

Balancing Power and Building Agency:
Creating Educational Pathways within an Indigenous Community

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Abstract

This is an original work co-created in reciprocity and in relational accountability by Cheebo Hou-E-Now-E Frazier and Mildred Rose McCloud, daughter and mother, weaving generational knowledges gifted by their ancestors. This study reflects a heuristic journey of intergenerational knowledge sharing within one family and how this traditional learning process is vital for community health, well-being, vitality, and futurity. What I hear from the community is the cry for change. Time and time again we hear, as Tribal leaders, how hard it has been for our membership to receive services, support and to access resources for their children, especially in the realm of the public-school systems. They come to leadership seeking solutions and answers to complex systemic issues. What I see lacking, and what I believe is the most critical need for the Nisqually Tribe and its citizenship, is adequate ties to the past and connections to the present. We also need membership to see their capacity and ability to hear the calling for community leaders to engage and drive positive change as a Tribe and community. Our Tribe has stories and examples where activism has led to astonishing feats of self-reliance and fortitude, including the signing of the Medicine Creek Treaty and the Fish Wars. We need to remember those stories now.

As I co-researched and co-wrote with my Mom, we used Indigenous research protocols by consulting with students, parents, Elders, and community members within the Nisqually Indian Tribe. This research links the past, the present, and the future of our Tribally self-determined educational sovereignty as the most powerful tool in Native education for the Nisqually Tribe. As researchers/writers, we are situated inside the community of research. One of us is an elected Tribal leader and the other is an honored Tribal Elder, both with the capacity to utilize intergenerational knowledges as a guide in our roles and responsibilities to our Tribe.

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Community driven research evolved, flourished and became actioned throughout this theoretical and applied project.

This study exhibits the need and the value of collaborative community planning and the incorporation of Elders' knowledges into the design and construction of the futuristic imagined state of being that we hope to see operationalized. Storywork as data is reflected through storytalk with my Mom and in community cafés with students, leadership, parents, and Elders. This work will continue to archive and digitize information. As a result, my mom's life's work will live on in her honor.

Keywords: *community, educational sovereignty, futurity, governance, Indigenous leadership, intergenerational knowledges, kinship, storywork.*

Prologue

All I would really want is for Nisqually to be able to go back and remember the days.

Grandpas, Grandmas, Aunties, Uncles, Cousins, Family, Intermarriage Family.

They fought for the peace of heart, for tranquility and safety of our lands, for renewing and cleansing of the earth.

The power of “Tomanush” to Be Medicine Creek Forever for our Children.

Medicine Creek Runner (or Itlawa “Raspberry” in Chinook Jargon)

Mildred Rose McCloud, Nisqually-Puyallup

Circa 2004

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I extend special appreciation and gratitude for my dissertation committee - Michelle Montgomery, Ph.D., Co- Chair; Dawn Hardison-Stevens, Ph.D., Co-Chair; and Charlotte Coté, Ph.D., Committee Member, three Indigenous University of Washington professors, educational leaders, and Native student success advocates, each specializing in land-based traditional ecological knowledge and culturally responsive knowledge sharing. Their commitment to the development of Indigenous doctors remains unrelenting and will undoubtedly result in generations of graduate student contributions to academia. Educational sovereignty is within our reach.

I endear the University of Washington School of Education Muckleshoot Tribal College Cohort, with 20 Indigenous leaders who have sacrificed themselves for the betterment of Native nations and Indigenous knowledge systems. We chose this path to fulfill a purpose. A special group that I must acknowledge is our study group. We call ourselves the Indigenous Education Advisory Group and have spent time meeting for three years in anticipation of this degree. Yvonne, Betty, Maya, Karen, Angel, Winona and Kenny have been key to our collective success. May we always remain connected. I also feel like Christine Robbins, the Adult Education Counselor at Nisqually Tribe, is an honorary part of our study group.

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Thank you to the Medicine Creek Enterprise for providing the coffee room for our study cohort as we began this journey, and the Nisqually Tribal Administration, Nisqually Operations Department, and the Nisqually Tribal Education Department for dedicating an entire classroom to doctoral studies. That is where the magic happened. We became doctors in these spaces.

I am grateful to the Round Valley Indian Tribal community and the Nisqually Indian Community for being the place and people that give me purpose. My lifeblood is filled by those around me and those Matriarchs who came before us, pushing us to be great, making us feel whole when the world does not always see us. Their vision, their hope, and their medicine are what make us strong enough to step up into leadership roles and fill the shoes of those before us.

Key Terms and Definitions¹

Chee-Tah-Bu Hou-E-Now-E	Bird-Looking-Ahead in Wailacki Language, my formal name and given name in my Native language abbreviated to Cheebo
Dx ^w sq ^w aliʔabš	People of the Grass, People of the River, Nisqually Tribe
Kinist'ee	Shasta Wintu Band of Wailacki Indians, Northern California
Nomlāqa	Wintun Band of Indians, Northern California
Spuyaləpabš	People from the Bend at the Bottom of the River, the Puyallup Tribe
She-Nah-Num	Medicine Creek, Treaty signing site in Nisqually
Təq ^w uʔməʔ	The traditional name of Mt. Rainier in the Lushootseed language
Yuʔyuʔbəč	Tx ^w əlšucid word for Butterfly, pronounced “yoht-yoht-buh-tch”

¹ Throughout this dissertation, some key terms and definitions appear in upper case or lowercase. Indigenous linguistic structures and Indigenous elements of writing style do not follow all English grammatical conventions. In keeping with the guidance of my Committee and to honor the integrity of my hereditary spoken languages, I follow spelling forms as they have been offered by my parents, cultural guides and community knowledge keepers as we are creating these standards and hold them as sacred.

**CHAPTER 1: Introduction to Our Storywork: Locating Us as Researchers and Our
Research in Nisqually**

Chee-Tah-Bu Hou-E-Now-E tsi dsda? ~ My name is Cheebo Hou-E-Now-E.

tulʔal čəd sɔ́waliʔabš ~ I am from Nisqually people.

tulʔal čəd sɔ́waliʔidup ~ I am from Nisqually lands.

Mildred Rose McCloud tsi sda? ʔə tsi dskʷuy ~ My mom is Mildred Rose McCloud.

sɔ́waliʔabš tsi dskʷuy ~ My mom is Nisqually.

sɔ́waliʔabš čət ~ We are Nisqually.

I share the memories in my mind's eye and the love in my heart for my family and our traditional ways. I share all of the lived knowledges I hold, my life, and the future of my children and our community. It is both a hope and a responsibility to capture remembrances for our children. My mom worked tirelessly throughout her life's journey to build community well-being and is now wanting to revisit and acknowledge her heart work. By aiding her, I heal myself. I learn a lot about who she is, where I come from, and what I am doing today. Through this research, I leave traces of these lessons and teachings for future generations to know our teachings too.

As educational leaders, we continue to examine what knowledges are, and where they arise, and to use them in aid of Tribal communities in their survivance and futurity. In addition, we hold faith in Creator. We gather our medicines and we remain grateful in relation to others within our respective communities. This examination of intergenerational knowledge sharing is essential to my positionality and identity as a Matriarch.

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I am Chee-Tah-Bu Hou-E-Now-E, named by my Great-Grandmother (N. Russ, personal communication, n.d.), who saw me as the “bird looking ahead.” She was the first to recognize me in the capacity of the first daughter, granddaughter, and niece; she foresaw that I would imagine futurities and create change. I receive much inspiration from my name and carry it proudly, reflecting upon its meaning and the way I perceive my positionality not only in academic research but in life. My father is Kinist'ee and Nomlāqa, from Northern California Tribes along the Eel River in the southern Cascade Mountain Range. My mother is both Dx^wsq^wali?abš and Spuyaləpabš, She-Nah-Num Tribes of the Pacific Northwest along the Nisqually River in the northern Cascade Mountain Range. I have spent the entirety of my life in relationship with my tribal homelands along the Pacific Coast and connected with my extended families, having been born and raised between both government-designated reservations where our people were marched and imprisoned during the days of attempted genocide and survivance. We are still here. This reality is integrated into our being and has shaped the educational pathways of my ancestors, great-grandparents, grandparents, and parents. This reality continues to shape my own experience and that of my children and my children’s children. It will always shape our community. This is the essence of the heart work that I embark upon through this dissertation journey.

I am Chee-Tah-Bu Hou-E-Now-E, Bird-Looking-Ahead. I am a dreamer. If you are a Native person, you may know what this means; if you are not, suffice to say that I have responsibilities for seeing and knowing in a forward-looking way. In carrying on this responsibility, I have become a Tribal leader, an elected member of our Tribal Council; through this work I am preparing this inquiry as a reflection of who I am and how our people have come to survive. Our futurity and continued survivance depend upon these academic feats that

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continue to generate new writing and require rewriting of old narratives that fail to adequately demonstrate the innate power and agency we hold as a community. To further empower Nisqually to teach others how the narrative tools of storywork as reclamation (Archibald, 2008a; Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2021), and counterstory as resistance (Brayboy, 2005; Grande, 2015; Martinez, 2020; Tuck & Yang, 2014) are vital to our sovereignty and ability to self-govern for the safety, well-being, and connection we hold as a Tribal community and Coastal Salish territory.

*łal tiit bək'w ʔəsq'wuʔ ʔəsx'wulab g'əsqalək'w g'wət tiit ʔə ʔacittalbix'w bək'w stab bək'w ʔacittalbix'w ʔal ti
bək'w g'wət dibət*

*“We live in harmony within the circle of life, with all natural things, with our community,
and with ourselves” – Nisqually Traditional Ways (2024, pp. 32-33)*

The Nisqually Indian Tribe is a Tribe of the Salish Sea in the South Puget Sound; we are a Coastal Salish Nation. These references balance how we are recognized by the Federal government of the United States, but our most important reference is how we are recognized by our sister Tribes, the Medicine Creek Nation and the other Tribes surrounding us. We are continually living in connection with our time, place and space, including this land, the mountain, the river and the other-than-humans who also occupy this time and place with us. Like all other Tribes, we have faced centuries of colonial hardship followed by generational traumas, but although taken to the brink of decimation, have survived. Introspectively, we know that surviving enactments of genocide was to the credit of our ancestors; however, many of our stories have not always been told, shared or known because story has been controlled and told by others.

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Originally, our lands were expansive and included mountain ranges, near big waters, connected to one another, expanding beyond the reaches of reservation borders, unassociated with colonizer maps, and beyond imaginary borders as perceived by the federal government. My research is located in the Nisqually Indian Community but extends beyond borders because the children and community in our care traverse to districts, schools, and institutions outside of our community. The goal and purpose in establishing relationships with these external entities is a matter of responsibility.

Unfortunately, our stories have not always been told or told accurately. This drove my mom to elucidate truth-telling. She has never been one to stand down in the face of adversity. She accepted opportunities by taking brave steps to travel and study. She crossed the nation and put herself at the doorsteps of institutions holding our files and records that pieced together our histories. Her heart knew that we could not be easily erased and would someday return to a position of strength. And when we do, we need more than Westernized power through assimilation. We would need powerful spiritual strengths and traditional values systems to withstand degradation of our community as a sovereign nation. While Indigenous knowledge systems thrive and survive in every aspect of our living and being, this research inquiry specifically focuses on how we generate learning and share teachings as a family and community. Our Tribal leadership system holds precious power over our collective well-being and when practiced holistically, Tribal governance can protect our right to culturally-based educational systems that are both conceived and participated in by our community members.

While my father relates that I was cultivated to honor the elders and their knowledges, I don't remember him formally instructing me of this when I was very young. I only remember seeing him living and showing me and then knowing that it was the way to be with your relatives

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when they walk this earth. Certain sayings reverberate inside of me, but they were feelings and sentiments, like my Elder, Great-Aunt, or as Native people would say “Gramma” Dorothy, who was my grandmother’s eldest sister told me, “I don’t want to get flowers when I’m dead” meaning she wanted to enjoy her relations when they were in the same time, space, and place. Teachings happen around us all the time, not only during school in a classroom with a teacher. The way one is raised and how one walks through the world with these reverberations is what I am sharing with today. I have learned to love being with my people.

Researcher Positionality

I situate myself as an Indigenous researcher in the same footsteps as my mother and grandmothers. One grandmother was a traditional Elder caregiver with minimal formal education but a lifetime of lived experience. My other grandmother was a degreed professional social worker with an honorary doctorate. My mother is a double-master’s degree holder in critical ethnography/Native studies and a lifetime researcher of her Tribe, the Nisqually. My parents gifted me with the knowledge and choice to become a scholar. Like my mom, this scholarship is meant to uplift and propel new works to continue in generative order into futurity. She writes, “As for myself, a Nisqually/Puyallup/Cowlitz woman from the Puget Sound – I want to contribute to the generations that will follow, whether it be spoken words or work that will help them understand and explore our native heritage” (McCloud, 2000, p. 2) The way that I was raised brought me to this place of relational accountability (Chilisa, 2012; Kovach, 2021; Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2008; Wilson, 2019) to help shape educational futures and to use the position I hold as a Tribal leader to advocate for culturally-relevant educational systems. Using storytalk (Archibald 2008a; Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2021) with my mom is restorative of both my parents’ past and our future as their family. I hope my children or my

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children's children pick up the pen to write and turn the pages of our histories born through this intergenerational knowledge sharing.

Statement of Problem of Practice

I come from radical activist parents. They are radical in every sense of the word, living and breathing resistance and sovereignty throughout our lives, creating an understanding of what these terms mean and their sacredness before I knew what they are now referred to. My parents are products of boarding school grandparents and parents born in the time of the great depression. They also faced segregation and racism during the era of desegregation. As children, we were not physically welcomed into spaces, admitted in only on paper by decree. The struggle was and is real. We knew that we had to assimilate to survive. Therein lies the conundrum. How do we preserve ourselves as people and still create space for thriving as a community and culture at the same time?

The problem of practice that I addressed in this study relates to my parents' mindset as they raised me, our ability to imagine a future of our own, and the inspiration to make it ours. In my mind we were never constrained, except by our own thoughts. I freely imagine possibilities and I think back on their voices and ideas reverberating in my own consciousness. They never excluded people, always included everyone, always welcomed and encouraged participation throughout the community. They worked to eliminate boundaries of hierarchy, stratus, status and elitism. They worked hard to move our Tribal societies away from politics of recognition and to build programs that celebrated Indigenous excellence. Shaping a people and their view of *Indian-ness* is a tricky matter, considering how the colonial systems worked to decimate our sense of self. They truly battled against a deficit mindset and worked from a strengths-based platform.

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My life with my paternal grandmother, Juanita Ramona, is a reflection of the nature of this ingrained thought process and how it controls our daily behaviors. My grandparents were exceptional. My grandmother was my best friend throughout 50 years of my life, from beginning to end. After she passed, I remember one morning when running late for one responsibility or another. I said to myself, “Stop, make your bed, Grandma would have wanted it this way.” At the time, I believed I was honoring her memory by following her life-skills instructions. I remember her saying, “Sis, always make your bed in the morning, it starts out your day and when you come to bed at night you have a good sleep.” I am not sure when it dawned on me that making one's bed and the incessant need for orderliness in life was a reflection of institutionalization as a result of boarding school life. Grandma felt that in order to be equal, or enough, she could not begin her day without a well-made bed. Having a well-made bed elevated her from being less than. Unfortunately, I am living the trauma that she carried. I cannot stop the habit of making my bed because of a fear that I will harm her memory and the lessons she passed down to me. This connection resides in assimilative practices. I understand how systemic change and alteration of these thinking patterns can be so challenging. It is not an easy thing to say to oneself, “Just stop doing it!” The question is, how do we change what we feel our heart is telling us? She and I shared knowledges and teachings throughout our lives but after careful examination, some of the ways we share appear to be boarding school ways of being. Figure 1 and Figure 2 relate to the span of our shared knowledges including what she brought from her beginnings and what I will take forward as a result of our relationship.

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Figure 1

Interconnectedness through Familial Bonds



Figure 2

The Span of our Lifetime Together



Throughout my mom's academic experiences, even in high school, she aimed to attend to community building, cultural resurgence (Simpson, 2017; Kovach 2021), and harmony. She interrogated these wonderments through work within herself, her connections with Elders' teachings, and through divine ancestral influences leading her and empowering her to continue

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this work throughout her life. In some ways, I believe that there has been an imbalance between the care she afforded to the Nisqually nation and the care that she afforded to herself. Doing this work can take a toll on one's physical, mental, spiritual and emotional health. Drawing upon holistic relational healing teachings about balance and harmony shared across Indigenous pedagogy referenced by Archibald (2008b), Kovach (2021), Simpson (2017), Smith (2021), and Wilson (2008) lead one to conduct research that is both enriching and fulfilling in different ways for both the researcher and for the subject(s). Different regions and Tribes, including Coastal Salish nations and the Nisqually Tribe, express these beliefs through their own cultural teachings and knowledge systems, through language and traditional ways. If you are not being replenished over time, it can lead to premature aging and exhaustion. The need to work collectively is long overdue. The time to work in collaboration has unexpectedly presented itself as if always destined. The time is now.

How do we heal the identity of our Nisqually people? Affording intentional time for reflection, generating healing praxis, and focusing on community building are all relevant topics in this journey toward educational sovereignty. The aim for this inquiry is related to self-governance and the role that the Tribal government can play in exercising agency with regard to Tribally-driven and community-driven initiatives. We, as a people, should decide what education is to us. By empowering our community, we can bring that vision to life.

The critical nature of my study relates to the ability for our Tribal community, through its leadership and self-governance rights articulated in treaties and legislation, to lead the co-creation of an educational support system originating from within our Tribe and shared outwardly with the school districts that serve our families. Our students face the daily strife of being placed in learning environments that do not provide the care our culture and heritage

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deserve. Adjustments and modifications to the education system are being promoted on many fronts, including the John McCoy (luliláš) Since Time Immemorial Tribal Sovereignty Curriculum (OSPI, 2024) (formerly known as the Since Time Immemorial (STI): Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State²) curriculum (OSPI, 2015). We know that adopting and implementing such educational programming has been very slow, resisted on many levels, and facing opposition in the Washington State public school system. We expect and are dependent on the public school system to create the necessary steps for compliance. However, we, as sovereign Tribes, are not operating at levels allowing us to administer these programs ourselves. We are also not the persons who test, measure, and rate compliance with the required training or the development and deployment of the curriculum and its standards. These responsibilities are in others' hands, but accountability is lacking. Community plays a critical, if not the most important part, in the instructional core for Native student success. Family members are the first teachers and the land is the first classroom. Our intergenerational ties are the support system and the site of knowledge sharing. Time, space, and place are the continuum where learning and teaching happen in reciprocity in the Indigenous Learning Core³ (see Figure 3 below).

My research inquiry was born from the need to examine how Tribes can work toward building human capacity within their membership to lead initiatives, develop Tribal laws, and formulate an educational system that we breathe life into. We can build a sustainable system or framework that honors customary traditions, culture, and laws to help us govern education for the children in our community. If the school systems outside of the reservation do not offer what

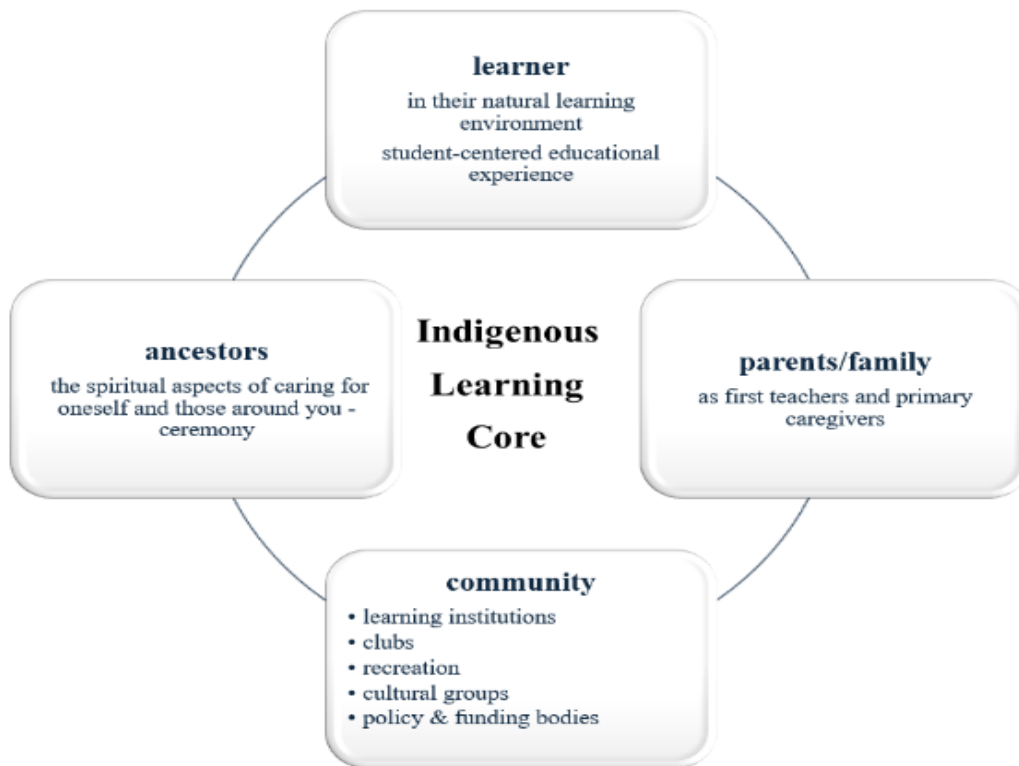
² A Washington State curricular framework that organizes teachings within public schools related to Tribal sovereignty and history as it relates to Indigenous peoples of the local lands.

³ The Indigenous Learning Core is framework developed by Cheebo Frazier (2025), depicting a triad of interdependent learning framework that neglects to include the connection to the place within which learning takes place and places the teacher at the helm of learning as opposed to reciprocal and transformational aspects of relational accountability (Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2008; Wilson, 2019).

we believe is sufficient, we can enhance, compliment, and compensate for these shortfalls within our realm and with self-sufficiency. This is self-reliance and educational sovereignty.

Figure 3

Indigenous Learning Core



Note. This figure was created by C. Frazier, University of Washington, as part of EdD coursework in 2025 to demonstrate a correction to standard instructional core.

Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this research inquiry was to examine Kinship as Relational Accountability (Chilisa, 2012; Kovach, 2021; Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2008; Wilson, 2019), demonstrating how the Nisqually people can activate knowledges passed down intergenerationally in our work as Tribal community leaders. Our communities are in strife, needlessly battling with one another as

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a result of a scarcity mentality and intergenerational traumas that conditioned us to engage in lateral violence. These wounds remain so deep that healing praxis can no longer be optional. Healing must become a way of existing. Leaders must commit to intentionality and resilience in leading towards a healing praxis.

This generative work will help to organize community gatherings by establishing relational accountability as a value woven into educational policy and self-governance. Through this study, I listened, engaged in dialogue, co-created knowledges through storytalk (Archibald 2008a; Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2021), and show how relational accountability (Chilisa, 2012; Kovach, 2021; Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2008; Wilson, 2019) can generate policy and advocacy alongside our parents and families with vested interests in their students' successes - academically, socially, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Wellness in a holistic sense is shared through teachings in many Indigenous cultures and through the literature shared by Archibald (2008), Kovach (2021), Simpson (2017), Smith (2021), and Wilson (2008). Teaching and learning environments exist within school walls as well as outside educational institutions. When students must carry themselves into school districts and learning institutions outside of their community, we want them to be full of pride, honor, and awareness of their Indigenous identity and Indigenous worldviews. Their strength and resilience will be a shield from the harms of settler colonial hegemonic spaces. Moving past traditional healing, we must also work to change the landscapes of learning and to influence the environments our students attend. These partnerships will lead to more than classroom decor, signage at schools and on information boards, and statements on webpages and within reports. Instead, these partnerships should enhance mutual respect and collaboration. These partnerships must be activated in transformational ways, including in how teachers interact with our students, how students show

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up, and how children feel when they return home to their families and community. The goal is to move beyond consultation and words, into action. Spaces, places, and praxis are demonstrated through this inquiry.

In the best-case scenario, partnerships and collaboration are based on allyship; however, not every learning institution meets this ideal. The stance we take in approaching our educational standards will be instrumental in students being successful and feeling that they are supported through the advocacy of their own family and community. The significance of this work is our presence, our capacity, and our responsibility as change agents.

To date, the Nisqually Tribe has not initiated, participated or collaborated in the examination of its Tribal leadership and governance role in advocating for Native student and family educational supports. Our Tribe has maintained the standard outsider viewpoint by attending government-to-government consultations and meetings as passive attendees receiving information in one-way delivery from the school district to the Tribe but not working with our own community to set standards and evaluate the performance of mutually agreed upon educational programming. The Nisqually Tribe remains the only federally recognized Tribe in Thurston County and in the capital city of Washington State. As the only Tribe and close neighbor to external municipalities, we benefit from having regular interactions with other government agencies. We are fortunate in many ways to have lines of communication and access points already established but can stand to make better use of them and how they can be used to represent community voice.

The Nisqually Tribe has moved through the standardized methods of strategic planning and analysis by conducting research in terms of westernized practices. We have administered community surveys and completed tribal-wide surveys conducted by third-party firms to assess

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community needs. These firms generally apply an out-of-the box or “cookie-cutter” approach that does not account for distinguishing features of identity within a people or community. These frameworks skew results of the feedback and deliverables simply by shaping outcomes before actual participation and analysis takes place. These processes produce pre-determined outcomes and present findings in overgeneralized language and terms that do not adequately reflect Tribal community value systems or traditional ways and knowledges. When applied to a Westernized system like public education or governmental policy, this information becomes whitewashed, changing who we are and how we fit into their structure. In addition, we periodically hold community dinners for the purpose of public hearing feedback. This is generally a good place for dialogue; however, feedback is not always viewed as data, and the storywork remains unused. In response, this study built upon the community dinner process to organize community cafe-type gatherings with a more specific goal to encourage dialogue around critical issues and to discuss how information gained from these dialogues can be activated and operationalized.

