education to the next generation. From Tribally operated K–12 schools to programs under Tribal college and public university agreement, Tribal leaders are actively shaping how the educational experience is created and sustained. By holding what our ancestors fought and died for into the future, we have a chance to change our relationship on how education is implement in our communities.

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Appendix A: Te Aho Matua O Ngı Kura Kaupapa Mıori

OFFICIAL VERSION OF TE AHO MATUA O NGl KURA KAUPAPA MlORI AND AN EXPLANATION IN ENGLISH PURSUANT TO SECTION 155A OF THE EDUCATION ACT 1989

INTRODUCTION

Presented in the Mäori language, Te Aho Matua has been written by the pioneers of Kura Kaupapa Mäori as a foundation document for their kura.

As such, the document lays down the principles by which Kura Kaupapa Mäori identify themselves as a unified group committed to a unique schooling system which they regard as being vital to the education of their children.

Te Aho Matua, therefore, provides a philosophical base for the teaching and learning of children and provides policy guidelines for parents, teachers and boards of trustees in their respective roles and responsibilities.

Te Aho Matua is intended for inclusion in the charters of Kura Kaupapa Mäori as the means by which their special nature can be clearly identified from mainstream kura.

Te Aho Matua also provides a basis from which curriculum planning and design can evolve, allowing for diversity while maintaining an integral unity.

Te Aho Matua has been written in a typically elliptical Mäori style which implies meaning and requires interpretation rather than translation.

Te Aho Matua is presented in six parts, each part having a special focus on what, from a Mäori point of view, is crucial in the education of children for the future.

PART 1: TE IRA TANGATA

This part of the document focuses on the nature of humankind, and more particularly on the nature of the child. The Mäori perception of the child is encapsulated in two well-known whakatauaki, or proverbs.

The first, which says, Ahakoa iti, He iti mapihi pounamu, refers to the singular beauty and immense value of even the tiniest piece of fine greenstone.

There are two related interpretations of the second proverb, which says, He kakano i ruia mai i Rangiätea, E kore ia e ngaro. The first interpretation refers to the child as the seed which was dispersed from Rangiätea, the island in the Society Group from which the ancestors of the Mäori migrated. The second interpretation refers to the child as the seed which was dispersed from the marae, also named Rangiätea, of the supreme deity, Io-matua.

The last line in this proverb affirms that the seed will never be lost. This statement implies a strong physical orientation for life, like that of the ancestors who faced the unknown on the high seas in search of a new home. It also implies the certainty of spiritual life since humankind emanated from the marae of Io.

When both proverbs are applied to the child, the nurture and education of that child takes on a significance which is fundamental to Kura Kaupapa Mäori philosophy.

The statement which follows the proverbs suggests that the teaching fraternity ought to have full knowledge of the make-up of humankind before an effective system of teaching and learning for children can be devised.

What follows is a statement which presents a Mäori perspective as to the origin and nature of the human spirit. It was felt that herein lay one of the answers for recovery from the malaise induced by loss of land, power and sovereignty which has been, and still is for many, the experience of Mäori people.

The statement says that the spirits of human beings derive from the Rangi Tuhaha, the twelve dimensions of enlightenment in which spirit entities dwell until physical life is desired and to which spirit entities return after physical death. The inference is that at the moment of conception the physical and spiritual potential of the human being becomes an individual entity endowed with the spirit qualities of mauri, tapu, wehi, mana and ihi; the spirit receptor-transmitters of whatumanawa, hinengaro, auaha, ngakau and pumanawa; and the iho matua, which is the umbilical cord of spirit energy which links that single entity through his ancestral lines to the primal energy source which is Io.

The spirit qualities referred to here can best be described as emanations of energy, the strength or weakness of which is determined by the condition of the receptor-transmitters where feelings, emotions, intelligence, consciousness, conscience and all other non-physical characteristics of human personality dwell.

Most often referred to as taha wairua, these aspects of the human spirit are considered as important as physical attributes, not to be dismissed as the domain and responsibility of church or religion, but regarded as an integral part of human personality and, therefore, are responsive to and affected by teaching and learning.