Aims of this Study

Upon discovery and analysis of the problem of practice within this study, I was not sure where the initial research would lead me. Some say we are destined to fulfill ancestral dreams and hopes, and that we are all responsible to our community to strengthen and prepare future generations. In this manner, I was able to use this academic inquiry to collaborate with my mother, my strongest connection to our ancestors and the knowledges they carried forward. Through this research, my Mom and I worked to preserve and honor the heart work of her life. Together, we initiated ways to coalesce community voice and activism, which we hope will lead to interventions that aid in how we engage in the government-to-government exercise of our sovereignty. In doing so, there were three specific aims of this study:

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1. Connect remembrances to new potentials through intergenerational knowledge pathways, find vision, and imagine new futurities.
2. Invite community collaboration, interconnection and co-creation toward agency in educational experiences of our Nisqually youth.
3. Indigenize our Tribe's approach to self-governance and self-reliance through policy, leadership and strengths-based worldview.

These aims were developed to rediscover connections between my mother's work and my work.

In my view, my Mom was thinking in advance of this scholarship, toward futurity, using what was available at the time of her academic career, while propelling knowledges forward. She used innovative thought to prepare and preserve the knowledges she felt were sacred and precious. She used these teachings and wisdom in her vocation, her career, and her service to the community. Before she leaves this world, I want to assure her that her work is carried forward *as* she wishes it to be, to make her research accessible to future generations and the students who follow in educational sovereignty and educational leadership. These remembrances gift themselves through generations.

Indigenous Research Paradigm

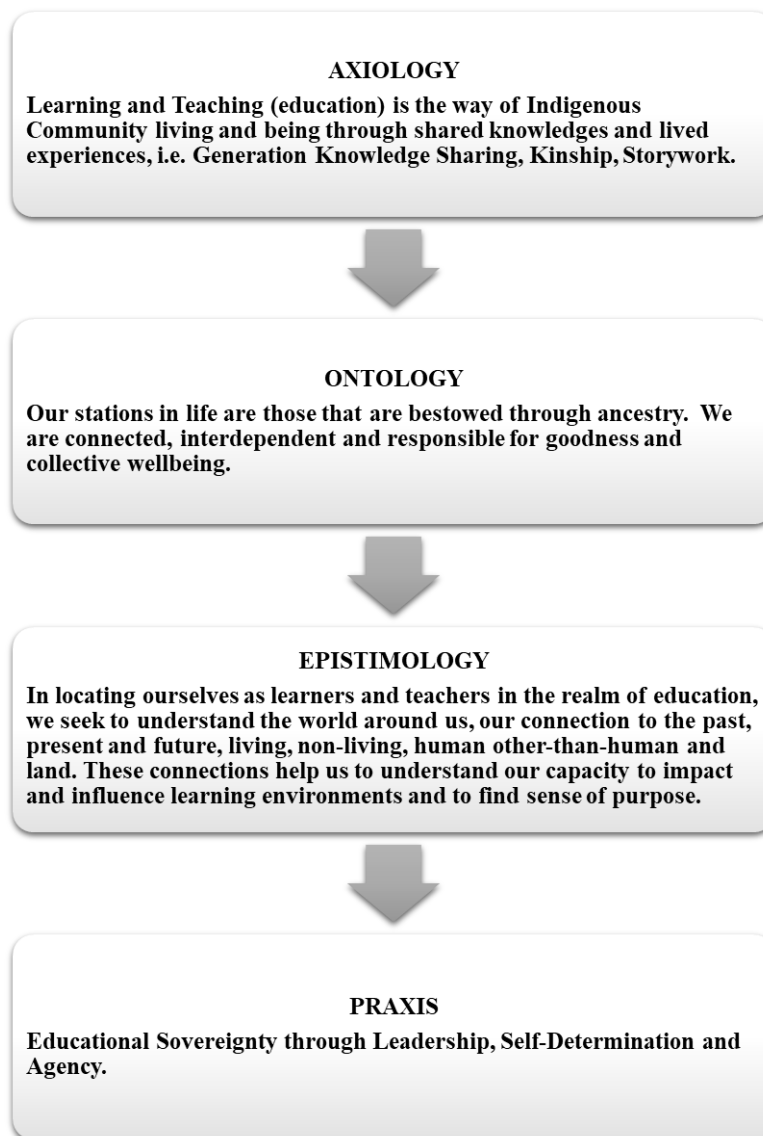
Figure 4 represents my Indigenous research paradigm, the "set of beliefs" that "guide [the] researcher's actions" (Wilson, 2008, p. 33). For me, this is the belief that relationality, especially familial, is at the core of learning and enhances what education can be in school-type settings throughout one's life, infancy through adulthood and higher learning. For this inquiry, I used a theoretical framework on relationality as referenced by Archibald (2008b), Kovach (2021), Simpson (2017), Smith (2021), and Wilson (2008). This framework shows the connection between educational policy and community voice. It is important to recognize that

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intrinsically, there is no linear process to demonstrate a pathway forward. The directional flow of the diagram relates to the development of theory into action, activation of ideologies, the emergence of transformative praxis into action, and the activism necessary to effect change within communities.

Figure 4

Indigenous Research Paradigm



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Note. Indigenous Researcher – Positionality Framework (Adapted from C. Frazier (2025c)).

The nature of all living things is cyclical, often observed in seasons of awakening and revitalization, ultimately moving to retirement and rest, only to return later as expected and in positions of strength. My ontology, or basis of reality (Archibald 2008b; Kovach 2021; Smith 2021; Wilson 2008), and epistemology (Archibald 2008b; Kovach 2021; Smith 2021; Wilson 2008), is depicted through this research inquiry. Findings suggest that knowledges are shared in reciprocity, thus in survivance and in connection with the past, present, and future. To realize this way of knowing and being, one must both imagine the vision and have faith in its existence. The same as seasons change and beings adapt, leadership is relational. In my view, leadership's role is to honor remembrances and use ancestral guidance to consider traditional ways of living, being, and knowing, and apply teachings to future work. My research rests in an axiology of relational ethics with the community as demonstrated through values-based research, responsibility and commitments with and to my co-conspirators. In their participation, they are also vested in reciprocity - in giving back to the community to make it stronger. In this way, the axiology is change-making, innovative, and healing (Archibald 2008b; Kovach 2021; Smith 2021; Wilson 2008).

This research study is a narrative centering relationality and intergenerational knowledge sharing specific to my positionality as a Tribal leader and community activist, following in the footsteps of my mother, and my parents' mothers. My mother and my parents' mothers have lived the realities of the Indian reservation system and federal educational policies meant to weaken and diminish Indigenous people into subservience and even into erasure. However, we are destined for more than that. Through storywork, counternarrative, and Indigenized tribal

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governance, we can begin to curate learning experiences and well-being for our community members. My inquiry examines how westernized colonial systems have fragmented Indigenous communities, emphasizing the need for self-determined and culturally grounded educational leadership centered on and co-created with the community. By conducting this study alongside my mother, a lifetime researcher herself, we lift one another and our people, the Nisqually. Ultimately, our futurity depends upon strengthening our ability to forge community-led coalitions within education and within the Tribal government.

This first chapter provided an overview of the research inquiry and my positionality as an Indigenous researcher. Chapter 2 entails a thematic overview of knowledge keepers in the realm of Indigenous strength-based worldviews related to survivance, resistance and healing. We examine contributions in knowledge through the strong research and scholarship around us toward educational leadership and decolonizing methodologies. Chapter 3 is summary of the methodology employed to ground this study in ethics, reciprocity and relational accountability (Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2008; Wilson, 2019). Chapter 4 describes the research design used in accessing and analyzing family archives and generating learning opportunities through community gatherings at Nisqually. Chapter 5 presents an analysis of the storywork involved in archival work and community gatherings, using threads of past work completed by my mom and current needs and feedback from our community to design a forward looking vision of community development and capacity growth toward strengthened sovereignty and self-determined educational pathways. Chapter 6 follows by presenting the praxis in action that is happening in real time, as this research and dissertation has unfolded.

CHAPTER 2: Knowledge Keepers and Their Storywork - Literature Review Reframed

ʔəshig^wəd čəl tiil sǎčiq bədəču? ʔacitlabix^w

“We respect the vision of others.” – Nisqually Traditional Ways (2024, pp. 32-33)

“Everytime I tell a story, I acknowledge the storyteller and/or source of the story.”

(Archibald, 2008, p. 35)

The collective knowledges in this reflective body of work demonstrates a deep connection with the intergenerational teachings that I have known through my family and our lifetime together. The knowledge keepers’ stories resonate with the plight of Indigenous people, our survivance and continuity today, and the potential to imagine new futures in generations beyond. I call out their writings alongside my own and my mom’s work to show the importance of narratives being constructed through our own lived experiences. Desire-based dreaming of futures that recognize the brilliance within our people’s abilities ensures that we organize and enable our children, the future leaders, to flourish in ways we had not thought possible in past times. Through these works and their views, I examine the way pauses, remembrances, and insurgence (Gaudry, 2011; Smith, 2021) decolonize spaces within our lives and the institutions that serve our people.

Kinship, Relationality and Intergenerational Knowledges

“Native Love Is...my mama” (Sabzalian, 2019, p. 228).

In thoughts of what power is and where it exists, one must acknowledge being and becoming as a state of survivance and futurity. This realization that we exist in a fluid state of existence, from ancestry to present to the next generations ahead, spreads the weight of our

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responsibilities throughout the span of time - a realization that we carry this future together and it is one of immense possibility. Self-determination is a part of examining our own futures, insisting outcomes can be imagined and that work is the job of many and not one alone. Sabzalian et al. (2023) argue that “relationality is power” (p. 195), and that we overcome the limitations of being positioned by others through resurgence (Kovach 2021; Simpson, 2017). Collaboration and interconnectedness are essential to insurgent work. In terms of operationalizing our teachings and knowledges, Sabzalian et al. (2023) suggest we move beyond the boundaries of comfort and acceptance by dominant institutions and press ahead with critical inquiries. I especially appreciate that they show youth’s courage to resist and the intrinsic values that draw us toward connection and relationality. Without activism, interventions would be missed and dreaming new possibilities would be hampered. Sabzalian et al. elicit the freedom to question and imagine the future of Indigenous learning systems. As Jacob et al. (2024) write, “Indigenous futurity centers knowing that is generative; that reaches forward to our young people, back toward our ancestors, toward the land, and beyond horizons” (p. 2).

Sabzalian et al. (2023) and Jacob et al. (2024) both discuss the ways in which they fight against erasure through community voice and storywork. They address the need to examine one’s own history and connection to the land in honor of their stories. Remembrances are medicine and a way of honoring the past by connecting it to the present. By gathering and listening, we strengthen our connection to our ancestors; in community we strengthen the potential of new possibilities with our youth as they learn the teachings they will someday pass along. Through academia I have met and collaborated with Sabzalian and Jacob virtually, learning from their talks and reflections, gaining encouragement and insights into their views about their contributions to literature. I believe the capacity to engage with readers

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interpersonally is a form of generative praxis. Moving beyond reading to listening and talking has created a stronger understanding within me and has impacted how to understand myself and direction in this work, as I continue to learn about the importance of resurgent education and community voice.

Jacob (2020) examines the role of Aunties, a reference to the female's role as mentor, guide, encourager, and supporter of young people through the journey of life. Jacob acknowledges the importance of matriarchal roles throughout life and in various locations, where they serve as guideposts for kind, safe, and healing praxis. This methodology of auntie-ing as kinship and connection is a factor in learning self-care and community care. The guidance received is wisdom that has been modeled, not spoken, and that reaches deeper than hearing and listening and is best received when felt and internalized as love. As Jacob et al. (2024) write, "Elders and storytellers are central in our most important forms of teaching and learning, as generations learn the values and responsibilities that are key for humans exist and thrive" (p. 1).

While leading an Auntie Way writing retreat, Jacob shared Patel's (2015) work as a way to ground one's thoughts around activating remembrances and brilliance as a basis for writing and research. This psychological, emotional and spiritual retreat connected us to our ancestral knowledges and the location of our work. What was most profound about Jacob's literary contributions is that she describes education as not a singular experience, but as a collective experience that happens in relation to people, place, and other-than-human beings around us. Education happens in community with one another. As Hernandez (2022) writes, "Sometimes the best thing for Indigenous communities to do is create their own table so they can place their cultural values at the front and center of it" (p. 134).

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Hernandez's (2022) validation of our knowledges comes through an awakening or becoming process. People become displaced from family and sometimes from place, but they can also become displaced from oneself, fragmented in their identity. In reconstructing oneself, the journey home begins with understanding where and who we come from. In Native spaces (villages and reservations) we believe that not everyone is from a specific land base. It may have been displacement associated with the reservation system, allotment system, child welfare system or the treaty process that physically positioned bands of Indigenous people in specific locations, without respect to their usual and customary trade and seasonal homesteading. Hernandez shares her family's legacy of displacement and the challenge and success of connecting with the natural world around us. The beautiful story of the protection offered to her father in a foreign land by a non-Indigenous plant-relative depicts connections happening despite separation from people and place. It is a story about how interconnectedness spans beyond space and place and can reach through time.

According to Wilson et al. (2019), "The knowledge that you gain, from research or any other way, is also relational, so you will only understand it fully if it is incorporated into all the other relations-that's how knowledge becomes wisdom" (p. 9). Wilson et al.'s work resonates with my research process as they write about knowledges and the contexts within which scholars situate their research and themselves in relationship to the community and its needs. The research journey is taking me home, to the core of my family, where my own academic journey began, as a connection to my parents. I was born in 1972, when my parents were in college at the University of California, Davis. My baby shower was part of the first Native family gathering in the University's newly designated Native student center. I also attended classes with my parents. The research and work that I am revisiting, digitizing, preserving and interpreting are theirs - the

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knowledges that they learned through their own relational accountability (Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2008; Wilson, 2019). The connection in our scholarship journeys is to build a better world by creating possibilities. It was a design and materialization that became my own context of lived experience. My work today is a continuation of theirs and will function in the same way, as community grounded praxis in healing of the sorrows of intergenerational traumas which harm and inhibit relationships. To indigenize our Nisqually governance system will be to incorporate relational accountability (Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2008; Wilson, 2019), repairing relationships through reconciliation and manifesting ceremony as a way of knowing and being. A self-determined educational system is one where the community co-researches, co-creates and co-lives the experience together. As McCloud (2004) writes “All I really want is for Nisqually to be able to go back and remember the days” (n.p.).

My mom recalls writing during her high school years in ways that surpassed boundaries. She did so bravely. Although I cannot read her early works, she describes them with pride and knows how well they connect to today. After reading my dissertation proposal, she said she needed to learn the new “lingo” of today so that we can speak and talk about it (M. McCloud, personal communications, 2025-2026). I believe she speaks through her writing, as she is not one to stand in front of a crowd or take to the stage, the podium or the microphone, to share knowledge. She is most comfortable in written words and paper. She is an avid reader and differentiates reading for leisure and reading for research. She chooses when and where and why each takes place. My hope is that through this dissertation process, she can write something of her own as a reflection of the work we have done together. “Together, and through sharing knowledges, we seek to imagine, create, and nurture holistic communities in support of

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Indigenous wellness, growth, and capabilities within our lives and the lives of those around us” (Frazier, 2025c, p. 2).

Reciprocity

This study speaks to the responsibility of knowledge sharing as a natural part of community care and cultural continuity. Knowledges are transformational. In my doctoral program, I submitted a reciprocity statement that entailed the circular journey of intergenerational knowledges involving how educational leadership approaches healing praxis as a transformative experience, similar to the analogy of the transition from caterpillar to butterfly, *yu?yu?bæč* (Frazier, 2025b). The intergenerational exchange of knowledges is vital for transformation because it allows learning and teaching to expand imaginings into the future and allows us to construct change mechanisms and build capacity. What we are born into changes with possibilities and dreams of our ancestors and how we enact and embody their teachings. I believe, as Findlay (2023b, 15:46) states, “What matters most is...our relationships to each other, our relationship to the land, our Mother Earth that is the source of all life, we belong to this land”.

Findlay (2023a) relates difficulty in relationships between Native and non-Native peoples as a result of intergenerational traumas. This causes them to take on protective defense and coping mechanisms. Findlay developed systems for educators and social workers to identify their own responses to community work and interactions. She identified pathways for working toward purposeful change through connection to community and using culture as medicine. Findlay (2025a; 2025b) presents an educational philosophy, *Skw̄wú7mesh*, based upon her traditional teachings, using a relational methodology grounded in reciprocity. In this philosophy, storywork is used to build collective community and identity forms a strengths-based perspective resting

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upon traditional teachings. Elders and knowledge carriers bring ceremony and ethical teachings and carry the wisdom forward as storywork pedagogy through kinship and connection (Findlay 2023a; Findlay 2023b; Simon Fraser University, 2019; UBC Learning Circle, 2023).

Survivance and Futurity

Transformation

Transformation is movement, a shift, a state of living and being. The medicines we carry within us are the sustenance that has carried us through the time space continuum. A shift happens within us as individuals and as communities, changing the way we engage with others on the *outside* of our Community. We have lived and carried forward foreign constraints, including self-limiting psychological ways of knowing and being that are unnatural and in conflict with our traditional ways. These are not our ways. “Our challenge is to fashion new tools for the purpose of decolonizing and Indigenous tools that can revitalize Indigenous knowledge” (Smith, 2021, p. 22).

Smith’s (2021) *Decolonizing Methodologies* marked a powerful shift for me in terms of critical thought about research and inquiry into positionality and insurgence (Gaudry, 2011; Smith, 2021). Her presentation of the array of connections from the past to the present state and the honoring and uplifting of Indigenous brilliance was a refreshing portrayal of the ways of knowing and being that pre-date westernized colonial states of assimilation and harm. Smith speaks of the time-space continuum and the connections held that are still a part of who we are today, the essence of interconnectedness and continuance. The difference that her work made for me was an awakening to naming what has happened around us. Smith created a way for us to verbalize and express the foreign constraints of forced assimilation and how the brokenness

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within community is a direct result of loss of identity and inability to see one another in our most natural state – a state of Indigeneity.

Similarly, Meyer (2013) argues that to learn, one must unlearn and spend time in a place of unfamiliarity with openness to accept and transform. This makes me want to understand how, if this is possible in one's mind, it can be possible in groups. Native communities have spent generations learning colonial constructs, living within them, assimilating, and sometimes abandoning a sense of self. Moving forward, we must identify tension points, the potential for pause, and the realization that shifts in knowledges held or remembered through our ancestral storywork can be transformational. These considerations guide my research and praxis.

In the same way that I am examining connections from the past to present, Simpson (2017) examines connection to land and how interconnectedness is a form of belonging. Simpson (2017) argues that “Resurgence as a lens, critical analysis, a set of theoretical understandings, and an organizing and mobilizing platform has the potential to wonderfully transform Indigenous life on Turtle Island” (p. 49). Simpson argues it is imperative that we resist structures and narratives that work to position us in historical terms. She implores us to imagine the past as it once was and to envision what the possibilities are for the future. In doing so, she reminds us of the importance of change and flexibility, depending upon the needs of the people and the place. Similarly, Absolon (2022) presents a roadmap for how insurgent research can be conducted, presenting it as “a learning journey” (p. 183), noting further that being in community and attending to research protocols is very much about travelling and those who travel with you.

Smith's (2021) work resonates with me as she speaks to the urgency for Tribal Nations to expand and exert their agency in the form of self-determined education. In the case of the Nisqually, we need to elevate this work by banding together in intertribal collaboration when we

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see a failure in government-to-government initiatives. There can and will be fluctuations in both needs and levels of cooperation along this journey; however, we have to learn or relearn how to rely both on ourselves and each other, and to trust in our Tribal leadership and governance for the necessary protection and advocacy. Ideally, Tribal leaders will balance priorities and foster resilience and when necessary, they will lead the Tribe in a return to radical resurgence (Kovach 2021; Simpson, 2017) and activism.

My Own Transformation and Shift. In my early days of undergraduate study at Dartmouth, I was not entirely focused and was reeling about the atrocities happening back home on the reservation. People were struggling to provide for their families and our Tribe did not have educational financial support that we now have in place. I remember receiving \$100 for a book allowance, when textbooks cost several hundred dollars for a single book. Granted, the landscape of higher education is substantially different today, it took time to develop and operationalize educational support for Tribes.

With child psychology being an interest throughout my childhood, I took a course in early childhood education, which led me to select a book in the Baker Library to examine educational opportunity. I chose the book *Manchild in a Promised Land* (Brown, 1965). I wrote a heartfelt paper drawing from my past growing up on an economically depressed Indian reservation and attending schools where racism was bold and not hidden. The focus of my writing was the harms associated with child development and learning institutions. I argued that when given a chance to build identity and pride, and to envision potential, there is hope. Upon meeting with my professor about the paper he kindly stated in no uncertain terms that I should write about the good things that exist and not just remember the bad (Education Professor, Dartmouth College, personal communication, 1991). This was a shift in my writing and in my

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Indigenous worldview, to see more beauty and potential. I wrote differently from that point forward.

As Martinez (2020) writes, "... I have come to this project as a storyteller, within a legacy of storytellers, a legacy that I am honored to continue" (p. xxix). Martinez encourages me to rethink the ways in which I engage this research by rethinking and reconceptualizing Western approaches to research from an Indigenous perspective and framework. Martinez (2013) also helped me to think about the power and purpose of words as a form of activism and resistance within the realm of policy and governance.

Mapping Futurities

Change requires transformation. Transformation allows us to look to the future while ensuring the survivance and continuity of our peoples, nations, and lands. However, Patel (2019) argues that "You can't map futurities; you can only map possible futurities" (p. 95). To do this, we must engage in what Patel describes as the pause, a halting of what has been impressed upon us, and a refusal to be situated and positioned by narrative that intends for us to assimilate rather than evolve. Throughout time immemorial, Indigenous people have not only survived but have carried medicine and traditional knowledges forward as healing praxis, and have forsaken the colonizer, empowered by Creator to resist and exist. To *see* the points of tension, where the pause takes place requires "... the suspension of currently held thought-patterns" (Meyer, 2013, p. 98).

Like Patel (2019), Smith (2017) argues that we must pause and be intentional about the change we want to see. Taking the time to pause is particularly relevant to the battle fatigue we experience when we continually face challenges and barriers within institutions. Taking a pause not only allows us to rest and restore, but it also allows us to focus. According to brown (2017),

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“What we pay attention to grows. Let’s cultivate the movement we want and leave space for others to do the same” (p. 168). Brown (2017) presents justice as an internal process, noting that justice is something “that individuals begin practicing in our personal, familial, and communal lives” (p. 133). In this same manner, relationality is both how we interact with the world and circumstances in the lives we walk and being in relation with oneself.

My Mom: The Futuristic Thinker and Activist Scholar. As we set out on this project, and during our first *formal* storytalk, my Mom kicked us off by saying, “Well, part of what’s really important in the history of colonialism is ‘where you want to start’” Then she said rhetorically, “Because I’m affected by it all. I started my research before Christopher Columbus. Where *you* want to begin?” (McCloud, 2025). We began with my Mom’s academic scholarship and educational experiences. I remain amazed at her brilliance both in thought and in writing.

My Mom (M. McCloud, personal communication, n.d.) wrote about futuristic subject matter in relation to Native and non-Native group dynamics, being positioned as reservation Indians, what the future holds for cultural revitalization, and the violent stripping away of traditions and knowledges that were meant to safeguard Indigenous peoples in their life journey. Using only pen and paper, she authored beyond borders and labels, positioning herself in crucial spaces as a scholar and activist at a very young age. Advancing Indigenous authorship and creating pathways to education have been her heart work and something I was able to follow throughout my childhood. Title IV (Indian Education) (now Title VI) and JOM (Johnson O’Malley) were critical aspects of her career in activating the rights and funding that were won through civil rights battles. What I witnessed was her not only standing up for our people but the work it took to create sustainable programs that carry power and agency into the future and the

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importance of an education foundation. I consider her writings to be grounded in remembrances of the past and equally balanced with innovative futuristic imaginings and possibilities.

The majority of my mom's research materials contain handwritten notes about her ideas for community development, healing praxis, and Indigenous knowledges, i.e., what knowings and teachings would be a part of the fabric of culture that makes us who we are and binds us together. Her thoughts - through notes, writing, research, and our talks - are important to our people and to me, as both a Nisqually Tribal leader and as her daughter. My mom operates similarly to Harjo (2019) in that she works toward mapping where we came from, who we are, and where we want to go. It is brave and confident to allow oneself to think beyond what is presently known and create capacity.

Storywork and Counternarrative

According to Absolon (2022), "All we really have authority to speak about with any truth is ourselves" (p. 7). She takes us through a journey of discovery as she shares her theoretical framework enlivening research and challenging Westernized research methodologies that disregard Indigenous knowledge as data. Absolon (2022) also discusses the importance of remembrances, identity, place and people when centering ourselves as "insider" (p. 167) and part of the research process. This perspective makes scholarship meaningful and heartfelt. With purpose and direction, the work will inevitably create shifts in the world around us, with reverberances of the knowledge built and shared out.

My approach to research is also informed by Archibald (2008b) who shares her experience working with Indigenous Elders who "... share their perspectives, knowledges, and insights gained from many years of learning, teaching, and reflection" (p. 487). Archibald's use of storywork in her research informed me of the way in which I engage my Mom in the research

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process for this study. Storywork helped me to experience a shift in the time-space-continuum through which I was able to gain knowledge through a blending of old and new ways, connecting and bringing forth the past into the present. Just as Archibald learned from Elders, I learned from my grandmother. I have core memories of being her tagalong when she visited with elders and made their morning porridge. The elders wanted to chat, visit, and gossip, which sometimes spurred memories of the old ways and teachings. Archibald (2008a) notes that “Elders’ life stories can show how we, as Indigenous Peoples, can keep our cultural knowledges intact” (p. 494).