In summary, then, Te Ira Tangata focuses on the physical and spiritual endowment of children and the importance of nurturing both in their education. Kura Kaupapa Mäori therefore:

challenge parents, teachers and trustees to work together in establishing a harmonious, child-centred learning environment in which care, consideration and co-operation are acknowledged as necessary elements for the successful operation of the kura for the greatest benefit of its children.

propose that the role of the kura is all-round development of its children rather than career orientation.

assert that the nurturing of body and soul in a caring environment is the greatest guarantee that children will pursue positive roles in life.

affirm that affectionate nurturing breeds happy hearts and lithesome spirits and thereby, warm and caring people.

honour all people regardless of age, creed, colour, gender or persuasion and will not therefore, belittle, resent, hurt or show prejudice towards anyone else.

honour gender differences and attributes in full understanding that it is in the combined and co-operative efforts of men and women that the well-being of children and community is assured.

respect the physical body and encourage children to pursue habits which guarantee personal health and well-being.

respect the physical and spiritual uniqueness of the individual and are therefore mindful of not perpetrating physical or psychological harm against oneself or others.

affirm that the needs of the spirit are well served through the creative arts of music and song, dance and drama, drawing and painting, prose and poetry and all the activities which give full sway to colour and imagining.

PART 2: TE REO

Having established the nature of the child this part of the document focuses on language policy and how Kura Kaupapa Mäori can best advance the language learning of their children.

As a natural and logical progression for graduates of Kohanga Reo, a primary focus of Kura Kaupapa Mäori is the continuing development of the Mäori language of their children. At

the same time there exists a particular concern among some parents that the English language skills of their children should also be addressed. The primary language issue for Kura Kaupapa Mäori became one of determining how the optimum result could be achieved in the development of both languages.

Indeed, the issue called for considerable research, including a review of the literature which described the experiences of other language communities, especially those whose language, like that of the Mäori, was experiencing serious decline. The language policies and teaching practices of other nation states, where bilingualism was a valued attribute for citizenship and the learning of a second language in educational institutions was encouraged, provided a rich panorama of experience from which the first Kura Kaupapa Mäori could base its language policy.

The principle of total immersion featured in much of the literature, and the published research experiments of Lambert and his associates in the French and English Quebec experience legitimised total immersion as being particularly effective in advancing the French language competence of English-speaking children.

So did the research studies of Dr Lily Wong-Fillmore, Professor of Education, University of California, Berkeley, USA, in which a range of second language learning methodologies, being used to teach elementary schoolchildren English were compared. Of these, total immersion proved to be significantly more effective.

The Ataarangi and Kohanga Reo initiatives which had preceded Kura Kaupapa Mäori by five years had already established the effectiveness of total immersion. This then became firm policy for Kura Kaupapa Mäori.

In summary, then, Te Reo focuses on bilingual competence and sets principles by which this competence will be achieved. Kura Kaupapa Mäori therefore:

respect all languages.

expect full competency in Mäori and English for the children of their kura.

insist that legislation for the Mäori language is worthless without a total commitment to everyday usage of Mäori.

affirm that total immersion most rapidly develops language competence and assert that the language of kura be, for the most part, exclusively Mäori.

accept that there is an appropriate time for the introduction of English at which time there shall be a separate English language teacher and a separate language learning facility.

agree that the appropriate time for the introduction of English is a matter for the kura whänau to decide as a general rule, when children are reading and writing competently in Mäori, and children indicate an interest in English.

assert that along with total immersion, bilingual competence is rapidly advanced through discreetly separating the two languages and therefore reject the mixing or code-switching of the two languages.

insist that competence in Mäori language and culture, along with a commitment to the Aho Matua be the hallmark of Kura Kaupapa Mäori teachers and parents but that there be accommodation for those who are still in the learning phase.

believe that, where there is a commitment to the language, mastery will follow.

PART 3: NGÄ IWI

Having established the nature of children with respect to their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs, and determining the most effective approach to language learning, this part

of the document focuses on the social agencies which influence the development of children, in short, all those people with whom they interact as they make sense of their world and find their rightful place within it.

In traditional society whänau was the socialising agency of children, and the fragmentation of this fundamental social structure in the urban drift of Mäori away from their tribal centres is one of the variables which has contributed to the "lost generations" of Mäoridom.