According to Freire (1970), “Revolutionary leaders commit many errors and miscalculations by not taking into account something so real as the people’s view of the world” (p. 182). I was introduced to Freire at a time and in a space and place in which he related his initial inquiries into community voice, power, and resistance. I spent time learning the Portuguese language, culture, history, and literature in Brazil, where my professor introduced me to Freire’s (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. I felt he did so out of respect for the marginalized underclass in the country we were visiting, so that we would not be extractive in our research and would see clearly into the nature of the political and culturally oppressive state of the people of that place. This experience allowed us to see Brazilian culture, class segregation, and other aspects of economic depression. As Darder (2020) relates, “In so many ways, [Freire’s] work pointed to how economic inequality and social injustice dehumanize us, distorting our capacity to love ourselves, each other, and the world” (p. 178). What I saw in Brazil was strife and power imbalances, resulting in desperation and an inability to see a pathway toward change. I was one of the few students in this group who felt both the pain and resilience in what Freire presented as an insurgent ideology. For me, Freire expressed what it means to love one another.

The Importance of a Strengths-Based Approach to Research

Although research tends to focus on what is not working in education, Quinless (2022) argues for a “A strengths-based approach to research [which] involves a concerted effort to focus on what is working well within Indigenous communities as opposed to identifying and accentuating problems and deficits” (p. 100). Quinless discusses the vast difference between what is classified as data from Westernized perspectives and how data and storywork converge in terms of relationality. She notes that community-based research design and community based participatory research methods link theory to praxis. Ishimaru (2020) also cautions against the weaponization of data. Moving forward, our challenge as Indigenous scholars is to attend to the design of research and ensure that when storywork is used it is reflective of the nature of our Indigenous ways of knowing and being and not obscured by the lens, outlooks, and worldviews of outsiders and non-allies. Part of our agency and control is to unsettle systems that reinforce power imbalance and to fortify the colonial systems around us, particularly in educational settings.

Community, Collaboration and Connectedness

“Our positions within our communities mean that we have a responsibility to listen to the multitude of voices that speak there” (Gaudry, 2011, p. 123).

Much like Absolon (2022), Gaudry (2011) speaks to the ethical aspect of relational accountability (Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2008; Wilson, 2019) in research. This is particularly important when the research is conducted by a community member, an insider or one who has an authentic connection to the people and place upon which the research is centered. I connect with Gaudry’s (2011) notion of seeing oneself as a change agent with a shift in mind at the onset. In being service and community oriented,

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Gaudry's research approach includes engagement and dialogue. These are actions and values that closely align with my current work with the Nisqually people. As such, I carry a responsibility to aid in our collective healing praxis. My community was the observer and evaluator of the impacts of this research and their feedback will drive my continued work.

Ishimaru (2018) writes that "Equitable collaborations designate families as fellow educational leaders and experts on their own children, cultures, communities, needs and interests" (p. 550). She also discusses the ways in which we are internally (intrinsically) activated as a result of generational strength to resist colonial defeat. We are called on to explore and see from new perspectives in finding resolve, resilience, and community action. Activism and counter stories are charged by the essence of ancestral knowledges. The teachings of our people contain a dialogue about ways to be, including acknowledging our heritage and teachings. Similarly, Patel (2015) calls on us to pause as we work towards the co-creation of educational sovereignty. In pausing, we allow time, space, and place for the dreamwork of innovative and creative approaches beyond white heteronormative standards of parent/family/community participation in the instructional core of Native student learning. Ishimaru (2020) urges us to "take time to do this kind of 'big' imagining" (p. 159) because it allows us to formulate pathways based on our lived experience and intergenerational teachings. In essence, wisdom is birthed through intentionality.

"Since the land was an ancestor, no living thing could be foreign. The cosmos, like the natural world, was a universe of familial relations. And human beings were but one constituent link in the larger family" (Trask, 1999, p. 5). In this quote, Trask speaks of the natural order of interconnectedness. I was first introduced to Trask (2002) through her poem, titled "Sons". This poem argues that we are often unknowingly complicit and it demands that we work with

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intentionality to balance power and agency of people to rise. This reference quickly ushered me down a rabbit hole of books, videos, interviews and podcasts featuring Trask and her insurgency through the power of words spoken, written, and received. Trask articulated the power of intergenerational and land-based wisdom of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. What I took away from her work is a deep sense of relational accountability (Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2008; Wilson, 2019) stemming from connection to people and place. She constructed decolonial thought and colonial resistance frameworks, representing her deep love for what it means to be Native Hawaiian. The fact that she is now an ancestor leaves me aggrieved in the sense that she is no longer able to create new knowledges. She left behind a rich foundation and it is up to those of us in resurgence (Kovach 2021; Simpson, 2017) work to create pathways toward unsettling colonial power systems.

In doing this work, Harjo (2019) encourages us to ask what and who is our community? How are we connected to this place and these people? My research began with my parents who birthed and reared me. I carry this relationality in my work, having lived within close relation to my grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Harjo helps us to think about the research methods we use as we seek to understand and elaborate on lived experience. This also allows us to envision connections and relationality within community, culture and futurity. The journey of self-discovery and pathways for Indigenous leadership allows for fluidity in finding a sense of purpose and being open to change as our aims and purpose shift over time. This perspective intersects with my goal of engaging the community in change leadership and change management. As Harjo (2019) shared, “Collective activities produce collective power” (p. 145). She reminds us to reach back and pull medicine forward, thereby creating opportunities to operationalize our Indigenous knowledges. The process of future making will be led by the

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creation of learning space, not necessarily in institutions or the walls of academic spaces, but in community gatherings. Unfortunately, the Nisqually are disjointed in their communication about gatherings and the inclusiveness of gatherings, allowing factions to gather, and causing some to feel unwelcome. To move forward, we need cohesion and ceremony toward reconciliation.

“What is Really Important to the Future of Nisqually Indian Reservation and Its People?”⁴

“... if we’re thinking about our ancestors, what are the unactivated possibilities that they didn’t get to carry out in this world?” (Arkansas CW, 2022, 3:07:3:17).

Policy, Governance and Sovereignty

According to Darder (2018), “Community members from historically oppressed communities are central to any leadership for social justice in education” (pp. 58-59). Darder (2020) describes humanity as “the dialectical relationship between our cultural existence as individuals and our political and economic existence as social beings” (p. 178). In both traditional and contemporary times, Indigenous leaders have stepped forward in their care for the community. My motivation for building agency is to curb and quell overreliance on outside structures, systems, and frameworks that disregard the family’s role as first educators and cultural lands as first classrooms. To move toward a just learning system, we must engage in political structures and begin to exert our teaching process, bringing the voice and vision of the community to the forefront in developing societal structures in support of holistic early learning. Living is the experience of taking on roles of learner and teacher.

Darder’s (2011, 2018, 2020) work encourages me to reflect on the time when Nisqually was first labeled as a Tribe, composed of peoples and villages who traversed seasonally based on food sources and connection to the elements and other-than humans. The leaders who stepped

⁴ Source: McCloud (n.d.).

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forward, now called chiefs, were *siab*, a person of honor and respect, carrying knowledges and trusted by their community. The Tribe recognized early on that the colonizer society was distinctly different from our traditional upbringing, forcing our *siab* into ongoing battle. Since this intrusion, we have sought to remain caretakers of our respective communities, yet we have been brandished by word, proclamation, and legislation. Darder (2011) acknowledges the deterioration of values associated with capitalism and the scarcity mentality (p. 185). This has limited our capacity to evolve and transcend the shackles of assimilative behaviors resulting from intergenerational harms. The need and ability to envision wealth as non-monetary is key to how we think about and define education. We should choose how our children are educated. We must work to identify those values systems that preserve our heritage and the living systems that are beneficial to our future existence. How can we propel our people toward this place of possibilities? Reimagining possibilities is a part of the pause, reflecting both gratitude and hope.

We live in a cycle of critical judgement of ourselves, others, and our constructs of knowledge. We are forced to measure, compare, and aim for constantly shifting standards that were created to incite failures. To remove ourselves from this cycle of intergenerational traumas, we must break free toward liberation and continue to be learners until we leave this earth, a responsibility we hold as expressed by Robin Minthorn (Pashia et al., 2023), there is an importance in building relationships and living with humility. My parents taught the value of all beings and the world around us, as both teachers and learners. The ways in which they included others and refused to follow Westernized and institutional norms is a great part of their community praxis for which they have been recognized and honored. It is also part of me and my being.

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Mirella et al. (2009) discuss the emergence of a facet of community-driven participatory research as a result of research conducted with Native Tribes, resulting in not only cooperation with Tribal governments but in collaboration and co-creation which balances the power of the researcher and the researched (p. 44). In this way, “researchers ideally act as catalysts and facilitators to assist the community to understand the problems and develop solutions” (p. 46). Their work denotes the importance and effectiveness of moving away from basing work within a Tribal community to being directly driven by a Tribal governance body, overtly in control of decision making with relation to the needs, the data and the outcomes. This enhances the ethical standards utilized in relation to the knowledges revealed and how they will be used.

Indigenous Policy Analysis

Napoleon (2019) shares that “forms of oral histories contain law and they are also expressions of law, and as such, they form part of the memory commons and legal history record” for Indigenous communities (p. 3). From a leadership perspective, policy becomes an important aspect of healthy communities and a crux on which many theoretical frameworks suggest toward change-making. Brayboy (2006) states that “for many Indigenous people, stories serve as the basis for how communities work” (p. 427), we are organized by the teachings and interpretations shared by those before us in ways of governance, healing and education, which may include how we lead as individuals and how we organize as a social group. TribalCrit shares two tenets directly related to governance and Tribal sovereignty including the recognition that policy remains compromised and speaking to the importance of freedom of Indigenous futurities (p. 429-430). While traditional policy analysis (TPA) may examine power imbalance, it has been described as “theoretically narrow” (Young & Diem, 2018, p. 81), critical policy analysis engages the complexities of power dynamics, and even more so, Indigenist Critical Policy

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Analysis (ICPA) further analyzes from a policy reform framework that specifies Indigenous interests (Bryant, 2024). Bryant hones in on public policy failure being at the crux of faltering change initiatives where agreed upon standards are contradictory, subjective in gray areas or gaps, and/or are not operationalized into practice, denoting that her proposal to create a framework for analysis is necessary. To this day and through the community praxis exercises within this dissertation study, the consultation process and the enactment of community participation are both unclear and inconsistent, calling out a need to frame the work with intentionality. Toward this end, Dunbar (2008) states that “a product of narrative story-telling is the capacity to reflect on change that will enhance in a holistic and culturally manner”, a move toward social justice for marginalized people and break away from the norms of dominant knowledge systems (pp. 92-93).

Areas Yet to Be Discovered (Gaps)

Four honorary doctoral degrees have been awarded to Nisqually Tribal members, including my maternal Grandmother Frankie (Kautz) McCloud, her sister/my Great Aunt Josie (Kautz)McCloud, and my paternal Great Aunt Georgiana (McCloud) Kautz; however, 2026 is the first year in which five Tribal members are pursuing their doctoral degrees. Three will earn our EdDs, two through the Educational Leadership program at the University of Washington Tacoma; one will earn a PhD in Human Resources; and one will earn a medical degree (MD). The Tribe is building resources that will enable others to pursue their doctoral degrees as well. As a result, new knowledges will be created. Such pathways begin through generational knowledge sharing. We could not have reached this point without our ancestors' influence; therefore, we carry them forward with us today.

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Historians and anthropologists have studied our historical knowledges, places, locations, and language. We have many master's level scholars and capstone projects that are on record at our Education department. We have a Tribal library and an archives department that has yet to collect and collate those written works by our Tribal members. We are missing the voice of the Nisqually Tribal and community members. Although my mom submitted documents as part of her own Tribal archives, preservation of and access to these documents have been compromised. My mom's status as a descendant and Elder, scholar, researcher, historian, and ethnographer designates her as an expert in Nisqually intergenerational knowledges. However, the absence of physical documentation of her unpublished work creates an important gap. During her undergraduate and graduate studies, it was commonplace for research materials to be either physically lost by the institution or plagiarized, without recourse. Indigenous scholars had to be careful to safeguard their scholarship and literature; they were often fearful that their work would be appropriated as someone else's original work (M. McCloud, personal communication, n.d.). However, my mom's status as a knowledge holder of the Nisqually-Puyallup Tribes cannot be taken away as easily as her papers.

We have employed Westernized tools meant to create and recreate settler-colonial systems and frameworks. We use business planning tools and methodologies like strategic planning, SWOTS, consultants and tools that emulate corporate America and capitalistic value systems. The ability for us to design and strengthen our Tribal governance system is possible. The generation of research through decolonizing methodologies (Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021) demonstrates traditional values and ways of knowing, and being, which Smith (2021) explicitly named as a framework, but has gone on to describe Indigenous methodology through traditional knowledges, teachings and ways of knowing and being.

Conclusion: Meaning-Making

This overview of contributions by knowledge keepers affirms that strong leadership and self-governance within the educational system can be liberating and healing for communities who have embattled colonial systems and intergenerational traumas in the vastness of the dominant social structure. Through these works, the authors embattle colonial systems through kinship and storywork to strengthen identity, spirit and knowledge systems from where we rise through decolonial practices toward a traditional values system and holistic ways of sharing intergenerational knowledges. The theoretical framework for this decolonial work will be further presented in support of the research and praxis associated with this project.

CHAPTER 3: Indigenous Research and Decolonizing Methodologies

*łal tiit bəkʷ ʔəsqʷuʔ ʔəsxʷulab gʷəsqaləkʷ gʷət tiit ʔə ʔacittalbixʷ bəkʷ stab bəkʷ ʔacittalbixʷ ʔal ti
bəkʷ gʷət dibət*

We live in harmony within the circle of life, with all natural things, with our community, and with ourselves. – Nisqually Traditional Ways (2024, pp. 32-33)

Indigenous doctoral dissertations are increasing in scope, frequency, and application, culminating in Indigenous literature and resources from which other scholars will propel. Despite this growth, each of our Tribal Nations must examine their own history, policy, and community needs to ensure that plans are formulated based upon specific needs of the people protected and governed by sovereign Tribes. Many Tribes are establishing programs related to archiving historical documents, photos, and artwork/artifacts. Many Tribes are developing interview programs and digitizing media as vaults to secure the voices of our Elders. Tribes are also actively engaging with Elder boards, committees, and Councils. My work rests upon capturing remembrances of prior work both in my family and my community. I envision working to understand key initiatives taken by my relatives that resulted in our continued survivance today. Using these understandings strengthens my ability to lead well and in a good way. There are knowledges and ways of knowing and being that are fleeting and should be heard.

The intergenerational research design for this study was actioned through deliberate policy analysis, targeting specific ways that we can Indigenize policy to reflect the traditional ways of the Nisqually people. Our strengths today rest in the strengths of the past that have carried us through. However, I fear we will not take time to remember. To advance this scholarship, my dissertation demonstrates the archival aspects of Tribal Elder storywork as

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imperative and invaluable sources of Tribal governance and policy sources. Existing literatures have not sufficiently investigated Tribally-driven and community-driven policy analysis to dream and imagine ways that we can both retain our identity as traditional people while also evolving with contemporary ways of living and being in the natural evolution of the world. Going back to the old ways is not the key; however, being Nisqually and living in honor of the old ways allows us to advance our ability to meet the needs of the membership through care and compassion. While gleaning knowledges through westernized methods may include the use of surveys or interviews, gathering knowledges and medicines in more traditional ways includes community gatherings and storywork, involves the people who are affected, and incorporates Indigenized language to connect the past and present.

Focus of this Inquiry

We find ourselves in continual strife being unable to coordinate our own educational policy and program effectiveness, and unable to participate wholly in government to government relationships with outside school districts in meaningful ways that impact the everyday learning experiences and school environments that we entrust to care for our children. To become a part of those decision-making processes, we must step forward and become part of the equation in an Indigenous instructional core which recognizes the importance of family and community as first teachers and home as the first classroom, from which all other learning extends from. Through this work, Nisqually will insert itself into the learning lives of our school age children in ways we reimagine together.

The central theme and unifying element of this dissertation is kinship as methodology, grounded in Indigenous storywork (Archibald, 2008b; Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2021), insurgence (Gaudry, 2011; Smith, 2021) and resurgence (Simpson, 2017; Kovach 2021),

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Tribal sovereignty and self-governance through intergenerational co-creation, connectivity and collaboration. The relational methods used in collating teachings and knowledges allow for reflexive interpretations, imaginings of futurity, community-driven design integration, and emerging findings. Through this work I remain answerable to my children, my family, my community - my kin. Kinship grounded my purpose and shaped the design, methods, and frameworks, ultimately allowing analysis and findings to move from theory to praxis within my life and vocation. I am not separate from this research, it is part of me and who I am as a scholar, researcher, and an educational leader at Nisqually Tribe.

Research Design

The research design was structured using a qualitative framework of narrative inquiry that culminated in a case study of the Nisqually Indian Tribe and our capacity for self-governance and educational liberation and sovereignty. The Indigenous research methodology used in this study is relational, cyclical and interconnected. The knowledges examined are reflexive through remembrances of the past and leadership roles of the present catapulting forward toward an imagined future.

The design of this study allowed for a natural unfolding of the problem of practice into community grounded praxis work involving Tribal governance and my community leadership roles working with the public school systems and the Tribal departments and programs that work in service to and in advocacy of the Tribal students at Nisqually. This research utilized Indigenous research methodologies (Archibald 2007; 2008b; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Wilson, 2008) because of my positionality as a Tribal leader and educational leader within my community of praxis, where I live, work, was raised, and where I presently rear my family. In all

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practicality, I am responsible to the Nisqually community in several layers of relational accountability.

My co-researcher/co-writer, my Mom, Mildred McCloud, has been an inspirational source of wisdom and influence in my approach to the world ,as a mother/aunt/grandma. She is the source of my Indigenous worldviews, which were developed as a child. Her studies and scholarship aimed toward similar goals in community building, cultural revitalization and educational system transformation. Working through her archival records with her and reflecting through storywork allowed for intentional intergenerational learning, and in the end, resurgence (Simpson, 2017; Kovach 2021) of those teachings she brought forward from the ones before her. The value of these teachings, and how we adapt them to my journey is something to be imagined and lived beyond today, beyond this dissertation, and beyond me as I bring it forward into Nisqually futurity.

Location of Research

I come from two lands, along the ridges of the Cascade Mountains, from Taquotema called Mt. Rainier in South Puget Sound of Washington, to Mt. Shasta (Wintu Mountain) in Northern California. My mother is from Nisqually reservation, born, raised and went to school here. My father is from Round Valley Indian Reservation, born, raised and attended school there. I spent my childhood living and moving between both areas throughout my life. I knew the love, care and the ways of both of my families. My parents often reflected that they wanted us to learn more than what was taught in schools and that the only way to do that is to be on the land and to know where we are from. Their purpose, goals and intent were to interrupt the assimilative behaviors that we are conditioned to know by our Grandparents, such as religion, church, capitalism, superficial values, educational standards, and even psychology. As one might

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imagine, the conversations growing up and the teachings they engrained covered a lot of ground and were formidable in my mind about who I should be as a student and lifelong learner.

Today, and through those challenges, I am a doctoral level researcher and scholar. I can honestly say I worked to become this version of myself. I chose it, the program, the school, and the challenge. I decided I would become a doctor and in doing so, set a path forward that necessitated that I select a single pathway for a dissertation. It is not the only path I will follow and not the only topic with which I will engage. A work associated with critical policy analysis was highly aligned with my job on Tribal Council, but the work to examine archival research with my Mom is highly engaging and can intersect with the leadership roles she has held and with my journey ahead. It seemed natural that I would work in the Nisqually community on this project.

Research Questions

Guiding questions for my research inquiry are as follows:

1. Community Agency and Self-Determined Education

How can the Nisqually Tribe strengthen community agency and self-determination in shaping educational pathways for future generations?

2. Policy and Governance Transformation

In what ways can Tribal education policies and governance structures be Indigenized to reflect Nisqually values, relational accountability, and intergenerational knowledge?

3. Intergenerational Knowledge and Healing Praxis

How do Elders, families, and community members sustain and transmit ancestral knowledges that contribute to a healing praxis within Tribal education?

Research Design

Kinship as Methodology

tiił ʔitlułluł wiwsu gʷəl ʔəslab həlgʷəʔ tiił maʔmad wiwsu

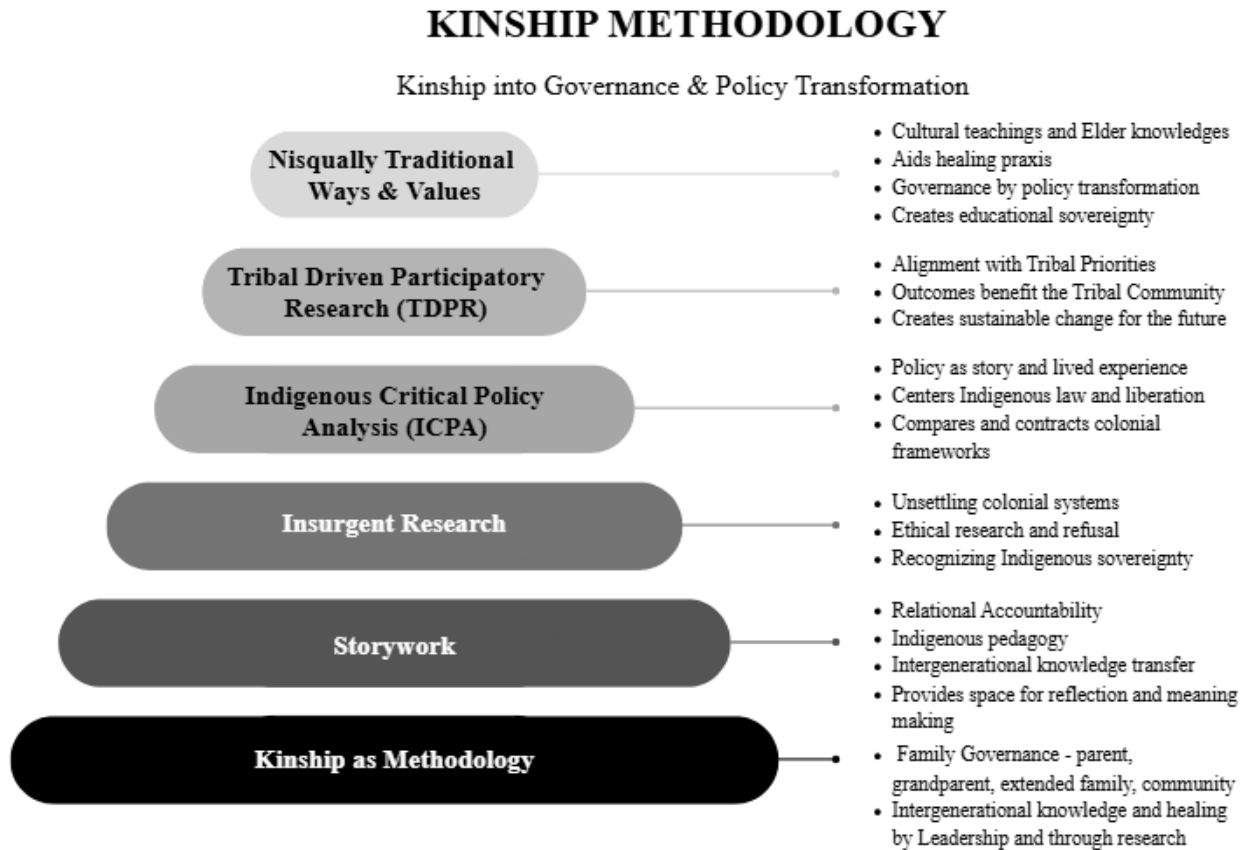
“Our older children, they look after the younger children.” –

Nisqually Traditional Ways (2024, pp. 32-33)

Figure 5 depicts kinship as the central methodology for this study. My positionality as a Tribal leader is rooted in insurgency, unsettling colonial systems, and change-making through educational liberation. As a tribal leader, I am responsible to our community and our ancestors. I am also creating futurity based on traditional ways of knowing and being. These cycles and reflections are based on the remembrances of the past reverberating into our future. What we get, we give in reciprocity.

Figure 5

Kinship as Methodology



So many thoughts swirl through my mind as I think about what it means to be a knowledge carrier, first, in my daily life as a Tribal leader, and second, in earning the Westernized title of Doctor. I feel like it might not be my place to say what it means to carry knowledges and I only wish to describe my understanding as it has been shared with me. I am still learning. That may be the basis of being knowledge carriers; they are those who are continually learning. That reflective thought reminds me of core memories as I moved through life, most of which are glimpses of the past when something wholesome was said or Indigenous humor was used to create harmony in a room of my loved ones. It makes me think that those

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teachings were the most important because their Elders passed that trait to them who are passing it to us and that I'm responsible to pass it forward with my children and grandchildren. I have always said that I have reached the pinnacle in life by becoming a grandmother. There is no greater achievement to me. My lifetime goal was to become a mother and my life has taught me that it comes in all forms, especially auntie-hood for the children who have sought solace in my space and place. They are my children too. It also applies to my research in that ties with Elders and remembrances led me to this academic life of scholarship and more importantly to a place of leadership within my family and my community. These teachings led me to realize the critical nature of Elders' knowledge transfer; intergenerationally, this is what connects community to the culture of healing praxis and strength to endure. This interconnectedness is lateral kindness at work and is intergenerational healing as a community. We are what we live.

Serendipity told me that now is the moment my mom has been waiting for, the moment that she is asking for, and the time and work she needs as a part of her lifetime goals. Using kinship as methodology, I move forward in this research as a healing praxis, to embattle those systems that continue to wound our community and to use the intergenerational knowledge systems in my leadership. Our Nisqually people are finding solace in my ability to do this work. My mom is finding assurance and relief in her quest to preserve and share her research. Together I believe we can co-create community planning to advance our educational system.

Kinship within Scholars

In applying to graduate school, my Mom wrote,

Back in my memories it comes to mind, we, of my family, were translators. In this function a person spoke three to four languages or dialects fluently. A person rode off on a solitary, lonely trail for days. The intent and responsibility was to deliver a message.

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Every message was important because the life of each village could be at stake. (M. McCloud graduate school essay, July 2000)

What I take from this passage is the importance of the work we do as scholars through literature, formulating knowledges carried our people through survivance all through history. My Mom's words are immediately relevant and applicable to the work described in this research inquiry. I attribute her greatest strength, as well as that of my grandmothers, myself and my daughters, as Radical Indigenism. My Mom is part of a long list of ancestors, using their strength and power to lead, leaving a pathway and traces for me and others to follow. I do not feel compelled to present our storytalk as a specimen to be examined, but to refer to it as a method for us to share knowledges between one another and to build capacity in her forward-looking imaginations and in my outlook and worldview from where I sit today as a family matriarch and Tribal leader.

In this study, I considered the sensitive nature of publishing storytalk; however, I view this work as an opportunity to offer important information about the research process and to encourage others to engage in heartwork, thereby helping to lessen the feelings associated with imposter syndrome for future scholars and academic researchers who may feel out of place in the world of higher education and research. The uncertainty of the true value of our ways of knowing and being and the feeling of being imposter that occur when we present our data and findings are both examples of the wounds that need to be healed through decolonization. In Chapter 4 I will discuss the validity and credibility of this research.

Co-Research with My Mom (A Dissertation Journey)

As serendipity demonstrates, my Mom has voiced her need to revisit the research gifts she received from her ancestors. I am at a moment in my life where heartwork is both the essence of my academic work and also my vocational work as a Tribal Leader. It is amazing the

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level of intersection between her past academic inquiries and where I locate myself in academia today. The alignment is uncanny. My Mom longs to resume her studies. I long to connect my studies to praxis. Our work together is an amazing synergy.

In my Mom's words, she shares her vision for Nisqually-Puyallup people, the "hope that [her prior works] may provide a basis for further community development research to help better the lives of the Nisqually-Puyallup who remain" (Frazier, 1973, p. 1). She recalls not wanting to but needing to write an annotated bibliography for the Nisqually-Puyallup because knowledges was being erased through the loss of land and the loss of history. Economic development brought civilization and urbanization, resulting in loss of records and, with it, a loss of sense of identity. Because many of the records were constructed by non-Native people, she soon realized the importance of talking to Tribal Elders. The progression of her work and education was a result of learning and knowing that counterstory is the story of our people from our view and a reflection of our experience. It is as if she could see our future needs were dependent upon the past and that the connection to our history was a basis for survivance (M. McCloud, personal communication, 2025).

This inquiry presented itself to me as a gift at the right time and place. Through this study, I had an opportunity to support my mother in furthering her vision. I am grateful to be able to commit to this project. The outcome will be lasting and will be influential for my children's children. In the duty of a matriarch, I lead my family and my community toward a future filled with the capacity to dream. This work goes beyond who I am and what I do today. This work goes beyond academia and educational institutions. This work will shape how Nisqually moves into the future of educational sovereignty - leading and shaping a path that is reflective of traditional values, powerful histories, and one that fulfills the aspirations of those before us who

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fought, dreamed and shared their knowledges, our aunts, our grandmas, our mothers. We owe this work to them.

My mom and I represent numerous images in the drawing shown in Figure 6. I created this drawing as a representation of how I view our knowledges as pre-existing, shaping a context of strength and making us whole, something we have and hold inside ourselves. The knowledges shared throughout the time-space continuum, shared among the stars and heavens, as we journey through life and as ancestors we share them again with our future generations.

Figure 6

Sharing Ancestral Knowledges through Generations



Note. Figure 6 represents the conceptual framework of the cyclical nature of knowledges and its fluidity like water, it travels and connects, staying in motion, aiding in healing and feeding beings in their lives and educational journeys.

My Mom shared, “*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was my *Bible* in college. We lived through that. Our parents and grandparents lived through colonialism” (M. McCloud, personal

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conversation, n.d.). My Mom called me one morning (the morning I was writing this chapter) and asked if I had ever heard of Paulo Freire. I was excited to share that his book is the reason I entered this doctoral program. She said she and my dad read Freire's work throughout their college years and used it in their scholarship and praxis work. I was astonished that after all of these years she and I had not covered this fact. I was also surprised to learn we are so familiar in this meeting of the minds. I reminded her about my college travel abroad in Brazil and our professor, Roldofo Franconi, who wanted us to learn the real truth about the culture and colonization of Brazil, and to see through the facade of civilization.

I studied the Portuguese language, literature, and history at Dartmouth College and went on to attend Universidade do Rio De Janeiro in the Spring of 1992. We travelled to Brazil during a critical time in its history, during the Earth Summit, one of the largest environmental gatherings involving global participation by nearly 200 countries. In attempting to demonstrate a message about collaborative environmental governance, Brazil spent the years and months leading up to this event moving the economically depressed people, the homeless, the underclass and the suffering into the shadows. They moved people away from the city into the countryside, displacing people who were already marginalized and homeless so that we as visitors to the country so outsiders would feel safe and see a clean, respectable order of civilization within the city. Our professor felt that we should know the truth. He took the care and time to open our minds and our eyes to colonialism and the traumas that are a result of attempted genocide. This was a pivotal time in my life when the light bulb went on and I realized that the picture being portrayed is the same one that my family and I have lived. This is when I understood where my heart work would take me throughout the rest of my life. I have a deep sense of wanting to know the truth about systems and forces within society that fortify the stratum of classifications, which

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demean some and glorify others. I see the beauty and notice the connection we have as a people and a place. We cannot be held back and we cannot be held down. I believe we belong and that we are never alone amongst our ancestors. We are with our mountains, our river and our community.

Traditional Tribal Ways and Values

This inquiry resides in Nisqually Community. The connection my mom and I have to her prior work has much to do with the outcomes of her scholarship, and how she would later apply learnings and teachings to her community grounded praxis - her heartwork. That work was situated in both places, my father's traditional lands and territories in Northern California, and her own, here in the Coastal Salish lands of the Pacific Northwest. Activism in both locations was pivotal and onerous. My parents recall being called to projects because of their style of unsettling colonial systems through Tribal self-determination and self-governance. They recall the days when resources were scant and when we had to learn to work through the "white man's systems," as my dad refers to the barriers to education (personal communication, n.d.), culture and community development. As resistance surmounted political and institutional obstacles, they became renowned in their respective communities as a duo that could plan and implement Tribal systems embattling colonial systems. One such project they partnered on was learning to interview Tribal Elders through formalized training and then completing interviews for the Boldt Decision (United States v. Washington, 1974) where they interviewed Tribal Elders like Qu-lash-qud/Willie Frank Sr., who was Nisqually's last first language keeper of the Nisqually dialect of Southern Lushootseed. Considering we are seeking to Indigenize policy through a traditional values and behavior-based context, the Nisqually Traditional Ways are critical to this outlook and the intention behind this study.

Tribally-Driven Participatory Research (TDPR)

The Tribal leadership position I hold now places me in a unique capacity for governance, policy development, and Tribal sovereignty through self-governance, while simultaneously researching and writing about my community praxis. In the context of this research inquiry, I am an inside participant in several modes, including as a family member within genealogy, as a Tribal leader within the community, and as a scholar alongside my mother, doing reflective analysis on her prior scholarship and research. In each case, there exists relational accountability (Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2008; Wilson, 2019), controls placed by the appropriate sovereignty, and outcomes that will directly benefit the “researched,” including our community at Nisqually and our future descendants.

Being a first-time elected leader has required a careful dance of finding my station within a political realm and sashaying through the nuances of working for and within the community, governing the Tribe, working with relatives, and being in a servant leadership role. This positionality as a Tribal leader was not within my reach or capacity when I started the dissertation process. At one point in my academic journey, I came to a juncture where I had to choose between one or the other, school or duty. My parents recommended that I do not run for Tribal Council. My professors also advised against it, stating it was not the time to both write a dissertation and take on Tribal Council governance responsibilities. They all knew because they have all served on Council. Still, the call was beckoning from somewhere deep inside of me as well as from the spiritual world. Indigenous researcher Lewis (Lewis et al. (2025) relates that she was told “the ancestors guid[e] us, putting us all on the same path - that Creator was aligning our

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universe” on (p. 200) There is a reason this inquiry aligned and brought me into a space where building agency within the Tribe would be a calling and a praxis.

This Indigenous research methodology calls out the immediacy of approaching the project with humility. We are not the primary researcher, other than on paper, within the outside institution. In order for this research to be successful, the calling is intrinsic and aligned with Tribal needs and pressing matters; solutions and responsiveness are also derived from the community where the research inquiry and praxis are centered. The researcher abandons control and facilitates power and agency within the people. In the case of Tribally-Driven Participatory Research (TDPR) (Mariella et al., 2009), the Tribal government oversees the project. How this project is situated within TDPR is that I first went to the Tribe for approval, explaining how the work with the community in the aspects of educational sovereignty would align with the community needs and long-term outcomes we are seeking as a Tribe. I was able to demonstrate the value of examining research and teachings about our Native learning systems as a continuation of what our Elders have held as strengths and fortitude allowing us to persevere and become what we are today. I emphasized the need to revisit and respect their work and the methods they used to survive within a system that was developed to disintegrate who we are as a people. There is value in knowing what it takes and aligning with traditional ways instead of moving further away from who we really are and who we are meant to be. Leadership is a calling.

TDPR intersects with Community-Driven Participatory Research (CDPR) but moves beyond relational accountability, ensuring that assessment of the value of the research and outcomes is done by the community and their own self-selected leadership group(s) rather than outsiders. Lewis et al. (2025) describe this as “put[ing] the needs of the community before the

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needs of [the researcher] or the academy” (p. 200). The caretakers who safeguard this process are the Tribal Leaders themselves. A researcher will take lead, guidance, and directive through appropriate review and approval modes. In this manner, I received Tribal Council permission (Appendix B) and continually engaged with community committees, families, and Elders to cross check the methods and methodologies with their thoughts about what was needed by the community and what they envisioned as successful outcomes.

Insurgent Research

Much like TDPR, insurgent research (Gaudry, 2011) is based on refusal of the Westernized research paradigm and is resistant to extractive outsider research, insisting that research conducted within this methodology is relational and accountable to the community of interest and not the researcher or the academy. Insurgent research also balances power, institutes relational accountability (Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021; Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2008; Wilson, 2019), and ensures that it is designed to benefit the participants in terms of praxis, outcomes and implications. The research design for this study was centered around self-reliance and self-governance. As described by Patel (2009), an insurgent researcher and their research is answerable to community, shaping future resurgence (Simpson, 2017; Kovach 2021) and political standing including identity, relationships and futurisms. The methodology is hinged upon the authentic nature of the relationships developed through the research methods. This then becomes the ethical foundation for the research. Insurgent research supports the growth of community capacity toward empowerment and engages work that becomes directly applicable and beneficial in praxis. The value of this research methodology is that it calls out the necessity to approach research work through an Indigenous research paradigm (Wilson, 2008), ensuring all

of the work is co-created with a good heart and that the research belongs to and within the community.

Indigenous Storywork

The concept of storywork (Archibald, 2008b; Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2021), through a literary context, was first introduced to me through a speaker who made mention of the smelt runs in her First Nation's territory and the ceremony that is tied to the date and season. How science has been able to detect and verify the interconnectedness of our natural, social and physical worlds was so fascinating. The speaker shared how fish talk and have numerous languages, and how they move and make decisions that impact human life and human experience. The detection and the knowing were not shared when this speaker related this information to us that day; it was shared throughout the history of their people. The knowing and being with other-than-humans was true long before we decided to study it and prove it scientifically. The value of story in how we share intergenerational knowledges is part of what this research inquiry is based upon. It is the genealogical analysis of how my mom knew she was set to research storywork to make the community and world a better place for her children and grandchildren, and then how I was called to follow this guidance and this calling in emulating her work and embodying these teachings.

Archibald (2007) defines storywork as an "Indigenous research methodology" that has the "actions of interrelatedness and synergy formed by the storyteller, the story, the listener, and the context in which the story is used" (p. 489). She relates further that it is more than a task, but the intentionality of setting forth to do good through interconnectedness. She also calls for a pause to notice the start of work as a recognition of the importance of the story as knowledge and transmission of the knowledge from the keeper to the next holder. My mom shared that as an

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avid reader she reads some materials for her leisure and personal pleasure but she reads differently when it is for research. In that same way, my interactions with her are different and more intentional when I take on the responsibility of holding her research knowledges as a new keeper. It feels more responsible and more relational.

Similar to what Archibald (2007) describes as the “teacher-learner relationship, this research project felt like a different dynamic than the mother-child relationship we held in the time before this work. The difference Archibald describes is that the work is done toward good and out of respect and reciprocity. The values system is the basis for doing good work. The fact that our relationship spans throughout my lifetime, and not simply for the sake of this study, is a factor that grounds this good work within the space of ethical boundaries associated with Indigenous research methodologies. Additionally, we did this work based on her time, her availability, her capacity to share, and her desire to pass the intergenerational knowledges forward. There was no externally set pace and the work was connected to a larger process (higher purpose) than academia.

Integration of Storywork as Insurgence

This research inquiry used storywork (Archibald, 2008b; Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2021), as a qualitative method within an insurgent methodology (Gaudry, 2011), by interrupting colonial frameworks regarding the validity of traditional and ancestral knowledge (Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2021; McCloud, n.d., Simpson, 2017; Smith, 2021; Wilson, 2008). These shared knowledges have always been and will become the remembrances and communal traditional ways that guide and govern our sovereign people, the Nisqually. Storywork, together with TDPR (Mariella et al., 2009), Insurgent Research (Gaudry, 2011), and Indigenist Critical

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Policy Analysis (ICPA) (Bryant, 2024), form the groundwork for a relationally accountable, community-centered, and decolonial approach to self-governance in educational sovereignty.

Indigenist Critical Policy Analysis (ICPA)

ꞑuyayus čəł ꞑəsq'wuꞑ bək'w ꞑəsq'wuꞑ dx'ꞑal tiil haꞑł ꞑə tiil ꞑacittalbix'čəł

We work cooperatively together for the good of our people.

Nisqually Traditional Ways (2024, pp. 32-33)

I am concerned that we do not give ourselves enough credit for the level of survivance necessary to withstand genocide. How did we make it to today? Some people may believe we survived because we were able to adapt to colonial systems well enough to be accepted into mainstream society, not necessarily equal, but essentially allowed to exist. Many argue against assimilation leading to survivance and about cultural continuity and the resurgence (Simpson, 2017; Kovach 2021) of Indigenous epistemologies being credited toward decolonization (Archibald, 2008b; Brayboy, 2005; Kovach, 2009; Simpson, 2017; Smith, 2021). Many people agree that the fight for survivance is continual and remains vital, requiring decolonized minds to lead insurgency. In speaking to our responsibility to future generations, Cajete (2015) notes that “we now need to revive community education and community-building as a method of revitalization”, to embattle systems initially meant to destroy our culture and that still have a remaining and lasting presence in the governance and community systems we built during times of destruction. We still have a duty to sift through the strengths and survival mechanisms to find those that most genuinely replicate Indigenous ways of knowing and being and simultaneously work to break down those that are destructive or otherwise detrimental to our traditional ways. This is evidenced by the existence of destitution and demoralization, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples, suicide epidemics, and drug overdoses at astronomical rates in current day

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Indigenous America. As noted by Quinless (2022), “the legacy of colonialism continues to shape states of well-being at individual and community levels for Indigenous people” (p. 24). As Martin et al. (2020) argue, continued “reliance on decision-making models that separate natural and cultural worlds” (p. 2119) is the cause of this systemic disparity in our Tribal communities.

ICPA (Bryant, 2024) embattles colonial performative rhetoric but it cannot happen without community participation. ICPA is a methodology that acts as an evaluation process to critically review relevant and applicable governance through an intentional Indigenous gaze, assessing the level of alignment with Indigenous values, specific to a people or group. This framework is relevant to my research with my Mom, as well as the community cafe forums, because the participants were apprised of the future work necessary to bring our Tribal government back in line with the traditional ways of the Nisqually Tribe. This part of our research anticipated further work and analysis. Through the discovery process, we identified the ways in which we were skewed and out of touch with our traditional ways and began discussions around who we are as Nisqually people and the unique needs of our community. This created opportunities for change and change-making created meaning and connection.

Culturally Respectful Research (Ethics)

Part of what makes us who we are as Indigenous researchers is that we have accepted the privilege, the challenge, and the task of creating hope, dreams, imaginations, and trust with our respective communities. When I look back at how and why I am where I am, I can easily say that I am here to help my Tribe. When I look around, I see those who hold me up and have been supportive, encouraging, and sometimes outright demanding about those of us taking on Tribal leadership roles. Sometimes we are asked, sometimes we volunteer, but most often we are told and shown how to step up and step forward. That is the way it is.

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An elder status in Indigenous society is one of reverence and deep gratitude because we are all aware of those battles our fore-families fought to keep us alive as a bloodline and as a culture. They saved us from extinction, and in the harshest of times they held onto the hope for a better future and cried out to Creator. It is such an emotional toll to think about and to remember their sacrifices. It personally drives me to do more. I have also held onto hope and prayed to Creator to help our people through very strenuous tests of our faith in the spirit world and in the natural world around us. Although I am still in the process of becoming an Elder, my work is subject to scrutiny, pressure to serve all, and to be honorable in doing so.

My parents were also tasked in their adult years to work on projects related to storywork and archival research. They both studied anthropology, interviewing techniques, and Indian studies. I came into their lives in 1972 when they were working on their bachelor's degrees at UC Davis. So, as one can imagine, their modeling of picking up the necessary skills to conduct storywork began at an early age and persisted throughout my life. I watched them instruct courses at D-Q University, write curriculum, obtain masters degrees and do community work entailing storytalk in formal settings and in community. The traditional values they displayed and mannerisms they carry are a part of who I am today.

At times, even with the best of intentions, we forget our ways in grounding our work with intentionality. In research, this is especially true in how we portray the approach, the inquiry, and the purpose, goals, and intent to create goodness within the lives of those around us. The end goal is not to get people to cooperate by coercive means, but to participate in full faith and trust that we are partners in this good work. We hear stories about Elders who are off-putting, reserved or quiet, unwilling to share their teachings. Many times, it is not until they are with the right person, perhaps a young one, perhaps a close relative, or perhaps someone who they

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connect with, that they open up. It may be that we must earn a level of trust or prove ourselves responsible to be able to receive small teachings in more intimate ways, through conversation and heartwork. Nevertheless, learning what it means to act responsibility and carry knowledge is work that one must do internally, as a conversation with oneself. This internal examination begins with a level of thoughtfulness, credence, and credibility in your spirit and in your work.

Each of the methodologies chosen for this study had a component of ethics built in - primarily initiatives by community, with community, for the community. This included prior interaction, understanding the present needs of the people, and creating a basis for future work to be continued. The research project had a pre-designed continuity feature that took place in real time, parallel to work happening on the governance side of the Tribe - community grounded praxis, as it were. There are immediate and real applications to the future landscapes, people-scapes and community-scapes at Nisqually as a result of this study. We are actively pursuing a re-imagining of how to do our community leadership work differently, a change from how we work now, but perhaps a reflection of the way it used to be. This is a way of connecting us to the strength, power, and diligence of the ancestors who have held us up spiritually for so long. It is our turn to grow by learning and equipping ourselves to offer the teachings forward. Doing so carries the intergenerational knowledges that have held us together as a people and have ensured our survivance.

Consent & Reciprocity

Kinship as methodology (Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2021; McCloud, n.d., Smith, 2021; Wilson, 2008) ensured that my research is answerable to my ancestors, my family and my community. The archival review and revitalization with my mom, the narrative inquiry with our community members, including students, parents and supporting extended families, and the

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gatherings to talk about educational woes, needs and ideas become acts of healing, self-governance and policy development. As an elected leader, it is expected that I will first listen to the general membership. As a young Elder, it is expected that I will learn good mannerisms from those before me. As an educational leader, it is expected that I will assess and analyze new ideas and that I will organize systems that protect our children. As such, the research methodologies used in this study were grounded in community participation and Tribal participation as they played an important role in the spaces and places where key points of data were collected.

In addition to having received formalized approval by the Nisqually Tribal Council (See Appendix C). I have been informally assigned by the Tribal Chairman and the Council to oversee Nisqually Tribal Education. Our community is aware that a group of doctoral students is working to design and implement programming that will over time demonstrate the commitment by the Tribe to create a shift in how much input we have in the school experiences of our young children. Part of the change is the healing praxis of our own community. This requires the community to believe in us and that we do the right thing as leaders.

Use of Recording Devices

Upon starting the doctoral program, the first gift I received was a battery powered mini-tape recorder from my dad. He said, “Here you go, you will need this” (personal conversation, 2023). My parents have had a long history with recording Tribal histories and teachings. Their research training and experience was at first very rudimentary and in a sterile academic fashion. From there they took their anthropological field training and began adapting their knowledge of cultural ways that entail the answerability and relationality with intergenerational knowledge sharing. Both being adept in Elder relations and storywork, they imparted those traits and ways to me as a child. I spent much time with them in undergraduate college, while they continued

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advanced degrees, and within our cultural revitalization work within the community. This included linguistics, photo archiving, interviews, songs and stories. There have been times when we lost physical copies of recordings which was devastating to our family. My father's apartment was broken into and his tape cassette recordings of his late grandmother, Nancy, were stolen. For this reason, I understand the importance of protecting data and data retention.

Our Tribe has been working to tell our story and generate the narrative as a sovereign Nation. The continual documentation of our ways of knowing and being is an articulated intention and goal for Nisqually. Following this pathway, I recorded interviews and gatherings. Additionally, during meetings I advised the people around me that it is always important and necessary to disclose the recording of any work session to your audience and to tell them how you will be using their information. This is clearly understood by my parents and children.. This is something I also practice through my work interactions and I have applied to my research. It is a basis for respect for all people's privacy.

Utilization of AI (Artificial Intelligence)

The recording device I selected is called Soundcloud. This device dictates, translates and formats interviews. It also offers a variety of other services including generative summaries; however, I did not use these summaries as part of my dissertation research. I used transcripts to identify speakers in recorded sessions. Soundcloud also indicates the date and time of the recorded sessions. My goal was to obtain clear dialogues in order to understand and further reflect on meanings and interpretations of the recordings. Traditionally and culturally, there are nuances to communication with intended underlying meanings, and interpretations that can change and present themselves long after a conversation takes place. I shared the complete

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transcripts with my Mom and considered these transcripts both story talk and private conversations that relate to our work as co-researchers and co-writers.

Conclusion

The Indigenous research methodologies that I employed in this inquiry are rooted in Indigenous storywork (Archibald, 2008b; Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2021), Insurgent Research (Gaudry, 2011), Tribally-Driven Participatory Research (Mariella et al., 2009), Indigenous Critical Policy Analysis (Bryant, 2024), and Nisqually Traditional Ways (Nisqually Indian Tribe, 2024). These theoretical frameworks directly examine and support my research questions by collectively centering community self-determination, relational accountability and intergenerational knowledge systems. They guided my research into Nisqually Tribal community agency in educational sovereignty by elevating the voice of the community toward their needs and priorities; they inform my study and analysis of community gatherings, dialogue, and leadership governance by grounding it in our traditional values system, resistance, and resurgence (Kovach 2021; Simpson, 2017), and balancing Tribal power and rights. This helps to tell the story of how we share our Indigenous knowledge within kinship relations that lead us toward healing praxis and educational policy transformation. Using these frameworks as design principles, this study initiated storywork, community praxis, and policy work as forms of liberation and self-governance in action. We worked to imagine Indigenous futures together and in relation to our community and for our community, and to benefit those in educational systems around us.

CHAPTER 4: Findings

*tiit sulułluł tud^{ix} ʔacit**al**bix^w, g^wətashaydx^w həlg^wəʔ g^wəsəsg^wədil ʔəstəči(l)təči(l). bələd^əəlaḫads
həlg^wəʔ g^wələ ʔal q^wubid həlg^wəʔ ʔə qaʔət*

*“Our traditional way is to feed and make strangers comfortable..” – Nisqually Traditional Ways
(2024, p. 32-33).*

As discussed in Chapter 3, this study sought to answer the following research questions.

1. How can the Nisqually Tribe strengthen community agency and self-determination in shaping educational pathways for future generations?
2. In what ways can Tribal education policies and governance structures be Indigenized to reflect Nisqually values, relational accountability, and intergenerational knowledge?
3. How do Elders, families, and community members sustain and transmit ancestral knowledges that contribute to a healing praxis within Tribal education?

Findings

1. Community Agency and Self-Determined Education

How can the Nisqually Tribe strengthen community agency and self-determination in shaping educational pathways for future generations? This question arose from many considerations we worked through in both articulating needs as well as understanding not the deficits in our capabilities as learners within non-Native systems, but the deficit in the non-Native school system to provide an education that meets our par defining student successes. Our goal and purpose is to find our place and our power in this dynamic. I argue that the overreliance of outside perspectives on the education we are entitled to and provided is insufficient, calling out our duty and responsibility as a sovereign to design and organize resources, including those

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associated with our treaty rights and government to government relationships. Self-determination resides in the people, not the government. In response, my study argues that we find power in our people - their stories, their lived experience, and their knowledge of how our children will grow and develop using past knowledges, present resources, and future hopes.