It seemed immensely desirable that the whänau which, in this context, are all those people associated with the kura and its children, should be established as a fully functioning socialising agency, where each member of the whänau contributes to the education of all of the children. This communal responsibility for all children has to be one of the most positive moves of accommodating single-parent and dysfunctional families whose children are most at risk, while at the same time providing a haven where such families and their children can recover both stability and dignity in their lives.

All people derive from a unique culture which shapes their perception of self as belonging to, participating in and contributing to the continuum of life. The uniqueness of Mäori social structures must therefore be reflected in the entirety of the kura, allowing the children to consolidate their place among their own people as the safe ground from which they can begin, with expanding consciousness, to explore the life ways of other people.

Given that these two important factors contribute to the special nature of Kura Kaupapa Mäori and are particularly relevant to the curriculum, to the functioning of boards of trustees and to the interaction of the kura with its whänau, it follows that teacher training should also be a major consideration for kura.

It cannot be assumed that the graduates of mainstream teacher training will meet the requirements of kura. In fact, kura may need to target potential teachers from within the kura whänau and to seek a suitable training package which allows such people to qualify as teachers for their kura.

As a further consideration, experience has shown that school size is a significant factor. A small school allows greater whänau participation with all the children. This same participation tends to dissipate as kura get larger. Kura may need, therefore, to set the parameters as to what their ideal population should be in order to fulfil the promise of success for all their children.

In summary, then, Ngä Iwi focuses on the principles which are important in the socialisation of children. Kura Kaupapa Mäori therefore:

emphasise the importance of genealogy in establishing links within whänau, hapa and iwi including iwi Päkehä.

emphasise the importance to children of knowing their own ancestral links and of exploring their links with other iwi.

emphasise that children be secure in their knowledge about their own people but learn about and acknowledge other people and their societies.

emphasise that children study the historical, cultural, political, social, religious and economic events and issues which are an integral part of their Mäori heritage.

emphasise that whänau ties are fundamental in the socialisation of children and are established and reinforced in a caring, supportive environment where aroha is evident.

assert that such learning is caught rather than taught and is the primary reason for the kura whänau to be close to and involved in the activities of the children.

emphasise that the association and interaction of the whänau with the children, where whänau approval or disapproval is felt by the children, is also where their sense of appropriate and acceptable behaviour begins.

value the participation of whänau as administrators, ancillary staff and teacher support as a means of reinforcing the cohesion of whänau and kura.

affirm that the kura belongs to the whänau and is available for the learning activities of all the whänau members.

assert that teacher training is a legitimate function of the kura and that aspiring teachers have extended experience in the kura before and during formal training.

submit that the size of the kura is a factor in facilitating or mitigating against the participation of whänau.

PART 4: TE AO

Having established the nature of children, their language learning and the people who influence their socialisation, this part of the document focuses on the world which surrounds children and about which there are fundamental truths which affect their lives.

Young children are naturally fascinated by every aspect of the natural world which enter their expanding field of experience. The task for the kura whänau is maintaining this fascination and optimising those experiences which contribute to their understanding and appreciation of the natural environment and the interconnectedness of everything within it.

Further to this, children need also to understand that the activities of people, including themselves, can have a detrimental effect on the environment and its resources.

In summary, then, Te Ao encompasses those aspects of the world itself which impact on the

learning of children. Kura Kaupapa Mäori therefore:

recognise that the learning of children encompasses what enters their field of experience at home, in the Mäori world and in the world at large.

legitimise Mäori knowledge of nature and the universe as an important and integral part of learning.

encourage children to marvel at and value all life forms, and the balance of nature which gives each of those life forms its right of existence.

develop in children an understanding that they are caretakers of the environment and are true to the laws of conservation passed down by their Mäori forebears, as well as those practices which are environmentally friendly.

inspire children to explore the natural and cosmic laws of the universe through the sciences and whatever means enhances understanding.

PART 5: AHUATANGA AKO

Taken altogether, the perception of children being central in an ever expanding world of experience which is accessed through the people with whom they associate and language, the implications for the curriculum become evident. This model provides for every aspect of learning which the whänau feel is important for their children, as well as the requirements of the national curriculum.

A further and final consideration is how best to achieve this in practice.