2. Policy and Governance Transformation

In what ways can Tribal education policies and governance structures be Indigenized to reflect Nisqually values, relational accountability, and intergenerational knowledge? This question asks whether we have fully assessed current policies in place to understand if they are truly reflective of our goals, purposes and intents toward the empowerment of our students, parents, and families to govern their educational experience in a manner that ensures we provide for and protect our rights to learn in holistic ways. We must contend with resistance to our participation in co-design and to what degree our collective community voice is collated and represented and in what forums are most effective to garner advancements in our agency. We must work to identify what it is that we are demanding through educational justice and educational sovereignty. Our Tribal leadership and government must prioritize and take the lead in the appropriate spaces and places necessary for this collaborative work. Working through narratives to detract from deficit perspectives and center the educational needs of the Nisqually people, through desire-based approaches, to create a counter strategy is the work of educational leaders. With the richness and vastness of traditional knowledges and intergenerational lived experience, we have the data necessary to command these educational pathways.

3. Intergenerational Knowledge and Healing Praxis

How do Elders, families, and community members sustain and transmit ancestral

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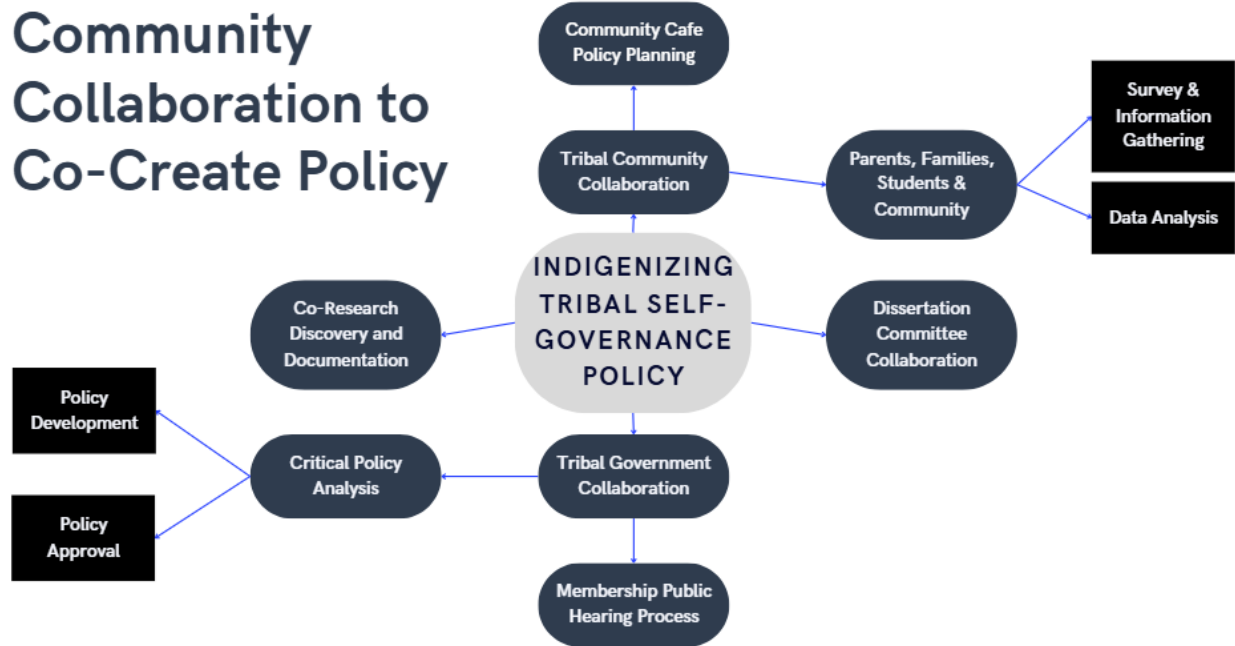
knowledges that contributes to a healing praxis within Tribal education? Because there is limited literature generated by Nisquallies in relation to Nisqually histories and knowledges, this study sought to understand why and how we can bolster these traces in relation to how we recognize brilliance and capacity in our community. What is most evident is that we hold a level of humility in which we refrain from boasting. A trait within our values systems has taught us to be reserved and intentional about sharing history, teachings, culture, medicine and rarely our innermost thoughts and opinions. This dissertation is a glimpse of the potential for our community to exact the necessary healing and connection that it will take to honor the knowledges that have sustained our people from survivance to futurity. The single notion of hope and instituting tools, such as vision, honor and reciprocity have led us through the darker times toward a place of increased vitality, agency, and a more self-determined future. Shedding light on these potential shifts in the inner workings of our community will be both healing praxis and activation, but also inspiration because it is meant for our future generations and their livelihood and wellbeing.

Collaboration and Co-Creation

Figure 7 reflects a pathway that demonstrates co-creation of Indigenized self-governance policy, in the case of this study, toward educational sovereignty of the Nisqually Tribe. The gathering of storytalk data is representative of community voice in co-design. The storytalk data in connection with leadership entities within our Nisqually community instead of outside of our community is the more appropriate and reflective of self-determined policy and the role of governance.

Figure 7

Co-Creation by Community



Some of the research conducted by my parents and held in their archives is related to their extended relations. In some cases, the stories are minimal and are often created by outsiders. According to my father, my paternal great grandfather, William Frazier, went to Chemawa boarding school. In their search for documentation, they were able to uncover seven pieces of paper related to him at a federal records agency in Seattle. The conversations related to searching for records was fascinating. The conversations were here in Nisqually with my parents but the journey is in reviewing the records they worked so feverishly to collect. As Makoyiisaaminaa (2023) writes, “Our culture has resisted erasure through stories; our people have resisted erasure through stories and our ways of knowing. Oral traditions have preserved our ways of life” (p. 10).

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The legacy of survivance spans generations; in my family it includes tragedy, famine, death walks, slavery, and other atrocities that befell Native nations. I recall a grandfather telling me that they had little choice in sending their child to boarding school because families were starving and parents held out hope that their children would be fed if they were sent off with the missionaries (personal communication, n.d.). My Mom recalls that a relationship, almost a dependence, was built with the churches. She remembers being taken to the different denominations and partaking in church ways because there was always food and gifting. When she was in charge of the smaller children, she coached them, noting when a confession was made, and what the children should say to get through the formality. This is an example of “the gifting of another’s story to a researcher: data are more than things, they are living connections animated through the exchange of story” (Kovach, 2021, p. 156). To my Mom, this storytalk was humorous and a way for her to express hardships in the natural and Indigenous ways we use to take care of one another. To her, this is a tale of survivance; to me, this is a connection to her life and the way she lived. For the loved ones under her care, she was a leader from a very young age. Although Native people hoped for the right to determine their children’s education and future, dire situations and systemic pressures forced them into desperate circumstances, leaving them with few options or choices.

As we rode around the reservation, my Mom and I discussed events that took place over time in Nisqually. I have had these talks with many folks, including my parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents; however, my Mom’s reflections are some of the closest to me, being her eldest child and now a graduate research student. Over the years, I have come to understand her school experiences and how she grew up as a child. These stories begin with her being the first granddaughter to Woy and Dottie; Woy being Rose Wells, her paternal grandmother, and Dottie

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being George McCloud the first, her paternal grandfather. She was their tag along as a child, later in their years. They spent their time in worship through the Shaker church, travelling from home to home and Tribe to Tribe with our relatives throughout the expanse of their church and fellowship. My mom held connections and friendships with other children who grew up on the tail skirts of their loved ones in church. She grew to know their lifeways of elders and teachings through her childhood friends. I know so many who had the fortune, privilege, and gift of growing up in a grand-family, living in a time of joy and connection. That is the way of our people.

Nisqually is a land of dispossession. Through the histories of our people being in relationship to land, we know that villages were based upon settling where life needs were met, which could be associated with sustenance and seasonality, mediated by connections to people and place. There were intermarriages throughout Coastal Salish lands and beyond, mixing of families and Tribes, histories, backgrounds, and traditions. I am a product of a marital union between a Wailacki man and Nisqually woman, meaning my ties to people and place span across eons, originating in lands, stories and stars, bringing me forward to having lived and grown up in Washington and California, trailing and tailing my own grandparents, soaking up their wisdom along the way. After childhood, college and early career, I made my home here. This is where my children are connected to me, through us, and with the land we call home. My educational journey will end here, upon my own sunset, in Nisqually, where theirs begins.

Figure 8

Intersections within Nisqually Education Systems



Note. The overlap of institutions creates a complex system where control and decision-making capacity can become convoluted and/or misconstrued to understand where responsibility lies in design, implementation, outcomes or accountability. Conceivably, we should work to have a stronger presence in each of those areas since the Community and Tribe are one and the same. We must contend with external systems, but we do not have to rely upon them completely.

Context of Values Systems

According to Hilbert (1985), “our historians developed excellent memories in order to pass on important information to later generations” (p. ix). Hilbert laments loss of culture

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through language, enamored with prayerfulness, meaningfulness, and gratitude about the possibilities of life. Her role as a knowledge keeper brought forward strong teachings about life and loss. She presents these values as teachings that survived through her heart (as translated and edited by q̣ʷatələmu/Nancy Jo Bob, Nisqually Language & Library Resource Manager):

ʔəskʷiʔa(t)txʷ tiʔə bəəəkʷ swatixʷtəd ♦ Respect (Hold Sacred) All of the Earth

ʔəskʷiʔa(t)txʷ tulʔal sqələlitut ♦ Respect (Hold Sacred) All of the Spirits

ʔəskʷiʔa(t)txʷ kʷi ʔəxəʔ ʔəq siʔab ♦ Remember (Hold Sacred) The Creator

xʷiʔ kʷ(i) adsubədčə ♦ Be Honest (Don't you dare lie!)

ləskʷaxʷad kʷ(i) adʔiišəd ♦ Be Generous (Be helpful to your people in any way you can!)

ʔəsʔušəbid kʷ(i) adʔiišəd ♦ Be Compassionate (Feel forgiveness for others)

ʔəsčəʔkʷ čəxʷ (ʔəsčəʔkʷ tulʔal bəkʷ saʔ) (sčiqʷil ʔi dʔəkʷadad) ♦ Be Clean (Keep washing away all badness (Dirt and Sin-crime))

čəxʷa ckʷaqid ʔuləyayus ♦ Be Industrious (And you will work always, don't be lazy)

Ancestral teachings and continuity are retrieved through our connections to the past and through storywork; they are ways of knowing and being that we learn, hold onto, and gift to the future. This is part of our responsibility. This is the educational system that is most profound, most sacred, and most necessary for our growing families and generations ahead. When I speak of the agency, the control, and the power to exercise education within our community, I speak of these teachings. When we send our students out into the world, we hope to shape those outside landscapes to honor our teachings and to embrace our children within those structures. Figure 8 denotes the overlapping systems administering Tribal education. As Wilson (2019) shares, “if conducted responsibly, research into decolonial pasts can help build platforms where marginal

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people can raise their voices clear enough to be heard over the clamour” (p. 70). Rather than our community assimilating to outside norms, we ask and we initiate that their learning systems acclimatize to receive our students in a way that reflects our teaching systems, from where our students arise. This is their foundation.

Our Wah-He-Lut Indian School⁵ carries the legacy and sentiments of the Willie Frank Sr.⁶ legacy and preserved many of his teachings, including the Nisqually Teachings of Our People (included in Appendix A), which I intersperse throughout this discourse as guiding affirmations of this work. A word of gratitude must be shared to Jean Sanders⁷ whose heartwork rested upon preservation of the traditional words, teachings, and lifeways of our last first-language speaker. The crux of the matter being that knowledges exist and are carried through and must continue to be revered as the basis of how we have survived, how we live now, and how we will become strong in the future.

Our Tribe created several projects related to community-based visioning that worked to re-establish traditional values-based life guides and instructions by our Elders including the 1995 and 2013 Nisqually Indian Tribe community vision plan and update and various other strategic plans including a 2024 Tribal resolution called “Building a Healthy Foundation” (see Appendix B). The process in creation of the vision booklets was a wonderful example of Intergenerational knowledges because of the composition of the community vision committees.

⁵ Explain Wah-He-Lut Indian School is a K-8 Bureau of Indian Education Tribal compact school founded at Frank’s Landing where they work to center Indigenous knowledge, culture and teachings including Lushootseed language.

⁶ Willie Frank Sr. , also named Qua-Lash-Qud, was a Nisqually Elder, credited for language preservation as a first language speaker of Lushootseed, as well as for an occupant and resistor in the Fish Wars that led to the Boldt Decision.

⁷ Jean Sanders, Nisqually Tribal Elder, who is credited for preserving language with Qua-Lash-Qud, our last first language speaker.

Impact of Federal Policies on the Education and Lives of Native Peoples

My grandparents lived through the Indian Reorganization Act of the 1930s. They were very young and living in a tumultuous state of survival, similar to what their parents experienced during the depression. They lived off the land, practiced traditional medicine, grew their own food, raised animals, and hunted/fished for sustenance. They maintained ties to the natural world around them but without resources families were dismantled, resulting in turmoil on many reservations.

As legislation continued, the federal government allowed the remaining Tribes to restore Tribal governments, realize cultural revitalization, and establish protections for their natural resources. Nisqually adopted its first constitution in 1946, later amending it in 1994. During that time, the Tribe moved toward self-governance under the Self-Determination Act of 1975, establishing a land base, introducing economic development and working toward community development planning and initiatives, including health care and housing systems. The Self-Governance Demonstration Project in the 1990s was a Nisqually project that took place during a time of struggle and resurgence (Kovach 2021; Simpson, 2017), requiring people to develop their abilities to live and work within a modern Westernized system of governance. This appeared to be a step toward reducing reliance on the Bureau of Indian Affairs administrative rule; however, in my view, Tribes were still forced acquiesce to federal government standards, leaving Tribes in the predicament of compromised values systems.

As I have stepped into leadership roles, it has been important to learn and share our Nisqually values systems and traditional ways, and our vision and work to affirm these ways of knowing and being with the outside entities who come onto the reservation to work with our community. Through this study, I examined ways in which we can extend Nisqually ways into

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the world we exist in both in and outside of our community, where we entrust our children to be cared for as they learn and become educated and socialized. The values systems relayed in our most recent Nisqually Community Vision Plan, 2013 (as translated and edited by q̣ʷatələmu/Nancy Jo Bob, Nisqually Language & Library Resource Manager) are listed below:

səsʔabšitub ♦ Generosity

sutiḵḵtubut ♦ Courage

ʔaltalbixʷ ♦ Humility

səsq̣ʷuʔ ♦ Togetherness

səshigʷəd ♦ Honor

sʔaciḵčigʷəd ♦ Focus

sḵəč ♦ Tradition

There is a need to revisit our values systems as individuals, as community members, as leaders, and as humankind walking this Earth. Our faith and trust in humanity to right-course itself is in question throughout the world at this time; however, we have survived attempts by the nation state of the United States to obliterate us. We have used our values systems and ideals to promote our own survivance. We have not lost faith in the possibility of change. As Vittoria (2026) writes, "...lack of faith in change becomes an ideology that underpins and conserves authoritarianism" (p. 2).

Data Engagement & Relationality

My co-conspirators were my parents, my connection to creation and those who brought me from the spirit world into this physical life. I am placed into the world as a granddaughter, daughter, mom, aunt and sister. These connections position me within a cosmos of having entered this space with responsibility. I'm responsible to listen to, learn and to pay attention. I

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did not always know that I should hang onto each word that was spoken to me throughout my childhood and wish that I could remember each word spoken to me by my loved ones. Their love and guidance moved me through life with strength and blessings. I did not understand their gifts until later in life. I'm here, working with those lived memories and taking in the realizations and reflections about this life journey. It is emotional and awakening to see the connections and strengths that were passed along from the ancestors to my Elders, my parents and from myself to my children. The intergenerational work must continue if we are to move into the future as a people, as a community, and as a Native nation.

Revisiting My Mom's Research - Co-Design

The initial phase of this study was to begin collating physical materials that have travelled with my parents throughout their lives, beginning in the early years of college. These items not only relate to their academic experience but to our lives as a whole, including my own materials and reflections. During their time at UC Davis, the Indian Education Program building was new and their Native Club honored my birth with a baby shower at the college where I was gifted many eagle feathers. Those feathers and the memory through their reflections is a part of my connection to their educational pathways and ties me to those lived memories of which we have shared physically and some of which have survived through storytalk - knowledges shared about how UC Davis began to incorporate and honor cultural gatherings, teachings and community within their academic institution. I am a part of that story and it has been said that I began my degree back in 1972, taking courses with my parents in a backpack.

Because digitization of archives, while not new for Tribes and their businesses, is not a norm for some generations, we understand that in many cases people live through written paperwork and library systems. Archives contain physical documentation; this is true for my

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parents, myself, and our Tribe. The Nisqually and Puyallup Tribes both have very active historical preservation offices, archival processes and libraries. There are indications that there may be archival documentation at the Round Valley Tribe of Indians, where my father is from. How the collections survived remains unknown. Through this study, I have been in contact with both Nisqually and Puyallup Tribes' offices and staff to inquire about materials that my Mom submitted to and filed with their archival departments; however, there was very little they were able to supply. Nisqually had only one paper, a photocopy that looked like it was used for someone else's research project as it was marked, notated and had sticky notes on it. I cannot imagine that it is the state in which my mom submitted her paper. Upon inquiring with Puyallup, they indicated they did not have her materials or any references related to her. However, she is certain that she placed her work there.

Upon contacting the University of California system, we learned the system did not retain old research papers and did not begin digitization until recently, resulting in spotty retention of student research and scholarship. It seemed that we had hit a dead end in the quest for archival materials. However, we were able to locate other types of writing and literature that were useful as storywork, demonstrating the interrelatedness within the Tribal community, ways that information was shared, connections that were maintained, how people collaborated and how important it was to fortify, strengthen and rely upon intergenerational knowledge sharing. Additionally, what I found through my mom's lived experience in educational institutions was how critical it was to become trained, certified and obtain tools for her trade, the trade of building Native American communities. I was able to locate various samples of her writing, including an Anthropology paper, her undergraduate capstone, a short story and poem among other artifacts associated with her development as a writer, researcher, historian and professional

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Tribal analyst, planner and administrator. She, like me, held diverse roles in the community and remained nimble, versatile and applied her technical skills toward creating capacity within large organizational systems, not shying away from the challenges.

Through the storytalk and storywork, it is evident that values systems have remained intact and have been a foundation of the survivance and hope that narrowly secured a future for our Tribal nation to persist. Personal values and associated behaviors can be one of the most prevalent ways that Native people criticize someone whose behavior shows degradation of good teachings. They do so by inquiring about who their teachers were in life, if they learned traditional ways, or if they were taught right. Stories teach. Stories guide. Stories govern. Indigenous people have naturally always integrated story as a primary educational tool that carries forward ways of knowing and ways of being. We have relied on our stories to carry us and this research will show that we must continue to do so in each of our family circles.

Data Analysis

Dunbar (2008) relates that stories rest upon voice and are indications that our “power was [never] willingly surrendered” (p. 97). Through the community cafe process, I demonstrate the patterns and types of gatherings taking place at or around Nisqually Tribe, where participants are active contributors to voice and self-determination. Westernized data collection and interpretation, including in phenomenology, is fragmented and reductionist in that it breaks down lived experience and story into interrogation and works in contrast to interconnectivity (Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2021; McCloud, n.d., Simpson, 2017; Smith, 2021; Wilson, 2008). Simplifying discussions by coding methods can be extractive and can move research away from relational teachings and connection with cultural values, intergenerational teachings and the heartwork associated with relationships (Archibald, 2008b; Kovach, 2021; McCloud, n.d., Smith,

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2021; Wilson, 2008). For this reason, I sought opportunities where traditional forms of data analysis might align and found little synergy in that style of categorical strata to generate outcomes and findings toward meaning making.. Analyzing the storytalk and community engagement more holistically warranted my attention and most closely aligned with how our community uses and views the power of the voice and the healing in the messages.

Memorable Archival Documents (Frazier, 1973-Present)

Resume

In her resume, my Mom presents herself from a strengths-based perspective denoting in-depth training and education related to working with Native American populations, including health sectors, education, Community development, self-governance, and housing. She indicated her specialty skills were related to acknowledging and reinforcing the existence of her Tribe(s) and people and how they interrelate to the non-Indian world around them. To me, this speaks of understanding the combination of a macro and micro dynamics of Indigenous people's ways of knowing and being in the world as they navigate complex landscapes and challenges in an oppressive society. She portrayed resistance to the narrative and to the norms of academic institutions and the wider community among reservations and surrounding resource agencies.

Job Application

Mom wanted to work for the Puyallup Tribe; however, when applying, she could immediately see that the hiring Director was intimidated by an educated Tribal Member entering the workforce; she presented a threat to his tenure. Her approach was to immediately assure this non-Native male that she did not want his job. As a result, they developed a strong work relationship based on trust and the understanding that she was not a threat to his position.

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Short Story

Her brilliance in the command of the English language is quite astonishing for me. She has a whimsical style in mixing culture, relationality and imaginative discourse. It is a wonderment that she did not publish her work or continue to create short stories based upon her lived experiences. She is equally as strong in verbal storytelling as she is in literary talent and can easily capture minds and hearts. In her specialty skills, she denoted “Experience with archives development and bilingual/bicultural training,” expressing her ease in communication and historical data. She grew up in Elders discussions using Chinook jargon and Lushootseed, including with first language speakers. She has a comfort in finding and creating meaning and expression through language, written and spoken, with humor and delight.

Capstone for B.A.S.

My mom writes with such purpose. The problem of practice for her remained the erasure of our Nisqually people. She recalled writing in high school about how Indians were distinguished by either reservation Indian or urban Indian, the underlying motive being the positioning of others into marginalization and further fragmentation. Moving into pre-college study and post-secondary education, including the birth of what became American Indian Studies programs, she reveled in the opportunity for resistance, re-storying, and counter-narrative through literary works. Before this time, her choices were anthropology or history. She eventually earned a degree in Applied Behavioral Sciences and a Bachelor of Science degree at UC Davis.

Her research inquiry arose from working with the curator at Washington State Museum, Delbert McBride, a relative that she refers to as an uncle. While working on Indian Health Boards and Indian Education boards, she conducted research at the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ area offices in

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the region, Brigham Young University, the Smithsonian Institute, and the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. This work was important to her because no one knew much about the Nisqually and Puyallup people after having lost their allotments due to the development of the Port of Tacoma and due to the development of Fort Lewis during World War I, World War II, they condemned the land. (personal communication, December 30, 2025)

She noted the ongoing theft of the lands by commercial ports, farmers, and military bases, calling it “developments in agriculture and economic development, in general, civilization” (personal communication, December 30, 2025). The critical need to collate resource materials led to many Tribal projects. She developed a bibliography in 1973 and went on to complete interviews related to Nisqually lands and occupation that same year, concluding with the Boldt⁸ Decision in 1974, appeals, affirmations, and the 1979 upholding of this ruling. The Tribe also used historical information in 2010 in a dispute over State compacts with Tribes, and again in 2014 during a dispute over usual and accustomed fishing rights. Nisqually is set to begin a new dispute that will again revisit many of the writings located in her bibliography.

It is important to note that my Mom’s master’s thesis from Sonoma State and D-Q University are not presently available for review; therefore, this document is referred to in this study based solely on Mom’s recollection and her personal documents. It is our goal and intention to locate her papers, to publish these papers, and for her to write a dissertation.

Graduate School Statement

My mom applied for and entered a master’s degree program in American Indian Studies with a concentration in Ethnic Studies. The statement she wrote in July 2000 was a statement that she could have written for entry into this EdD program. It is contextualized in a way that

⁸ The Boldt Decision, otherwise referred to as the Fish Wars court case, is a case in which the Nisqually Tribe fought for their Treaty Rights to hunt and fish in usual and customary places.

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represents everything we are focused on as guiding values and targeted learning outcomes. She was writing to the university but when I read it, I felt like she was writing to me. She was writing in futurisms, well advanced and representative of our connection and how I am carrying out the same Indigenous research methodologies in connection with and in relation to our Nisqually people. The serendipity is remarkable.

Anthropology Paper

This paper, “The Re-emergence of the Dream: The Nisqually Tribal Exhibit,” was written for a college course, Anthropology 596, at Oregon State University. This paper expressed her views on archival photography project and how it was organized. What was so poignant about the paper was seeing the working draft in her handwriting where she laid out the ideas. The draft is much longer and in more detail than the actual paper itself. The draft tells so much more about her perspective and the emotional side of ethnographic and historian work. I also enjoyed that my father brought me the resource books that my mom referenced in her work so I have the articles and book chapters that she drew on as resources. It placed me in her shoes for a moment, as a researcher and anthropologist, as well as an activist in historical preservation to bring back the Nisqually identity, helping us understand who we are as a people. The description of the scholarship she produced and my experience reading her working draft does not adequately relay the profound experience of learning from her and getting to know her as a student, researcher and community healer. Her praxis has certainly evolved into some of our greatest historical assets and she was able to predict the problem of complacency and colonial behaviors interfering with our generational knowledge transfer. If there is one writing that I could help her publish, this might be the one.

Kautz Journal (1978)

It was a peculiar experience to read about one of my grandfathers who married into the Nisqually Tribe, August Valentine Kautz, son of German immigrants, a soldier in the Civil War, and student at West Point. It is not often that I reflect upon my non-Native roots and bloodlines as various emotional, social, and political undercurrents attempt to place us in a binary struggle of insider or outsider. Thoughts about blood quantum cause liminality to appear and it becomes a destructive force of erasure and fragmentation. These are difficult conversations and contemptuous thoughts to have regarding how we identify within ourselves and whether or not we really know who we are and where we come from. It is rather jarring to ingest new materials like this one.

My grandfather writes of his arrival at Fort Steilacoom and his first views of the Nisqually delta, “the clear surface of the water was marked by the light gliding of Indians in their canoes, spearing for fish, of which there was great abundance. They filled their air with their wild discordant songs.” It revealed the poetry of Indian life, to which the many stern realities bear a sad contrast, and the poignant words strike me as much as it is to know he was a soldier who battled our Indian nations and helped settle the region, interrupting the beautiful life we held before colonization. What a wretched pain to feel, reading and knowing this past. I read it and I paused to catch some semblance of who I am and who we were in this past reflection. He looked upon the land and loved it as I do today. I literally go to the water and admire the Olympic, the Cascades, the waterflow and the serenity that surrounds us that he calls “the romance of the surroundings” (p. 5). He speaks about what we speak about today, that our food and sustenance make us rich and this abundance is a key feature of the lands and people (p. 12). What I found interesting is the unspoken dependence that the settlers had on the Indians of the area for

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directions, escort, food sources and support in general. He called our grandmother Kate his companion and she was referred to as his Indian wife, a regular occurrence but not one that was recognized as a part of his formal life, something marginalized, extorted and later abandoned.

Family Letters

I grew up in a household with a lot of multicultural music, books, reading and writing; however, we refrained from having a television for most of our childhood. We were avid letter writers and checking the mail was a favorite pastime as a child, a chore we did for our family, but one that created shared joy in anticipation of the mail delivery system and what connections it held to our family. A part of our historical records are the letters received and held precious. In reviewing my parents' records, I found that their document retention was very similar to my own. Interpersonal communications are even more vibrant and storying than something written as a historical document. It was mesmerizing to read the rich texture of sharing one's life, emotion, and current events, especially as it relates to school, Tribal rights, and sovereignty matters. My parents being activists meant that a lot of their dialogue was related to fighting against injustice and working toward radical solutions. Questioning the system was a norm and sign of the times. There were letters spanning from well before my birth into my childhood, so many reflections to re-imagine myself in that era and to make me wonder what was written to them in advance or in return of their letters. These knowledges are insightful and relevant to this study. It is also reassuring that change is possible and that we must keep pushing past our limitations in the interest of our Tribal communities.

I cannot express how much I have taken away from reading and re-reading these letters. I knew they were there but I had only read them with minimal interest over our lives. Reading them as connections to the past and lessons for the future, there was so much depth and context

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to how we use words and story for teachings. When I look out at my own family, I see how important interrelatedness is and how relationship does not only exist in person, but through distances, through tools, words, story and into thoughts and prayers offered. The letters have been so formidable in my understanding of where we stood in the past, creating foundations for the work of today and how we formulated our outlook, our stance and our resistance. These pathways led us to the healing praxis of today. With my parents' permission, I hope these words are archived and read to their family members because it is so important to know our people in contextual ways and different dimensions, and to know the work they did for their future generations.

Allotment Interviews

Erasure has negatively impacted historical records and archival preservation. In my parents' quest to build community, it became imperative to know and understand the past. Oftentimes, they relate that there was so little information available. They were only able to reconstruct small portions and it was tedious work, requiring travel and requiring monies that they did not always have. They had old documentation on photocopies and sometimes only microfilm. We now have the internet but not everything has been digitized; this makes it difficult to access. This material is what my parents consider the most precious of family records. They delineate not only original allotment of property but also Tribal affiliation, blood quantum, and familial relations. The part that most resonates with me is the life experiences that were relayed and reported about family members, some of them I knew in my lifetime.

Photography & Portraiture

The precious value of photos as archival records is immense. My father held photography as a hobby and has contributed to many decades of photo history for both California Tribes and

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Washington Tribes becoming Tribal record and retained for historical purposes. My mom specifically wrote and fulfilled grant work associated with photography collections for Native Tribes. One of her documents contained in her records is the grant work for photos collection, the photo release process she used and publications she generated using some of the photos that were released in trust to my mom. This project, specifically called “The Nisqually Exhibit” which was the start and birth of the Nisqually Archives collection, consisted of studio quality photographic reproductions, and entailed the participation of 24 families. My mom details that it was a job that was temporary, part time, and no one wanted to do and so in terms of heartwork, she entered that space with the right frame and perception. This work was for her community. I was not able to scan the publications into record and will have to take them to a professional service to make copies of her community photo newsletters.

Community Grounded Praxis - Gathering Nisqually Stories

tiit ʔaʔ k^w(i) bək^w stab g^wəʔluwiəx^wsəx^w ʔal tiit ʔustali(l)s

“If someone is greedy they will lose everything in the end.” – Nisqually Traditional Ways (2024, pp. 32-33).

Community cafe forums are a space and location for qualitative data generation, designed as small-group dialogue with informal conversational dialogue. Outcomes can vary with the design of the sessions and what the purpose, goals, intents and conversational guides are. Additionally, groups can identify a set of norms associated with the space that support relationality. Figure 9 describes the generalized locations where community gatherings took place. where Cafe-type activities garnered a deeper level of dialogue within participants. A key feature of this gatherings was refreshments. As noted, Indigenous people give and provide for others as a form of hospitality. This is part of the traditional way of building community.

Figure 9

Community Connections in Educational Settings

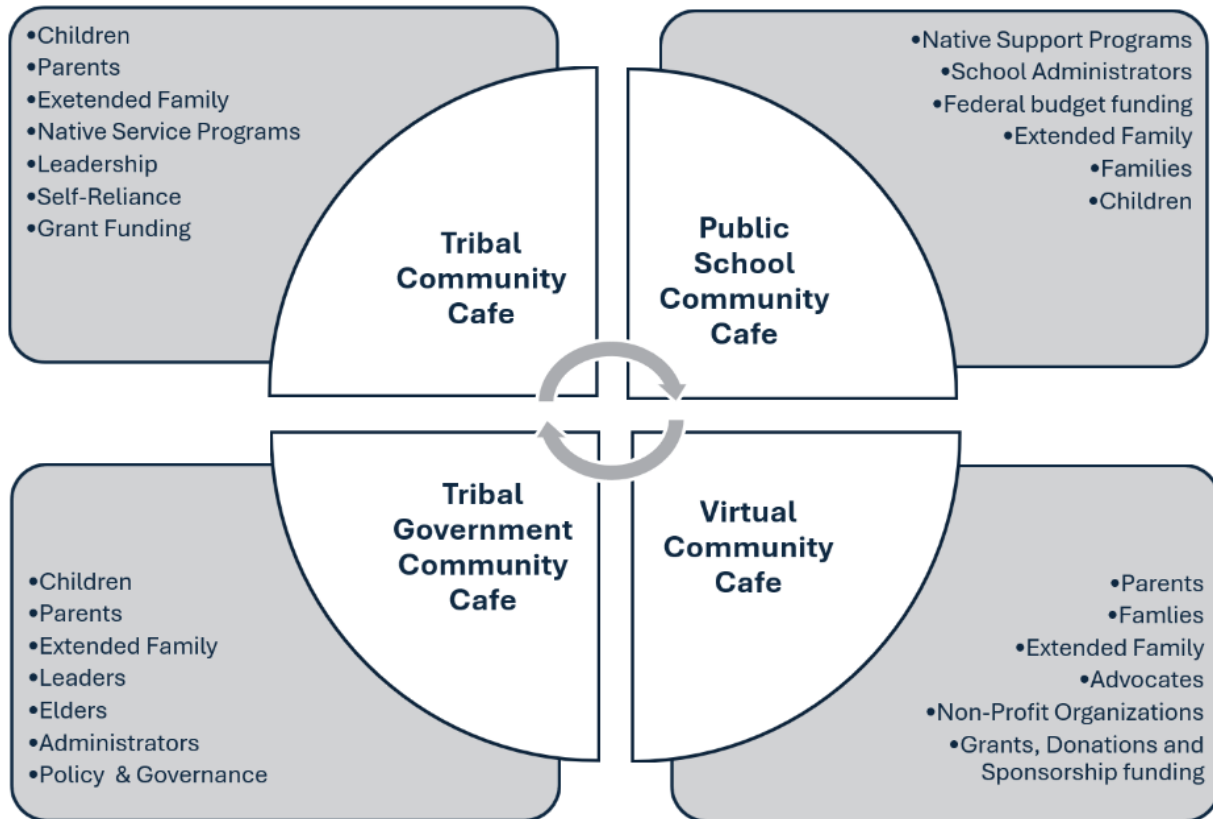


Figure 10

Community Cafe Groups, Settings and Data Types

<i>Type/Style</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Participant Group</i>	<i>Data</i>
Virtual Native Community Café <i>“Urban Indigenous Futures”</i>	Online Zoom local non-profit organization online social media	Indigenous Families Native, Pacific Islander, Indigenous and Latinx relatives of the South Puget Sound	Storytalk Talking Circle
Virtual Native Women’s Community Café <i>“Coffee Chat”</i>	Online Zoom local non-profit organization online social media	Women leaders in capacity for policy-making, balancing family and career	Storytalk Talking Circle
School District Community Café <i>“Shaping the Future of the Native American Education Program”</i>	In-Person at the local elementary school and at the Tribal Office meeting room Yelm School District	Children, Parents, Family, Tribal Leaders, Educational Leaders, Support staff, Educators	Storytalk Food
School District Community Café <i>“Native American Café”</i>	In-Person at the local public high school, off-reservation North Thurston School District	Children, Parents, Family, Tribal Leaders, Educational Leaders, Support staff, Educators	Storytalk Talking Circle Food
Tribal Service Department Community Café <i>“Education Center Open House”</i>	In-Person at the Tribal Education Center, open house introducing services On-reservation	Children, Parents, Family, Tribal Leaders, Educational Leaders, Support staff	Parent Surveys Storytalk Food
Tribal Youth Council	In-Person at the local Youth Center On-reservation	Youth, students from surrounding local schools/districts	Storytalk Food
Tribal Community Café <i>“Pulling Together for Success”</i>	In-Person at the local Youth Center On-reservation	Nisqually Reservation Communiyt-at-Large	Parent Surveys Food

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*ʔəshikʷcəb tiit lułluł gʷəl səshaydxʷ həlgʷəʔ bəkʷ stab ʔaqid həlgʷəʔ xʷiʔ kʷ(i) səsjiwʷbicəbs
həlgʷəʔ sʔaqid həlgʷəʔ dʷixʷ ʔal tiit qa ʔacittalbiʷ*

We respect the old ones for their wisdom; they are not cast aside but continue to hold a place of honor in our families and communities. - Nisqually Traditional Ways (2024, p. 32-33)

Storywork - Virtual Native Community Cafe

Part of this study was exploratory in nature as we worked to identify ways of gathering stories that would be conducive to family and community engagement, knowing that people are busy. In response, I participated in “Urban Indigenous Futures” (see Figure 11), a program that invites families to “spend time talking about lived experiences in the community, what feels missing or needed, and what people hope to see for Indigenous families, youth, elders, and future generations” (email correspondence, 2026)

Figure 11

Urban Indigenous Futures Virtual Gathering



Storywork - Virtual Indigenous Women Cafe

For this study, I connected with Native Women Launch (see Figures 12 & 13). Because of both matriarchy in Tribal Leadership and the experience I have in women’s leadership roles, I wanted to understand the importance of drawing together women’s leadership support systems and how vital they are for coalescing community work groups. Native Women Launch recently started a non-profit that empowers Indigenous entrepreneurs through culturally-grounded business education, leadership development and financial knowledge. Their mission is to “...empower ambitious Indigenous women to reach their full potential by providing the mentorship, resources, and community they need to thrive” (Native Women Launch, n.d.) I was particularly interested in intergenerational healing and economic sovereignty as they relate to healing praxis and building community agency through leadership. One commonality I found is

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within the matriarchal groups; they are firmly based on traditional Indigenous worldviews and grounded in culturally-based values systems. All of the above are similar in that manner leading women toward capacity growth and healing praxis.

Figure 12

Native Women Launch Coffee Chat



Figure 13

60-Day Goal Setting



Storywork - Non-Tribal School District A (half of Nisqually community) Cafe

The Nisqually reservation is split between two school districts. The old housing neighborhoods, originating through the 1980s back are part of the original reservation school district to the East of Nisqually Reservation. The areas located in the newly built neighborhoods to the West, including Cuyamuca Village and Nisqually Valley. are in the second school district. While this strains families as they move inter-district, this also strains intergenerational family dynamics for siblings, parents, grandparents and cousins who would normally, and traditionally, grow up together and attend school together have different school calendars and sports programs.

I, along with four siblings, all attended elementary, middle and high school in district A. I returned to this district as a graduate student doing community grounded praxis and reestablished a connection with the school that I graduated from. An inherent challenge is that there is no opportunity for the two districts to collaborate or to serve this independent community that is

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severed and fragmented in terms of educational services. Moving past the physical boundaries there remains a lack of effort on the part of the districts to break down barriers, and/or to establish and maintain meaningful dialogues with the Tribal government, Tribal educational programs, and the community. The District A prefers to maintain a very linear and sterile approach versus an organic, relational and community-driven approach.

Community cafe gatherings formulated prior to the study ramped up during the research period when the school district attempted to pass several funding levies. Even through their hardship, they did not come to the Tribe for advocacy in gaining support for the levies. Their approach to the Tribe was to brace for how services would further decline and at no time did we become a partner in the project. The relationship remains contentious but there is hope that the districts and the Tribe can work together to co-create meaningful change.

Over time, the community cafes have evolved from parent committee meetings to Tribal government-to-government consultations and each time, marked by performative conversations and information taken out of context and applied without real change in teaching and learning. Two key indicators of this in district A is that it has the longest historical tie to the Nisqually Tribe and its residents (my granddad, my Mom and I all graduated from this district), and secondly, it is in a rural setting, less urbanized but subject to urban sprawl and growth. This district is also in a pressurized space of being at the county border with mixed voting boundaries, but a small-town requiring infrastructure to support a growing population.

Storywork - Non-Tribal School District B (the other half of Nisqually Community) Cafe

Approximately two-thirds of the Tribal community population is served by District B, to the West of the Nisqually reservation. As noted, generations before me graduated from District A, the smaller district. I, however, purchased my home on the West end of the Nisqually

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reservation and in doing so raised my children in District B. My familiarity with this district is from the perspective of a parent, extended family, and community member at-large. It has been beneficial that I approach this study from knowledge gained as a student, parent, and a concerned/interested community member.

This district is more urbanized, serving a larger, more diverse population and understandably has a closer connection with the OSPI office than other school districts and Tribes that rely upon their district for education of their Tribal Members. This district is highly versatile and nimble in their collaborative measures and have been subject to a growing partnership with the Nisqually Tribe over the last decade. This district has established formalized government-to-government consultation at bi-annual special board meetings, one hosted by the district and the other hosted by the Tribe in reciprocity. Relationships have flourished strengthened over the years because of commitment and shared vision.

This district has a history of community cafe work on a quarterly basis, normally with specific topics to address, and 2026 was the Native American Café (see Figure 14). The structure of their community cafes is formalized to recognize community voice.

Figure 14

2026 Community Cafes



2026 Community Cafés

Native American Café
February 19 | 5:30 to 8 pm
River Ridge High School
350 River Ridge Dr., SE
FREE SALMON DINNER!

Join the conversation!

The Community Café approach provides a safe, welcoming space for families, students, staff, and community partners to participate as equals in conversations that value reciprocity and honor everyone's contributions.

Join us to share ideas about how NTPS can continue to grow the culture of inclusion and equity within NTPS.

What to expect:

- A free meal at 5:30 pm
- Adults and students 14 and older will participate in the adult Café
- Students ages 5-13 will participate in the youth Café
- A "harvest of ideas" for supporting students and families
- Interpreters available upon request

Register at:
<https://ntps.news/cafereg>



Storywork - Tribal Program Cafe

The Nisqually Indian Tribe has begun to revamp its government and administrative programs to assess, evaluate, and improve their internal service to the community. There are many reasons for doing so, some of which are budgetary. Over the past 12 months our Tribe has faced the longest government shutdown in history, which resulted in a strenuous post-epidemic Tribal budget process to normalize government services impacted by the end of COVID-recovery dollars. In doing so, we are examining areas of redundancy, where streams of support and expenditure become obsolete, and areas of potential synergy, where we can gain more coverage by ensuring our service sectors are collaborating and building efficiencies. The education department is one of these areas that intersects with numerous other operational areas

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and has been designated as ineffective in establishing priorities, setting goals or reaching levels of high accountability for service delivery and optimization of allocated funds.

With a turnover in elected officials on Tribal Council and a newly structured Tribal Administration, more change is on the horizon. This began with recruitment of a new Education Director and a rebuild of the Education Center, staff training and development, and community public hearings to roll out the design and program components. Reintroducing the service department to the Tribal membership and community is an important first step in redesign. We need their input and feedback to ensure we are focusing on a foundation for a strong Tribal support system (See Figures 15 & 16). In addition to the community gathering, I collected specific survey feedback through individual talks with parents on an anonymous basis (see Parent Survey – Appendix E). I found not asking them for identifying information was the optimum way to collect more candid feedback without fear of reprisal. There is work to be done to ensure that the program creates interconnectivity throughout the Tribe and centers students and parents in their vision for how the Tribe can honor their needs and their voice. This study examines the connection between the responsiveness of the Tribe to the community and how this is the crux of creating real, tangible change in the learning capacity and learning environments we entrust our students to outside of the reservation and community, where all factors are within our control. The influence of the Tribe and our partnership with school districts will be our greatest educational challenge as Tribal leaders.

Figure 15

Nisqually Education Open House

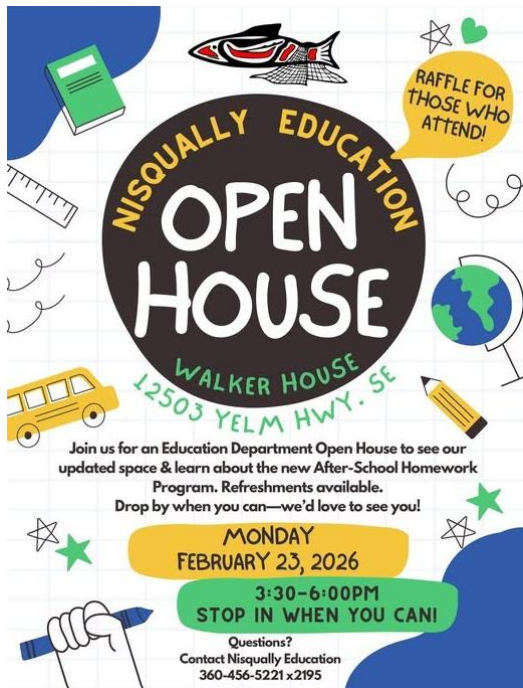
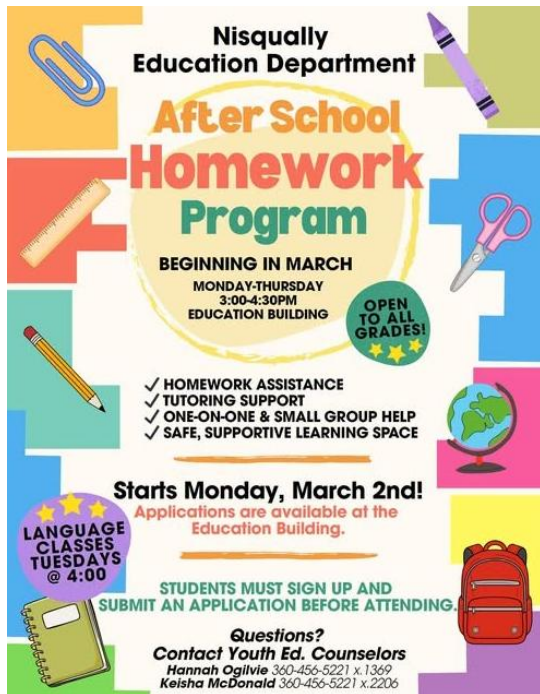


Figure 16

Nisqually Education Department After School Homework Program



Storywork - Youth Council Cafe

The Nisqually Youth Council (see Figure 17) is an after-school club open to all community youth to create a collective presence and voice for the next generation of leaders within the Tribe. This group is facilitated by a Youth Council Coordinator (new to the position of supervision) and Youth Center Director. This group is modeled after the UNITY⁹ framework for youth councils. The group is new, the facilitator is newly assigned this responsibility, and this is Nisqually's second time trying to institute a youth council to represent the Tribe. Their meetings are weekly, Wednesday nights at 6pm. I signed up with my son and I am a parent observer and a Council delegate to engage with the group. In our Nisqually Tribal Code there exists a Tribal Law, Ordinance Title 2¹⁰ - Committees, which states that

The public's trust in their government may be sustained only as long as the public remains involved in the deliberations essential to responsible decision-making by that government. The Tribal Council wishes to preserve this public trust by openly seeking advice, ideas and recommendations from the Nisqually Tribal Community. (Nisqually Indian Tribe, 2014)

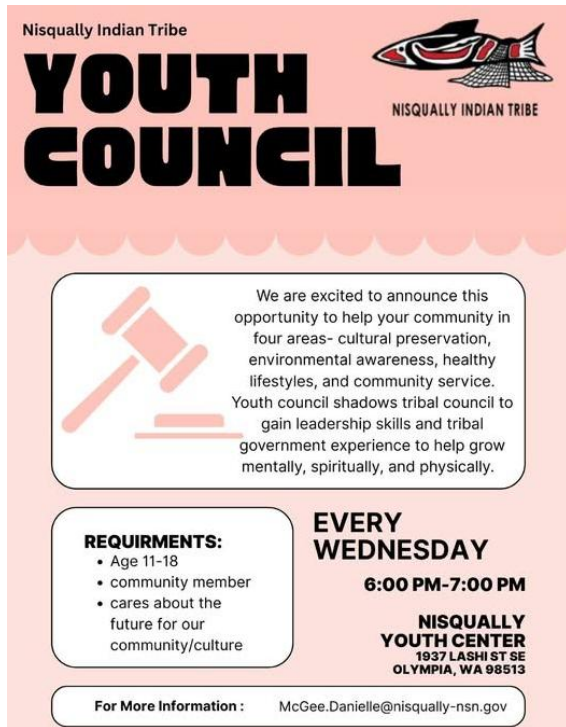
The Youth Council is recognized as a formal Tribal committee group. It is one attempt to introduce young leaders to parliamentary protocols for meeting to conduct business, and in my view to learn the wide array of areas that require attention for a community to grow.

⁹ UNITY is a national network organization promoting personal development, citizenship, and leadership among Native American youth. <https://unityinc.org/>

¹⁰ Title 2 Committees law - [Title 2 - CommitteesAmendedFinal1014.pdf](#)

Figure 17

Nisqually Indian Tribe Youth Council



These meetings initially began with understanding what the youth feel would be valuable for their own learning, how they wish to give back to the community, and what they understand leadership to be. It is also important to note that the Youth Council has been a start and stop project that we are working to invigorate under the Youth Center so that it takes hold and can be a consistent presence in the community. I included this group in this inquiry because it is seeking to generate a level of connectedness with the community, organize with autonomy, collaborate intergenerationally, and contribute to the collective voice. I want this group to feel a sense of importance and responsibility, as well as the sense that their voice is heard and valued by Tribal leadership. In these interactions I play down my role as an elected member of Council; I attend as a parent of a youth, showing enthusiasm, support and presence. Who I am in these circles also changes and varies. I am a participant, a researcher, and a community member.

Storywork 3 - Tribal Community Cafe

Opportunities for connection with data through storytalk with the Tribal community are endless. As an elected Tribal leader, I am responsible for open meetings and community information flow. What this translates to is that the Tribe works with Administration to ensure regular and ongoing community gatherings, public hearings, general membership meetings, and weekly Tribal government meetings that are open and subject to open meetings laws¹¹ of the Nisqually Tribe. Our quarterly Pulling Together for Success community dinners (See Figures 18 & 19) are a space where resources intersect with access points through our Tribal departments, programs, and community services. This venue is for all agencies to participate in community outreach and it serves as a hub for resources, information, assistance and services.

For the research portion of this study, I greeted and spoke with all attendees. I asked participants questions (see Parent Survey – Appendix E) regarding their children’s educational experiences, their role, and any challenges they had experienced that might have required Tribal support. My approach with this interaction was to simplify, not ask for much in terms of logistics, and to alert them that future project work was impending, gaging their interest and laying a foundation for a grass-roots, community-driven pathway, returning to the power of the people and community.

¹¹ Title 1 Open Meetings law. See: [Title 1 Open Meetings And Conduct Of Officials.pdf](#)

Figure 18

Community Gathering



**Pulling Together
for Success
Community Resource
Gathering**

This month's event is held in collaboration with Nisqually Children and Family Services to honor winners of "Parent Recognition", as February is Parent Recognition month. Employment opportunities and educational support services are still available. Join us on...

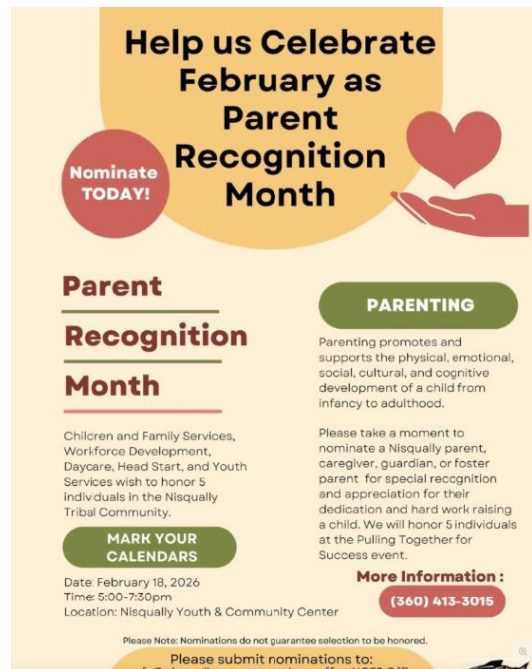
Wednesday, Feb 18th 2026
5:30-7:00 @ Nisqually Youth and
Community Center
1937 Lash St S.E. Olympia, WA 98513

NEW LOCATION!