Ahuatanga Ako lists the principles of teaching practice which are considered of vital importance in the education of children. Kura Kaupapa Mäori therefore:

assert that teaching and learning be a happy and stimulating experience for children.

practise karakia as a means of settling the spirit, clearing the mind and releasing tension so that concentration on the task at hand is facilitated.

value the presence of supportive adults as important participants in the teaching/learning process.

emphasise the particular value of concentrated listening as a skill to be thoroughly learned by children.

encourage the use of body, mind and all the senses in learning; listening; thinking and quiet concentration; visualisation and observation; touching; feeling and handling; questioning and discussing; analysing and synthesising; testing hypotheses; and creative exploration.

adopt teaching practices and principles which accommodate different styles of learning and motivate optimal learning.

honour kaumatua as the repositories of Mäori knowledge and invite their participation as advisers and fellow teachers.

expose children to the protocols of hospitality in the home, at school and on the marae, and require their participation at cultural functions in roles appropriate to their ages and levels of maturation.

accept that healthy relationships between brothers and sisters, younger and older siblings, children, parents and elders are the joint responsibility of the kura whänau.

encourage older children to care for the young ones and to occasionally assist in their learning activities and younger children to accept the guidance of their older peers.

emphasise the importance of creating a learning environment which is interesting, stimulating and reflects the Mäori world.

expand the learning environment to include marae, the wide-open spaces of bush, sea and sky, libraries and museums, and all other places which contribute to learning.

welcome innovative ways of stimulating the learning of children but encourage self-motivation.

provide for the special interests that individual children may have in the development of self-directed learning.

encourage shared and co-operative ways of learning.

PART 6: TE TINO UARATANGA

Having encapsulated in the foregoing statements the major areas to be considered in the education of children in Kura Kaupapa Mäori, a final consideration focuses on what the outcome might be for children who graduate from Kura Kaupapa Mäori.

Kura Kaupapa Mäori will have in place appropriate measures for assessing and evaluating the achievement of their children at all levels of the national curriculum, as well as whatever else the kura decides are valuable areas of knowledge for their children.

This part of the document focuses, however, on the whole person in terms of a fully functioning human being whose personal attributes are recognised, nurtured and brought to fruition.

In summary, then, Te Tino Uaratanga defines the characteristics which Kura Kaupapa Mäori aim to develop in their children, that they:

develop free, open and inquiring minds alert to every area of knowledge which they choose to pursue in their lives.

become competent thinkers, listeners, speakers, readers and writers in both Mäori and English.

advance their individual talents to the highest levels of achievement.

delight in using their creative talents in all feats of endeavour.

are receptive to and have a great capacity for aroha, for joy and for laughter.

are true and faithful to their own sense of personal integrity while being caring, considerate and co-operative with others.

assimilate the fruits of learning into the deeper recesses of consciousness where knowing refreshes the spirit.

manifest self-esteem, self-confidence, self-discipline and well-developed qualities of leadership.

value their independence and self-determination in setting personal goals and achieving them.

radiate the joy of living.

manifest physical and spiritual well-being through the harmonious alignment of body, mind and spirit.

are secure in the knowledge of their ancestral links to the divine source of all humanity.

are high achievers who exemplify the hopes and aspirations of their people.

Appendix B: Handouts

Muckleshoot Community Study

How Including Muckleshoot Culture in the Curriculum Affects Student Outcomes

Calling All Muckleshoot Tribal School Graduates

Are you a **Muckleshoot Tribal School graduate?**

Would you like to participate in an **University of Washington / Muckleshoot Tribal College** study about your educational experience?

If you hold a **Muckleshoot Tribal School diploma** and were enrolled for at least two years, you may qualify to participate in a research study exploring how **Muckleshoot Culture** impacted your learning journey — both within school and beyond.

About the Study

Participants will be invited to take part in:

A 60-minute in-person interview

A survey exploring experiences with cultural education

A demographic questionnaire

Compensation:

You will receive a **$50 Amazon.com** gift card for participating in the interview. All responses will remain confidential.

How to Participate

Simply scan the QR code below to learn more or sign up for the study.