This event is open to Tribal Members, Community Members and employees. For more information or to reserve a table contact Jesse Youckton-360-456-5237 ext. 2210 or Youckton.jesse@nisqually-nsa.gov

Figure 19

Parent Recognition Month



**Help us Celebrate
February as
Parent
Recognition
Month**

Nominate TODAY!

Parent Recognition Month

Children and Family Services, Workforce Development, Daycare, Head Start, and Youth Services wish to honor 5 individuals in the Nisqually Tribal Community.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Date: February 18, 2026
Time: 5:00-7:30pm
Location: Nisqually Youth & Community Center

PARENTING

Parenting promotes and supports the physical, emotional, social, cultural, and cognitive development of a child from infancy to adulthood.

Please take a moment to nominate a Nisqually parent, caregiver, guardian, or foster parent for special recognition and appreciation for their dedication and hard work raising a child. We will honor 5 individuals at the Pulling Together for Success event.

More Information :
(360) 413-3015

Please Note: Nominations do not guarantee selection to be honored.
Please submit nominations to: nf@nisqually-nsa.gov or drop-off at NCSF Office

Storywork as Data

In working to understand how Nisqually builds community around education, this study involved multiple forms of engagement with data sources including:

- a. Co-researcher collaboration with my mom, Mildred Rose McCloud
- b. Co-conspirator collaboration with my father, Allen Lee Frazier
- c. Talking Circles and Community Cafe forums
- d. Parent survey tools aiding storytalk dialogue

This study employed a heuristic inquiry, a qualitative, phenomenological methodology (Laverty, 2003) in which the intergenerational lived experience and storywork are the data generation. The knowledges ranging from traditional ways of the Nisqually to reflexivity in remembrances and archival study of past research, to current lived experience of community members allowed my theoretical understandings and interpretations to emerge through community praxis and relationality. This inquiry travels through dimensions of historical data, current data and futurisms that have yet to become the fabric of our community. It is within this hope and desire for better educational opportunities that leadership including parents and families standing together toward educational sovereignty to design and demand more from the systemic landscapes surrounding Nisqually.

The research methods are not indicators of precise data points as theoretical samples to be collected and drawn upon but are sites of connectedness and relationality that are meant to be reflected upon and engaged with as a part of the ways of knowing and being. One of the difficulties and what made me realize that I was changing my research methodology in this process is that it is not reductionist into a narrow phenomenon, but that the results of these community cafe gatherings are expansive, leading into iterations of findings that have potential

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to help us see past limitations. These gatherings are generative toward imagining Indigenous futurisms. The narrative framework that encapsulates the storywork and brings forward meaning is built through the hopes and dreams of the Tribal community.

Validity & Credibility

The framework of community-engaged research positions community cafe forums as legitimate research spaces where families engage in co-design and knowledges sharing toward a self-determined agenda. Rather than a researcher looking outside in, and participants as subjects of research, everyone is a collaborator bringing knowledges into the forum, aiming for collective understanding. Providing that we are examining the needs of the community together, this research rests on its origination by and with the community as its relevance. In 2023, the origination of the problem of practice was a fellow parent reaching out to me about a lateral violence experience where a Native person publicly disparaged her when she was elected to the school district Title VI program parent advisory committee (unnamed, personal conversation, 2023) and it was not addressed by the District, the Director, the Department program staff nor the school liaison who committed the assault and no apology was received. This immediately prompted me to engage with the school and assess my own interpretations about their community-led programs and the dialogue they maintain with our Tribal community and to review their self-reported compliance. It did not take long to understand that our community is accepting standards of mistreatment or marginalization without questioning the systemic structures and are being sidelined in terms of co-creation and collaboration. In all that we are learning as a doctoral cohort, none of this is ok. It became a part of my fabric of existence and quickly dovetailed into this research inquiry. This study further examines the relationality and constructs that neither tie or bind us to the school district and keep us on the outside of our

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children's learning experience. Alongside that parent who was harmed, I stand together in solidarity and in our innate power to engage.

Conclusion

There are more resources to tap into for engagement with my mom's work. We have more family archives in storage between California and Washington State. There are more libraries and archival records to search across the Nation. Even in Puyallup and Nisqually, they noted a desire and critical need to update the organizational capacity for processing and preserving materials that have not been archived to date. They are in the process of reviewing and adding new materials over time, denoting the painstaking and time-consuming process of working through the materials and ensuring we have the technical support and resources to do so. There is a need for Tribal communities to continue this work. In the meantime, on a more personal level, outside of my capacity as a Tribal leader, I must lead my family toward knowledge of what exists and how to protect it. What I can contribute as a leader within my family is to begin the process of sorting and segregating materials and to identify what exists. This project plan is already in motion by my Dad and only needs to move from physical to digital. These talks are happening with my parents in tandem through this research project.

The act of gathering knowledges is an immersive process because it is not separate from who I am as a Nisqually matriarch, elected Tribal leader and scholar within the University system. I live and breathe the praxis in seeking ways to heal and reconcile groups within our Indigenous community who at times can be their own worst enemy. It is a careful approach to identifying healing mechanisms that can build connection and understanding through identifying a strengths-based system around holistic worldviews. If we were to only listen to the deficit narrative, we would be convinced that there is no higher justice and no futurity for our future

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generations. By living the teachings offered by our ancestors through their survivance, we uncover these broken trails and see pathways toward a better and stronger future. The next chapter details how we can work through everyday interactions to uncover the beauty in our traditional ways of knowing and being through intergenerational collaboration.

CHAPTER 5: Reflections & Relational Meaning Making

slaḡiday' ʔə suq'abic g'wəl həlg'əʔ dx'wig'itubuł həlg'ə ʔal tiit wiw'sučəł

“All natural things are our brothers and sisters; they have things to teach us if we are aware and listen.” – Nisqually Traditional Ways (2024, p. 32-33).

This project worked to understand what Tribal community agency is and how we develop a sense and direction for self-determined education. First, we discovered who our community is to locate the research both geographically and in terms of our government relations and Tribal history, doing so through an examination of story and working with community leaders. We also examined the importance of power and positionality, envisioning the context that we are working within to understand the complexities surrounding the needs of the community with regard to education. Lastly, we worked toward praxis by creating a picture and pathway of using those knowledges in current projects and programs underway within the Tribal community. Our singular purpose was to address vulnerabilities within our population and to create safety in learning institutions, both on reservation and off reservation, for our children, parents and families.

This chapter represents the reflexive work in archival reviews with my Mom, which have been immensely helpful in understanding myself and how my worldview was shaped by my observations by the influence of my parents in the tumultuous eras that they navigate, shifting landscapes in educational policy, cultural revitalization, and community healing. This is, in essence, the past. This chapter also peruses a variety of community cafe gatherings where knowledges were shared through lived experiences with the purpose of examining educational policy, the value of culture and identity within educational institutions, and how healing is

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integrated into our work in present time and current events. A third purpose was related to educational leadership on a government-to-government basis in the present position I hold and my capacity to be a change agent for and within my community, the Nisqually Tribe. This is where I worked to understand levers, influences, and potential for critical change mechanisms that will propel the Tribe into frontiers that honor our own will to self-determine our futurity and that of our future generations.

Storywork 1 - My Mom, Mildred McCloud, Analysis & Findings

Mildred Rose McCloud was born April 22, 1947, to Frankie Augustine (Kautz) and George Hi McCloud Jr. in Tacoma, Washington, at the Cushman Indian Hospital. She descends from a Scotch-Irish war soldier who married into the Cowlitz-Puyallup Tribe(s) on her father's side and from a German army leader who married into the Nisqually Tribe on her mother's side.

Their ancestry began as a byproduct of colonization as the United States government migrated West to what is now the Pacific coast and the waterways where we reside today. In her research, my Mom traced her bloodlines back to the European countries from which part of us descend. While this study does not begin an inquiry about mixed race Indian people, it is not something we dispute nor something we concentrate on as we identify with the plight of our people on the reservations and within the socioeconomic boundaries of our Tribal communities. We also acknowledge the atrocities that come with our status as Tribal members.

This short paragraph, nor the study itself, capture depth of who my Mom is and how her life led to mine. She has a strong identity because she worked through the rigorous process of establishing her Indigenous positionality as a student and researcher in the exact same fashion that we are doing today. As she has done, so have I and so will our children and grandchildren.

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Passing along these knowledges, especially that of who we are and where we come from, will be the legacy we leave as Matriarchs.

My Parents' Remembrances

My parents faced a different challenge than the one we have today. They were brought up in a time of scarcity, where the basic needs of Indian people on reservations, off reservation, and those not enrolled or tied to a Tribe were lost without connection to land and place. In their early childhood, schools had just begun to transition from Indian mission type schools on/off reservation to integrated public schools, but that was not without resistance and hardships faced by those on the cold front, walking those first steps and facing brunt realities of internalized oppression and racial warfare. Recently my dad relayed his experience with integration efforts stating, “No one wanted us. The town didn’t want us. The school didn’t want us. The administrators didn’t want us. The teachers didn’t want us. The other kids didn’t want us. Nobody wanted us” (personal communication, 2026). Yet, the reservation children attended, entering doors that were not friendly, nor accommodating. There was little to enjoy and much to endure. Before this time, preceding generations attended church and school away from home at boarding schools to get their basic needs met. My parents attended school and church on the reservation in their own community. Still facing strife and a lack of resources and still relying upon the outside entities of church and state. This dependence has proven difficult to move away from, leaving autonomy out of reach for many.

The struggles were often times for the basic needs of children, including food, clothing, housing and safety, even from the elements. There was also a struggle for the emotional, physical, and spiritual safety necessary to catalyze a state of learning, one where their mental acuity and aptitude could be entrenched with new knowledges. Until those moments were

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afforded by outsiders, the opportunities were limited. My Dad also recalled how cultural teachings were stripped and deemed illegal until their adulthood. As an undergraduate student, certain music, dances and ceremonies were not allowed, often forgotten and hidden away. As a result, Native people were embarrassed to be recognized as Indigenous and sought to blend in, leading to assimilation, although it is impossible to be something you are not.

My Mom's Childhood Schooling

My Mom's experiences were not only similar but were actually the intentionalities that led my parents to their Civil Rights journey where policy began to change due to the force and will of people of color standing up for their identities and cultures to be recognized as part of the fabric that makes up community, and thereby schools. My Mom's childhood school is still standing and is a reflection of how communities emphasized the need for education and how education was provided within communities. A second location for much of her formalized education about survivance and systems was within the various church facilities, each having its own protocols to follow, each proclaiming to be better than the other, and each forsaking the outside world beyond the church. Being weighed, judged and evaluated for fitness as a human was an early lesson and the harsh reality was that they were told they were not good enough and had to continue to work to sustain their place in schools and to attain the greatness only offered to good people, smart people, white people. How and when they could reach this epitome of life, being and knowing as a Native person in a white world, white community, and white school was a mystery. Feeling whole and good enough was something they found at home within their family and Indigenous community.

My Mom and I have always had story sharing between us. It is our way of life to hear, listen, talk, and laugh. In Indigenous ways, humor is healing and a form of understanding that we

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as humans folly at times, with no regard to judging ourselves as failing, winning or conceding.

It's just a way of being; we accept our whole selves and are accepted by others around us.

During the storytalk about my Mom's experience moving through education, there were indeed times when she practiced resistance and pushed back upon the hegemonic forces that delivered less than what she was capable of undertaking. We have always been underestimated or devalued, despite the evidence of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Early insights with my Mom were the ways of intergenerational teachings, spiritual work, multi-linguistic connectedness between villages, athleticism as a physical standard of well-being, and many more teachings associated with the Tribe and other Indigenous groups.

My Mom's Post-Secondary Experience

Revisiting her works, especially her final project for the B.S. degree, the annotated bibliography, reminded me of the many talks with my parents during my upbringing about education. They discussed the way in which Westernized systems are devised so that we must learn their ways of knowing and being in order to excel. They spoke of this being true from Kindergarten and most certainly through high school and into college. They kept me apprised about how to work through these systems while not getting lost in them, always maintaining the importance of our real work as humans in staying connected to our lands, our people, and our spiritual selves.

Throughout her transition from high school to college, my Mom noted the difficulty of not having a precise area of study available. She worked within the systems available at that time to devise a strategy for documenting the presence of Nisqually people in their space and place. Although their lands had been gradually claimed and taken, their historical ties and ancestral use would be documented.

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My Mom also spoke of the various skills and practices she learned during this time related to research and ethnography, including how valuable it was to the current events and happenings at Nisqually-Puyallup in the various political eras. Her work on these projects utilized decolonized methods and conceptual frameworks regarding how historical work and documentation should be managed and preserved for Tribes as a basis of substantiating ancestral ties, to later be referenced as usual and accustomed way, denoting validity.

We indeed live in two worlds, one that we can control by honoring our traditional ways, and one we cannot control but can utilize the Westernized tools, systems, and frameworks to reframe and counterstory in our quest for better outcomes. What my Mom garnered, learned and developed led her to different stations and roles within the community that developed better programming toward educational, vocational, health and well-being as important components of community building. I believe she passed along these traits and knowledges to me over the years.

A challenge is to recognize the differences and to balance our strength and our priority in each area. It is not a horrible thing to understand Westernized ways; we just need to understand how to use this knowledge better and to balance the work with traditional teachings and values systems, especially when it comes to working within our community and how we relate to our own people. Westernized systems are not always healthy or supportive at the community level. My Mom's work has been both instrumental and pivotal in my own research, my work as a Tribal community leader, and how I contribute back to our community.

Continuation of My Mom's Research

I cannot help but understand that there is a continuity in my Mom's studies and her pathway that continues through me and the journey that led me where I am today. The deep dive and intimate time spent reading and re-reading her archival collections have intimated our

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similarities and explained a lot about myself that I had not realized – things that were passed down as intergenerational knowledges and understandings of the world. She was once and has many times been sitting in this seat that I am in now, a space of contemplation, critical inquiry and critical consciousness (Darder, 2011; Freire, 1970; Yellowbird, 2014). She has examined the world I am examining today, wondering how we can make critical shifts and changes to ensure the future of the generations coming behind us. The work is serious. The work is emergent. The work is from the heart.

Necessary Archival Work

In further speaking to my father, and working together through this project, we have only scraped the surface of the boxes he shared with me. He selected what he felt would be complimentary to my inquiry based upon my description. He provided me with such profound materials that I keep reading them to work through the sensations and the emotions of their meaning. I keep asking myself, how did I not know these things sooner. Why did I not realize her experiences more closely? But then I remind myself, I did know them. I lived them with her, alongside her, and with her. My Mom did not work in isolation; this is the life we lived together. I was only now seeing it on paper and the recollections were not only the pathway she walked but one that we created together. I will someday leave archival work and records similar to these for my children.

In closing, many of my mom's stories led to embattling racism and discrimination. In her community college transcripts, I noticed her high school Spanish credits as foreign language study; she told me a story about when she took Spanish in college. She was interested in Spanish, already having a basic fluency. Although she was very interested in Spanish and was a high performing student, the professor failed her in the course. She appealed to the Dean of the

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Spanish Language Department, who happened to be the husband of her Spanish Professor. Once he met with my Mom and discovered she was Native American, he apologized for his wife, stating that she is of Spanish descent and my mom was an *Indio*, meaning less than and undeserving. In other words, she was racist against Indian people. Being rejected and harmed, my Mom moved to studying French. She said, “that’s just the way it was back then” (M. McCloud, personal conversation, 2026). Unfortunately, these stories didn’t end there.

The problem of practice is that I have experienced similar scenarios throughout my life. My children have experienced the same. I anticipate my grandchildren will be embattled in spaces much like those we suffered and survived. I hope to provide a sense of security that when they are faced with such adversity, they have a strong spirit and good words that take them beyond any obstacles they may face. Their courage and might will be a result of key knowledges about systems that are meant to break down the marginalized.

The next section outlines the community gatherings by identifying learnings and takeaways from each community café. My approach to each cafe was organic and depended upon my role in the space, as well as the teachings and learnings I have lived through under the wings of my grandmothers and mother, the matriarchs of my life and family. These gatherings are the lived experiences work that is archived to be passed down as knowledges to those who come behind me.

Storywork 2 - Community Cafes Analysis & Findings

Each community cafe demonstrated their effectiveness in balancing power and equity toward Native educational sovereignty for the Nisqually Tribe and toward co-creating educational environments and experience for their children, parents and families. I included

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community cafés spanning from a distance, including virtual and off-reservation, moving inward to community and Tribe. In general, these lessons apply:

- Sessions take time - more often relational work and storytalk, not always simply research but it is about creating a relationship that supports knowledge sharing
- Give grace, accept grace - we fumble through the formality to get to a comfort zone
- Stop the hurry up and be done already - remove urgency and accept natural pace of relationship building
- Depressurize zones - relieve lateral violence tendencies and prioritize traditional values, practice lateral kindness and intergenerational healing

In this section, I shared the experience through engaging with each type and style of community cafe, gatherings that collected and collated community voices toward agency and decision-making capacities and changemaking.

Storywork - Virtual Native Community Forum

The knowledge I gathered from the virtual Native forum is the value of grounding the gathering in a sense of spiritual connection and honor by recognizing those in the room. I understand that this can be done without actually being in the room and through good facilitation. One of the lessons that I learned from lived experience with my parents and from the Urban Indigenous Futurities experience was a reminder that that work is not about ease or convenience. Instead, it is important to be mindful and intentional about how access points are established before joining space together and working to establish relationships that are conducive to the sharing of space, place, and ways of knowing and being. Engagement and participation would stifle without the pause and reflection about who we are and why we are

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present. Being in a virtual environment and making this organic connection happen was quite impressive.

Through watching my parents engage with students, parents and families throughout my life, I saw them facilitate spaces and places where there was acceptance, positive energies and a feeling of pride in being Indigenous. They were radical; however, they were kind and gracious and welcoming. They gave me a sense of value for the kinds of diversity that exist in families and in communities. They also gave me the skill to notice differences and to value differences. Being very reserved and introverted, social queues are hard for me to deliver but easy for me to detect. I have applied this within my own home, academic work, with my children, and in my work in Tribal training and development with Nisqually. Working with this knowledge in hand will ensure that future group work and collective community projects have the time and care necessary to do good work. In her community work, Harjo (2019) utilized a formidable exercise called “Prouds and Sorrys” where people voiced very interpersonal proclamations to their community. These proclamations both washed away contention and offered healing praxis, creating connection and understanding between people who might otherwise have been fragmented through intergenerational harms. This is in essence intergenerational healing praxis and part of what we are working to accomplish. To create power and agency, we must first be willing to and able to work together.

When working to convene community gatherings aimed at developing self-determined educational policies and resources at Nisqually, it will be important to create spaces in which people feel welcomed and comfortable sharing their stories, knowing they are a part of a bigger system that will not settle for less for our children. In doing so, will be compelled as a Tribe by this sense of collective power and powerful voice.

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Storywork - Virtual Indigenous Women Findings

With the hope of designing community forums that lead to healing praxis and capacity building, I engaged virtual forums that drew on the element of easy access, reaching people in ways that give them a sense of participation and engagement and taking the ease off everyday life and stressors. I designed a regional parent committee comprised of families from all surrounding school districts that serve Nisqually Tribal community including the two public school systems, a Puyallup Tribe BIE Tribal School K-12, the Frank's Landing BIE elementary and junior high school serving K-8, and surrounding districts where our membership reside in local districts. The goal was to establish a hub centralized at the Tribe and to have capability for outreach and interconnection. The vision is that when a parent needs help or assistance, we are reachable and responsive and they do not have to wonder where to turn for the aid. The successes of virtual platforms and group connection will be a part of growing connections. I anticipate potential quarterly in person regional parent committee dinners supplemented by monthly virtual gatherings without pulling parents away from their homes and already pressing schedules. It is positive to note and quite delightful that as I surveyed parents, I was mostly in contact with fathers and will elaborate on those parent surveys in the next section.

Storywork - Non-Tribal School District A

The key takeaway from the Native family forum is that some external parties are unwilling to truly adopt culturally-grounded and community-engaging practices despite efforts by the Tribe to apply resources toward a collaborative relationship. This school district has proven repeatedly that they provide only performative measures, remain in safe zones, resist true participation, and create false narratives to protect their image. Almost every negative form of interaction is displayed. Takeaways are that in order to survive this marginalization, we must

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protect ourselves through defensive tactics, such as creating counter-narrative. The lesson here is that a desperate school district and one that is renowned for its “generational racism” (Native program liaison, personal conversation, 2025), will act egregiously to prevent inclusivity and co-creation. In many cases, they had nothing to lose and everything to gain yet purposefully created barriers to community-driven and tribally-driven collaboration. Of course, our children stand to lose connection in this school district alarming part is that the school also stands to lose as well but they are not equating or attaching any value to the relationship with Nisqually Tribe and how it could endeavor to help them financially or otherwise.

My interactions with this district began two years ago, in the midst of my community grounded praxis, as I approached the Native student support program to find out what types of services they were offering to students. At the time, the program was rich, diverse and interactive, leading to engaging and thoughtful family activities as well as in-person weekly touch points with students in the five schools within the district. Unfortunately, the school administration has used a challenging political and budget situation to abandon their commitment to Native education and to allow program support to collapse. The finding is that despite a commitment on the Tribe’s part we may need to consider more drastic alternatives such as running for political office, requesting a seat on the school board or even annexation from this district altogether.

Storywork - Non-Tribal School District B

My greatest takeaway from this gathering focused on Native families was that the best and most formidable method of using conversation is to allow it to be organic in a way that is determined and drawn out by those in conversation. This means that an agenda would not contain precise talking points but conversation starters and the feedback is open, free and without

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constraints. This school, although once a subject of my problem of practice has demonstrated commitments made and met by the administration and their program services.

The difficulty that I find is that they are very exclusive to who they will allow within the Native family circle and they become defensive and uninviting to any parent or family that asks critical questions. However, they remain very friendly to those that contain their engagement to the safe zones that do not challenge the balance of power and agency within dominant systems. A shortcoming that I see is that there are no Nisqually community parents on the parent committee. The Native program staff are from Tribes outside of our locale. Input into the program only contains input from Non-Nisqually parents, families, administrators.

I have had challenges requesting to join their Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), challenges in asking to volunteer, challenges in asking to participate in work groups on Native student projects, and problems being recognized as a Tribal community interested party in general. Other parents have indicated to me that they are also unwelcome in these spaces (e.g., being asked to resign, personal attacks, verbal assaults by school personnel). As an example, in reviewing the planning document for our 2026 Native American Community Café Hosting Guide, the committee did not include me on the Host Team, nor in the list of Community or Committee members although I was on the planning team. They only listed me in the Roles section as a food server. This is after I had been coordinating contact with the school for several years, having been a school district parent for over 10 years, and engaging with their PAC for the past three years. I remain conveniently forgotten as the only Nisqually, in a school that operates on Nisqually Traditional lands, and as a representative of the only Tribal Government that has a government-to-government bi-annual special board meeting. Despite my interest in engaging and staying informed and involved, the microaggressions and slights create large gaps in service and

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connection to the Nisqually community, not only for me but for the families at large. During my parent surveys, one Nisqually parent, who had experience on this PAC, described it as being “chaos” (personal communication, parent survey, 2026).

During this Community Café, there were only two Nisqually members present. I was a parent/community volunteer and the other was a Native student in high school. In spite of outreach and advertising to recruit registered participants, there were very few Indigenous families and students; none were Nisqually. It was a very telling experience as to what is targeted and what is achieved compared to what is touted as connected and interrelatedness of this District to their host Tribe, the Nisqually Indian Tribe. Of all the community cafes, this one was the most intricate in terms of planning and design. It was also the least Indigenous in its execution and participation. Our review meeting to assess the feedback received is scheduled at a later date, after this manuscript is finished.

Storywork - Tribal Program

Education has traditionally been identified as one of five core priorities for the Nisqually Tribe: Elders, Youth, Health, Housing and Education. The education department and education programs under Tribal administration are important for our capacity to ensure effective educational services for our children. There are many factors that relate to the functionality of this arm of the Tribe. In the span of a decade, approximately 2010 to 2020, the Tribe went through an intense period of economic growth and financial capacity. When this happens to any organization, it can be difficult to change and adjust to a complex organization. This is the case with education. The education program was stagnant in its policy and provisions over that period of time.

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During the period of community grounded praxis, the year preceding this research inquiry, I facilitated an educational policy review for updates and recommended changes, doing so as a community member and student, not as a part of the elected leadership. The way I approached that project was to interject myself as a guest at an open Tribal Council meeting where education in general was a topic. The Tribal Council recognized me as a guest, giving me an opportunity to speak about my experiences as a graduate student. I noted that we have had doctoral students leave the program due to tuition and that their loss was a travesty, considering their brilliance and their future work. At that point, the power of community voice, a single voice, in this case, proved to be powerful. That single voice was a catalyst for change. The experience of working through the policy update created a pathway for me to understand the need for policy updates, government and tribal leadership capacity, and how critical policy analysis is to the Tribal educational system. This study grew out of this experience as well as dreams and hopes for a stronger future, including community voice and charging leadership with governance that creates positive shifts and change.

Finding myself on the other side of the system, as an elected official, charged with governance, those same factors play a role in the work we are tasked with completing and the change we seek to accomplish. We are still responsible for listening to and understanding community needs and community voice and for envisioning how to bring their hopes and dreams to life, securing our collective futures and ensuring the materialization of tangible positive outcomes in education.