Scan to Learn More or Join the Study

1 **Questions about this study?**
Ryan Wilson, Muckleshoot Tribal Member
kuno@uw.edu
206-650-8653

2 **Questions about your rights as a participant?**
UW Human Subjects Division
hsdinfo@uw.edu
206-543-0098

Muckleshoot Tribal School

Muckleshoot Tribal School Research Invitation

How Including Muckleshoot Culture in the Curriculum Affects Student Outcomes

Calling All Muckleshoot Tribal School Educators

Have you taught at the **Muckleshoot Tribal School** for at least **2 years?**

Would you like to share your experience in an University of Washington / Muckleshoot Tribal College study?

If you have at least **two years of teaching experience,** you may qualify to participate in a **research study** exploring how **Muckleshoot Culture within curriculum impacts student outcomes.**

What Participation Involves

If selected, you may be asked to take part in:

A 60-minute in person interview

A survey about teaching and cultural inclusion

A demographic questionnaire

Compensation:

Interview participants will receive a **$50 Amazon.com** Gift Card
Those who complete only the survey and questionnaire will be entered into a raffle

All responses will be kept confidential.

How to Participate

Simply scan the QR code below to learn more or sign up for the study.

Scan to Learn More or Join the Study

1 Questions about this study?

Ryan Wilson, Muckleshoot Tribal Member
kuno@uw.edu
206-650-8653

Questions about your rights as a participant? 2

UW Human Subjects Division
hsdinfo@uw.edu
206-543-0098

Information About A UW Research Study

How Including Muckleshoot Culture in the Curriculum Affects Student Outcomes

What Is This Study About?

You are invited to participate in a **University of Washington research study** examining how **Muckleshoot Culture** taught within **Muckleshoot Tribal School (MTS)** curriculum influences student outcomes.

Participation is **completely voluntary** — you may withdraw at any time without consequence.

You are eligible because you are either:

- ✓ A graduated student of MTS (enrolled for at least 2 years), or
- ✓ A current teacher with at least 2 years of teaching experience at MTS.

Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions before deciding whether to take part.

What Will You Be Asked to Do?

If you agree to participate, you may be asked to:

Take part in a 60 minute interview about your experience at MTS.

Complete a short survey on beliefs about Muckleshoot Culture in curriculum.

Fill out a brief demographic questionnaire.

Compensation:

Participants who complete the interview will receive a **$50 Amazon.com** gift card. Those who only complete the survey and questionnaire will be entered into a raffle for a basket **(valued up to $400).**

What Will Happen to Your Information?

All information you provide will be kept confidential.

- Interview data will be stored under a coded identifier, not your name.
- You will receive a written transcript of your interview to review and edit before it is used.
- The code list linkingyour name to your data will be stored separately and securely.
- Surveys and demographic responses will be anonymous your name will not be connected to them.

What If You Have Questions or Concerns?

Ryan Wilson
Lead Researcher
University of Washington Tacoma
206-650-8653
kuno@uw.edu

UW Human Subjects Division
206-543-0098
hsdinfo@uw.edu

Participant's Statement

with signing to the right ⟶

- The study has been explained to me.
- I voluntarily agree to participate.
- I understand I can withdraw at any time.
- I may contact the researcher or UW Human Subjects Division if I have questions or concerns.

Printed Name: ____________________

Signature: ____________________

Date: ____________________

Participant's Statement – Audio Recording Consent

Per Washington State Law RCW 9.73.030, consent is required from all individuals who are recorded.Your interview will be audio recorded and transcribed, and you will receive a copy to edit or review.

- The recording process has been explained to me.
- I consent to being recorded as part of this research study.
- I understand I can ask questions or withdraw at any time.

Printed Name: ____________________

Signature: ____________________

Date: ____________________

Appendix C: Interview Questions – Graduate Student

1) What does it mean to you that the Muckleshoot Tribe operates its own school?

2) Please reflect on your cultural experience during your educational career at MTS. How would you describe your overall experience?

3) Think back to the first time you remember Muckleshoot culture being taught. What do you remember? How did you feel?

4) What cultural teachings or practices made an impression on you?

5) How did land play a role in your educational experience?

6) In what ways did the school support your learning about Muckleshoot language, stories, or ways of viewing the world?

7) In what ways did attending MTS influence your pursuit of your future goals?

8) If you had to describe your experience to someone who did not attend MTS, how would you describe it?

9) What were your plans prior to graduation?

10) What did you choose to do after graduation?

11) What are your future plans or life goals?

Appendix D: Interview Questions – Educator

1) Please describe your educational experience.

2) What motivated your decision to pursue a career in teaching?

3) Do you have a teacher in your life whom you attempt to emulate when teaching students?

4) Could you please describe the progression of your career?

5) What brought you to teach at the Muckleshoot Tribal School?

6) What types of training, classes, continuing education, and seminars prepared you to teach at the Muckleshoot Tribal School?

7) What culturally centered continuing education opportunity has had the most impact on your teaching approach at MTS?

8) How have you been involved in integrating Indigenous culture within a classroom setting?

9) In your professional experience, what teaching methods resonated with your students?

10) What methods do you find beneficial in helping struggling students succeed?

Appendix E: Demographic Questionnaire

Please complete the following demographic questions. Your responses are voluntary and will be kept confidential. Please skip any questions that you do not want to answer.

1) What is your age?
   a) 18-25
   b) 25-34
   c) 35-44
   d) 45-54
   e) 55 and over
   f) I do not want to answer this question
2) Which roles do you occupy?
   a) Elder
   b) School Administrator
   c) Former Student
   d) Teacher
   e) Parent
   f) Other ________
   g) I do not want to answer this question
3) How many years of experience do you have in your stated role? If more than one is noted, please write down each role next to the year count.
   a) Less than 1 ___________
   b) 1-2 _________
   c) 2-4 __________

d) 5-8 __________

e) 8-10 _________

f) Over 10 __________

g) I do not want to answer this question

4) Which grade levels have you taught or attended?

a) Elementary

b) Middle School

c) High School

d) Other:__________

e) I do not want to answer this question

5) Do you identify as Indigenous?

a) Yes

b) No

c) I do not want to answer this question

6) If you answered 'yes' on question #5, please feel free to share your Tribal affiliation below (leave blank if you do not want to answer):

____

Survey Questions

Please complete the following survey questions. Your responses are voluntary and will be kept confidential. Please skip any questions that you do not want to answer.

1) How important do you think it is to incorporate Indigenous culture into the curriculum?

a) Very Important

b) Somewhat Important

c) Neutral

d) Somewhat Unimportant

e) Not Important

f) I want to skip this question

2) I believe incorporating Indigenous culture into the curriculum improves student outcomes (including academic success, engagement, and cultural awareness).

a) Strongly Agree

b) Agree

c) Neutral

d) Disagree

e) Strongly Disagree

f) I want to skip this question

3) More time should be allotted for cultural education.

a) Strongly Agree

b) Agre

c) Neutral

d) Disagree

e) Strongly Disagree

f) I want to skip this question

4) There should be less time allotted for cultural education.

a) Strongly Agree

b) Agre

c) Neutral

   d) Disagree
   e) Strongly Disagree
   f) I want to skip this question

5) Culture should function as a foundational component of how curriculum is taught, not just a stand-alone class.
   a) Strongly Agree
   b) Agre
   c) Neutral
   d) Disagree
   e) Strongly Disagree
   f) I want to skip this question

6) Place-based learning has been an essential part of educational practices and cultural development.
   a) Strongly Agree
   b) Agre
   c) Neutral
   d) Disagree
   e) Strongly Disagree
   f) I want to skip this question

7) More time should be allocated to place-based learning.
   a) Strongly Agree
   b) Agre
   c) Neutral

d) Disagree

e) Strongly Disagree

f) I want to skip this question

8) It is recommended to allocate less time for place-based learning within the classroom and school environment.

a) Strongly Agree

b) Agre

c) Neutral

d) Disagree

e) Strongly Disagree

f) I want to skip this question

9) Teaching culture within classroom environments has a beneficial influence on one's life.

a) Strongly Agree

b) Agre

c) Neutral

d) Disagree

e) Strongly Disagree

f) I want to skip this question

10) Teaching culture on the land exerts a positive influence on your life.

a) Strongly Agree

b) Agre

c) Neutral

d) Disagree

e) Strongly Disagree

f) I want to skip this question

11) Please select the option that most accurately describes you.

a) Graduated student

b) Educator

c) I want to skip this question