Storywork - Youth Council Findings

Immediate takeaways from this group are observations around who speaks and how they conduct themselves. This brings me back to my own youth and upbringing. There was such a

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mixture in the room with these young adults who were learning about educational, administrative and governance systems. The future of leadership depends on piquing their interests, but that is not new and not due to a program being implemented. This is the way of our people to foster and encourage curiosity and to make learning safe and unfearful of making mistakes. Our way is to find humor in small missteps and to bring humility and joy into the learning parts of our lives.

Youth Council began much like our doctoral program, by first self-identifying, knowing ourselves better, and thinking about what leadership is, what it looks like, and how to do it. Our youth council creates space for our style of learning and teaching, one without repercussions and one that fosters confidence and results in strong traditional values-based behaviors and leadership skills honed on contributions to the greater good of community, humanity and the world around us.

Storywork - Tribal Community

The primary takeaway from this event is that families are indeed seeking assistance in many areas of their lives, not only with school relationships and advocacy for their student(s). They need advocacy and resources for themselves as parents/family members too. This is more about stability and the foundation of their home and family unit in order for them to feel equipped to manage the student-family-school relationship. Although many parents feel overwhelmed with and deterred from a parent advisory committee (PAC) program because it feels like added responsibility to show up and engage, many parents and families were not aware of the existence of PAC existence and had never considered being a part of the group. This lack of awareness is a symptom of greater needs and an opportunity for the Tribe to generate a program that looks, feels, and operates in a new fashion in comparison to historical PAC groups

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that remain in the status quo. We have an opportunity to structure the new regional program differently and design a whole new approach.

Storywork Connections to the Research Questions

Community Agency: Tribal Sovereignty

The integration of the feedback and how community forums produce knowledge has an immediate relevance and applicability to Tribal government and administrative affairs. The Westernized systems in place hamper community participation and voice. We moderate through public hearing and opens meeting laws that refer to Robert's Rules of Order which are not always conducive to talking circles and rather a banking methodology that restricts organic dialogue and places importance on single topic as opposed to larger systems thinking and critical conversations. Additionally, talking circles and community cafes are organized by pre-agreed upon ground rules stemming from culturally based and traditional values systems. In this way, gatherings can be guided by teachings on decorum and conduct and can be instrumental as a part of education itself when all generations come together to learn self-governance. Incorporating cultural teachings from the onset including opening meetings with a prayer and ceremony bring us to into a space of healing and collaboration. The tool called community café is a method that teaches us how to be in circle and how to interact while maintaining a safe space. It is a way we can create discourse that is centered on our people, our views, our voice.

Tribal Leaders take on the responsibility to ensure that we are engaging with the generations before us and the next generations after us. If anyone should be a recipient of our teachings it should be our own community members. Education is not something we gain from going elsewhere. It begins at home in community.

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Being positioned on reservations, places us into a context that our sovereignty is carried in location and not within our people. We still remain sovereign in other spaces and places outside of reservation boundaries.

Educational Policy: Self-Governance

At Nisqually, we have educational components that are situated independently. This results in duplication of services and compartmentalized thinking. This also demonstrates itself through how we use budgeted resources, how we staff, and even where services are located. One of our ways of fending for our survivance has always been through education and by stepping into arenas where people may have thought we could not succeed. Our aunties became honorary doctorates for the path they walked, their lived experience, and the dedication to their work in the community. They did what we are doing now – the community grounded praxis - long before there were words and terminology for it. These practices are innate to our culture and where are survivance is born from.

Our structural systems at the Tribal government and administrative levels have not advanced over time and we remain in an archaic framework of being dependent upon the federal government, state educational programs, grant funding and school systems that keep us at an arm's length away from true collaboration and co-creation. In working through this process, I understand that our community is depending upon Tribal leadership for direction and solutions toward a better educational system. We have Tribal laws that govern other responsibilities but we do not have a Tribal code that provides ordinance language for education. We have MOUs established with school districts but they only state that we will be partners in educational achievement. They do not specify specific rights and responsibilities that position the Tribe as an equal partner in collaborative co-creation (Ishimaru, 2020, p. 96-119).

Kinship Knowledges: Intergenerational Teachings

The question comes down to who is capable, responsible and permissible to share traditional teachings and values? Too often, and in so many spaces, non-Nisquallies are speaking for Nisqually and not often enough do we Nisquallies speaking on our own behalf. This change or growth will be a learning curve as we manage to organize and balance our lived experience with training and educational opportunities to grow into technically adept leaders who can prepare and address discourse with counternarratives centering our voice, our needs, our determinations.

My Mom shared that she once continued her graduate work by learning a California Indigenous language (not her own heritage nor that of her children) but could not teach it. She was told she was not a Yuki¹² and that a professor of Yuki had to be Yuki, she notes as “it was only appropriate.” Although she was interested in learning and teaching the language, she was humble and respectful regarding the importance of Yuki people teaching their language (personal conversation, December 30, 2026). Wilson (2019) writes that “even the well-intentioned can cause harm by speaking *for* others” (p. 71). Additionally, an associate in our Tribal training program, a Makah woman, alluded to the fact that it is not her place to teach the culture of the Nisqually, only cultural competency, both being markedly different (personal conversation, 2023). It is our own people who must learn, lead and teach, passing down the traditional teachings. In many spaces it will be the elected and appointed leaders who must work to ensure that the structures are set in place and that the priorities are identified.

¹² An Indigenous Tribe from Northern California, part of the Round Valley Indian Tribes.

Educational Pathways

Toward the end of this dissertation process, my Mom asked in wonderment, where I planned to go with my research, where exactly is it taking me? I responded generally and in a formal tone about collective community agency. I then discussed my frustration with how we are allowing others to dictate our vision, our pathway, and our experiences for our children and ourselves. It is out of frustration that I critique what is happening and it is out of love that I seek a solution. Her response was, “I know what you mean, everything we need to know, we have always known, back to our grandparents and the grandparents before them. That is it, that’s all” she states (M. McCloud, personal conversation, April 22, 2026, her 79th birthday). She went on to say that her grandparents taught her to speak three languages by the time she was in the first grade and that my grandmother spoke her language to us when we were young. This means we need to look back in order to look forward. When we realize that, we will understand that we have all of the knowledges needed to secure a strong and healthy future for our children and our children’s children.

For me, there are two possible pathways:

Pathway 1: Retain our teaching and learning culture by centering intergenerational connectedness with one another and the world around us, taking our work away from the conference table and outside of the office, into community spaces. Our leaders must return to the people and to the land.

Pathway 2: Ensure that our political landscape includes community forum and community representation from all age groups; youth, adult and Elders, and build collaborative structures for decision-making. Community is more than an object, it is an action, a feeling and has a spirit of its own.

Limitations of the Study

A challenging part of this study and the process of writing was that I continually thought about how it could be better and stronger, about how it would be best suited to help others in the future, and how I wished I could do more. It is difficult to accept that a dissertation serves a purpose for a specific aim, goal or intent when we really want the work to be powerful and impactful. Even encapsulating the content and working to determine what the important factors and statements should be included was a difficult task. There is so much added depth, context, and truths to be told and the story is from time immemorial into futurity. Some of the limitations are as follows:

An initial limitation of this research inquiry that was realized early on is that it is missing my father's story. The research was built upon co-researching and co-writing with one parent. Throughout the research process it became apparent that my father was the most in tune with the family archival collection. He was able to steward records, share and discuss the times and components of the relationality between their combined experiences as it relates to my upbringing. In turn, my Mother was also prone to speaking about their combined work in the context of how it related to our family unit as a whole. I am part of two wholes. Not only did they raise me together but they researched together and built community programs together. My father maintains so much institutional knowledge and lived experience that I am certain there is capacity and opportunity for the three of us to partner in future writing as we migrate through the archival process. Their work is commingled and difficult to separate because it skews the picture and the story. His storywork and commentary have been invaluable. In missing his important storywork as it relates to my research, we are also missing his place-based knowledges from

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Northern California, which was a prominent part of my life growing up between the two states. I only moved permanently to Washington State when I was 12-years old.

This is only half of my lived experience of being raised in two places and having connection to separate lands, separate peoples and separate traditional ways and teachings. This means this research and storywork only represent half of my knowledges. To be better balanced I would need to expand my study to research both sides of my parents' work, comparing and contrasting their lived experience and their research in order to get closer to my own knowledges as a combination of their teachings and what they bring forward from their elders and ancestors.

Another limitation is related to research design. Tribally-driven participatory research requires a researcher to give up some form of control with the problem of practice and the approach. The researcher must be able to center the community voice not only on data but early in the process to determine the needs and research aims. To bring in the Tribal government and Tribal community as early as possible into the construction of the research design is empowering for the community and balances power with the research institution and the researcher. In my case, the research was done as an inside researcher. The research that I laid out in my dissertation proposal was impacted by the direction that the community set as priorities. I became a vessel from which we as a community carried out research in co-design.

Another key component that is missing from this study is one of the two school districts (School District A) that serves our core population. Although I initiated contact with them early in the phase of identifying a problem of practice and working through the community grounded praxis, the development of a Tribal to School District relationship did not evolve in my role as an elected leader. It has been disappointing that in spite of numerous attempts to create a connection, the school district only works to maintain engagement as far as safe zones permit

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and only through avenues that they directly control, limit, and throttle. They refused to collaborate in any way that demonstrated co-creation or relationality. This remains a challenge with which we must contend.

In the other public school district (School District B), the community café was not co-created in a way that is derived from community needs. It was organized and structured by their own design, with their own aims, almost an out-of-the-box, one-size-fits-all approach. This school does work in safety zones as described by Sabzalian (2019).

There are also deeper lessons and learnings from the historical traumas and historical healings that each tribe has been through. The Medicine Creek Treaty Tribes were dispersed in illogical order on lands associated with villages but not necessarily their traditional sites, and not traversable outside of reservation boundaries, resulting in cultural diaspora. Still to this day infighting amongst sister tribes derived from a mentality of scarcity is affecting how cohesive we are in legal parameters and in coalition with the outside world. Tribes, bands and families work in isolation of one another and often we recreate a wheel of traditional ways with innovative approaches but hesitate to circle people in from outside. It may be a coping mechanism symptomatic of intergenerational traumas that requires intentionality toward lateral healing and kindness. I wish to see future work arise from a strengths base perspective.

Additionally, in community grounded praxis, I identified a particular population of caregiver or extended familial relation called kinship-care, also referred to as grand-families. This particular population has its own specialized challenges in the sometimes informal way that grandparents, aunts or uncles assume care over children in their lives. They have unique needs and require more support, but they are often invisible leaving their situation unaddressed and sometimes ill-equipped to manage in all senses of the work caregiver. Supports could include

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meeting their emotional, financial, and legal needs in spaces where educational challenges exist. Intergenerational cohabitation, social systems and knowledge systems are a strength within our Indigenous lived experience and our systems should reflect that.

Lastly, not everything that I learned is shared in this dissertation. Respect for the knowledge holders, my parents, and my future family means that much of our ways are not broadcast and some teachings and learnings are internalized by the researcher (me) as a lived experience and something I will share when the time is right with the right people. This manuscript is not the start, nor the end, it is a glimpse of possibilities.

Conclusion

Torres (2019) argues that “the fundamental task of indigenizing education is one of creative intimacy with our world, ourselves, and each other, re-centering the education process as a genuinely integrated emancipatory project” (p. 181). In reflecting on this inquiry, the data produced, and the interpretations noted in this work, I can honestly say that it was about the relationship with both my Mom and dad, my first teachers, and the extensions of family and community around me and beyond that made the facets of educational sovereignty and liberation so apparent.

One aspect of working through this dissertation process was contrarianism and how important counterstory is to storywork, teaching, learning and pedagogy. It leads me to think of lessons about fluidity (the continual change and fluctuation relating to potential) and balance (the reality that there are opposing realities, choices, and ways of being) and how important it is to be observant and intentional about our pathway. Storywork includes contrarians like the Trickster to demonstrate opposition and how the world naturally works around us with tension and friction. In reflexive thinking and contemplation, we can critically examine norms and imagine generative

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alterNatives to futurism when we realize that there is more than one possibility to consider. This relates to critical consciousness (Yellowbird, M, 2012, p. 21) or conscientização (Freire, 2000), where a society can become liberated through praxis that formulates shifts in identity and transformational power. Our ability to live and work within the construct of opposing energies is truly a skill, especially in leadership when you are working to guide and heal community ways.

Additionally, in thinking about who I am today as an elected leader and an educational leader for Nisqually Tribe, I must think about the complexities within a community and the ways in which healing must come before task and accomplishment. We are accustomed to and complicit in working with outward government operations that “proclaim democratic ideas - freedom, participation, equality - while historically sustaining systems of transnational capitalism, elements of colonialism, and imperialist expansion” (Vittoria, 2026, p. 3). Moving away from Westernized ideals and values systems means sometimes walking into the fire, facing difficult conversations, working to recognize, acknowledge, and appease hurts and damages caused by those systems we have survived. As leadership, it is imperative we build systems that welcome dissent and foster dialogue, moving to collective thought and co-creating dreams for our people. As a leader, this much is true. We are here for collective healing. I will dedicate my leadership to this.

The next and final Chapter discusses the implications for activating and operationalizing the community grounded praxis for the findings presented and portrays the future as it remains for those responsible to continue our cultural continuity in perpetuity.

CHAPTER 6 - Actioning the Knowledge through Praxis

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We honor a person for what they have done for the people; not for what they have done for themselves.– Nisqually Traditional Ways (2024, p. 32-33)

Reflections on the Research Inquiry

In reflection, I think about how I came to be an A.B.D. (all but doctorate). The intrigue, the challenge, and the draw pulled me into this program. There was more that I wanted and needed to do to prepare myself for Tribal leadership. In this Tribal Council role, there is so much capacity building to institute within our Tribal community, only so much time to do so, and an imperative to coalesce our people to work together on building a strong future for Nisqually.

Together, with my cohort we struggled to find ourselves and began a quest about what is not right in the Indigenous world and examined potential spaces where we can impact for the betterment of Indigenous people on a grand scale or on a meager scale, it takes continual intentionality to focus on what matters to us and to bring healing back to our communities. It starts by healing ourselves from the ways the colonization has weakened and destructed prior pathways and avenues where our successes lie.

We were given the opportunity to see these ancestral pathways and to bring them back to life for the world to see. I am so excited to encourage others to trudge this arduous road toward strengthening our Tribal community members and to be more ardent and more unified in the process. We cannot depend upon others and must do this ourselves.

Discussion: Findings in Relation to Kinship methodology

This study has created a closeness and strengthened a bond with my parents, re-establishing our interests in historical preservation of our family's knowledges. Through kinship, we have reinvigorated our sense of enthusiasm and responsibility for this work to happen for our Family, our Tribe(s), for Nisqually and for our future generations. The responsibility extends beyond discourse, it moves into actioning, becoming a part of the live we weave. These knowledges are ways of knowing and being and becoming. The pathways that I questioned in the beginning are constructed from the storywork in community that moves like a river's water from our ancestral voices directly into our imaginings of a community building futurity for Nisqually. These visions for a strengthened nation with purpose and empowerment are possible through methodologies that call upon our Indigenous leaders to bring forward these ideas of collective agency, sovereignty and capacity building.

Discussion: Findings in Relation to Literature (including my Mom's)

Reading through my mom's archival paperwork and records was an emotional journey and a reflexive space that allowed me to synchronize the learning and study that I have been in for the past several years into perspectives about the pace and methods for change making at Nisqually. I am both aware of the shifts and developments that have occurred and equally aware of the areas that have not changed and where stagnation has happened.

Recommendations for My Parent's Continuity

This process has been enlivening for my co-researcher, my mom, and my co-conspirator, my dad. We have spent more time together than we normally would in our day-to-day busy lives. Now knowing how important the work is and having overcome all of the barriers that delayed it

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in prior years, has returned the prospect to us to uncover our familial knowledges and prior work that is so necessary for this critical review and reflective analysis to take place. Their work is meaningful and it is not over.

There is opportunity for them to write and to publish and to revitalize their work and authorship, which they both would like to do. I hope to see this take place and will work toward the appropriate avenues to make it possible. This will include travel to some of their special locations including past schools at University of California, Davis, Santa Rosa State University, DQ University, and to see some of their friends working in the field or heading up non-profit work. This will also include intergenerational travel with the grandchildren in tow.

Implications for Tribal Policy

The most formidable part of this process has been the connection to my work as a Tribal Leader. As an elected Council woman, I now question every step with intentionality and with a decolonized lens toward Indigenization of our Tribes policy and governance documents. In order to continue this work, I believe we must create a framework for continual engagement with the Elders committee, the Youth Council and the community-at-large. This pathway must be established as a practice and formality.

The second effort I plan to implement is to design an Indigenist Policy Analyst role to examine that works through a decolonial lens toward protecting Tribal sovereignty, identifying colonial structural systems embedded into our Tribal governance and administration, redesigning policy using our Traditional values and ways of being, and centering our intergenerational knowledge systems, land-based kinship connections, and community healing praxis. This position will work to dismantle those systemic barriers that unintentionally and invisibly cause

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harm to our Tribe and our community vision. This task will include language literacy and creating policy frameworks and methodologies for Tribal work in the sq̓'aliʔucid language.

Transformative & Generative Work: Research into Praxis

In the spirit of Linday Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2021), we must move to make research empowering. She notes "To imagine self-determination, however, is also to imagine a world in which Indigenous peoples become active participants, and to prepare for the possibilities and challenges that lie ahead" (p. 145). We are imagining more and more.

Community Cafe as forum. One of the purposes for this research inquiry was to examine how community cafes function in the array of how they are conducted and how well the community responds. The lessons learned and takeaways led me to want to reimaging the spaces where we gather and how we enter into the work with community. This is where the values based behavioral systems could be emphasized and referred to as we create better and stronger ways to relate to one another in doing the community work. The dialogue and discussion space has to be leveled for all to want to have equal voice and be heard. There is work to do with these gatherings and how they are received by the people. In most recent spaces and something I learned from senior Council members is to let all others speak freely first. The ultimate role of leadership is to listen intently and to truly hear.

Regional Parent Advisory Group (RPAC). This group has been a long time coming. It is an idea that was started with and by our prior Native Program Liaison at a local school district where they began a collective called the Alliance (personal conversation, 2024). The idea fizzled and went away without enough engagement because it required the support and oversight including commitment by leadership with surrounding districts and the Tribe(s). This measure is

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completely feasible and realistic and a wonderful idea that needs appropriate support and resources to get it moving off the ground. There must be access to capital, not in the manner of matching federal grant funds or charitable donations but shared funding sources. It must be placed as a priority for partnership and engagement. This is one of the ideas of the Indigenous instructional core, that there are areas to activate educational advocacy. The regional RPAC will have members from the public school districts, Tribal school districts, Tribes, parents, students and families. This initiative has started already. When I did the parent surveys in the Tribal program and Tribal community cafes, I also did sign-ups for the RPAC indicating that it would be a new venture, on zoom, and alternating for lunches or evenings making attendance convenient for parents. It is important that we, the Nisqually, do the work to create just environments and compassionate space for natural curiosity and inquiry inside and outside of classrooms.

Historical preservation. One lesson and sentiment I heard strongly in my parents' views was about how difficult it has been throughout their lives to protect information. My mom was hardly able to protect her proprietary writing, knowing it was subject to appropriation. My father relays that unbelievable amounts of invaluable cultural recordings were lost in the shuffle of time over years of Tribal operations. Setting a future goal for the Tribe to have a secure historical preservation facility, program and technically trained team in place would be wonderful. We are presently in negotiations toward a future building that could be the start of a hub to central all matters of Nisqually history for our Tribe. This hub can contain a library, language classrooms, archives, lab, museum, research center, community space to host guests and visitors. We are presently creating this pathway to bring the vision to life.

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Wellness Court. Our Tribal Wellness court system is truly a striking and formidable method to Indigenize wellness throughout our community systems. We have been poised with some successes leading into this year that include expanding the court and its alternative routes. We are approaching this project with the intention to work toward prevention, meaning we want to intercede into family and juvenile matters before legal interventions and before a person becomes a court case within our legal system. This means we will work to blur the standards and boundaries that entrap people into the system and instead use our critical thinking capacity to create space and support for programs to excel, exceed and become more for the people and designed with and by the people. Presently, Nisqually families want more from Family Services and Educational Services.

Kinship caregivers. A key differentiator for our community is intergenerational living and diversity in family structures within the home. It is a norm to be growing up in a kinship situation where sibling, aunts and uncles, grandparents or other relatives are raising children as caregivers, guardians and adopted parents (or other relatives and non-relatives at times). Normalizing ones identity as being whole has a lot to do with how they view their positionality within their home and family. Part of my unpublished, unwritten research related to grandfamilies and kinship care. With the level of prevalence in our community, this reality demands attention and focus. Healing praxis can be developed by recognizing, supporting and normalizing other living scenarios such as these. They also require additional supports which can be built into our social service systems to aid, increasing the potential for school success.

Implications for Future Research in My Life Journey

This research journey is not an isolated project. It is not separate from who I am as a leader and what I do in my personal and professional life. It might be succinctly written about in

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a fashion of chapters, but it will continue to live within me just as it was born from the generations of good work arising out of my long line of predecessors, genealogy and our Tribe as a whole. As a continuance, there are several areas that have been in motion prior to the program, came about through community-grounded praxis, having led to problem(s) of practice, and made their way into the inquiry about Tribal community agency toward educational pathways. I share thoughts on these areas of sustained praxis work as it relates to this research inquiry.

Archives. There remains to be a tremendous amount of archival research to be digitalized into a formal archival system. I will need to hire a technician and/or find a trainee or intern who may want to complete a project in order to address the bulk of the remaining archival materials. I can only foresee that there will be other Tribal members throughout the reservation who need to also undertake such a challenging project within their own families. It would behoove our Tribe to create a guide for members to share in the community as a how-to guide on the initial steps toward record keeping.

Another option is to create a series of Youth projects starting with a program for youth creating digital video storytelling interviews with their Elders. This would be optimal because each Elder could engage with Elders who are in their own families, extended relatives (aunties) and friends of the family or neighbors. My quick idea is that we would incentivize the capturing of an Elders story through providing students with a short orientation training about video storytelling, the use of Tribal equipment, or providing them with supplies like mini-tripods and assistance in editing the videos, as well as publishing them to the Tribal website and/or Tribal social media. The credits will be acknowledged and their success celebrated. I aim for this program to operationalize in 2027.

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In terms of intergenerational knowledge sharing, we will have captured the voice, the mannerisms, the facial expressions and all of the tidbits of shared knowledges that the Elder is willing to share in those moments. The connection will be a community healing praxis and a measure of relationality in real time.

Visioning. We have already established preparedness to advance into the next rendition of a community vision plan. Within the archives, I believe I located the very first community vision plan. We have had several generated throughout the duration of self-governance policy implementation. Our most formal one was established in 1995 and renewed in 2013 establishing our 20 year pathway including for educational spaces and Tribal governance. Our next dates will be to begin a project plan in 2028, establishment of the intergenerational community-based Community Vision Committee in 2029, meet and collaborate for drafting in 2031 and publish in 2032. The next era will be built upon the foundation of and in continuity with the prior generations planning already done and will prepare us for the next planning to take place in the future. In this way we remain connected as a community with a unified vision.

Governance Work. Constitutional amendment process will begin in the next 12 months. It's only been done once but has been called to order by the people and will help us advance our collective direction moving away from the old ways into a forward looking imagined future, one that is derived from a decolonized mindset, and one that will ensure survivance and self-determined futures, especially with the long term care of our future generations and those who are learning to be strong leaders and will someday fill our shoes.

Commitment to Future Growth

As a doctor and Tribal leader, I aim to continue my research and archival work in conjunction with my parents as a time for us to continue their work to ensure they fulfil their dreams of preserving intergenerational knowledges. Again, most of this time will be a learning venture for myself; learning about my family, our history, about them and about myself too. Cultivating knowledges as my parents have done is more than a desire, it is a responsibility.

Additional research would be an interesting prospect as we've become a close cohort with connections to academic institutions and our professors. There are undoubtedly many opportunities arising for educational leaders such as us to reach back to pull others forward and to generate new work, new literature, new scholarship. We spoke about committing to helping the future doctoral cohorts succeed in their respective programs. Aiding and mentoring the future doctors is a must. I would love to follow this dissertation up with a shared chapter with my parents as co-authors. I would love to assist my father to write his books of which he has always dreamed.

Further learning on my behalf will related to critical policy analysis which could possibly be my future career with my Tribal organization when I move away from the Tribal Council. If I have to name one future success that I imagine as a part of my work, it would be in rectifying the relationships with the school districts toward improving and ensuring student, parent, and family support for Nisqually education. That is a tangible goal that means so much to our families.

Conclusion

In closing, Nisqually has had areas of innovation like sustainable power and natural resource advancements but we've also had areas that require more attention for us to create new

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paradigms. One area I see us falling behind is in the development of leadership strengths which is something we can focus on with intentionality. Our leaders need us to be strong leaders now so they may be strong leaders in the future. Cultivating our Nisqually ways and our Nisqually knowledges will carry us into the future in ways that we can hardly imagine.

EPILOGUE - My Grandmothers' Prayers

In reflection of what it means to earn a doctoral degree, I offer the following about what I learned through this journey.

Prayer

Aside from learning to write, research and present my thoughts on community well-being and holistic approaches to education, I learned the importance of connection to oneself and to spirit. As much as I learned this through discovery and teachings, I learned it from our doctoral cohort members and from myself in the level of bravery and confidence we held. If you do not pray already it is not an art that takes time to learn and harness its goodness. Prayer is a connection and dialogue with the spirit world. You do not have to qualify or prove your prayerfulness. It's not a criteria to meet to be holy and sacred in someone else's eyes. There is no test. You are in the prayer circle because your people have always prayed and continue to pray for you today.

Prayer is how you take care of yourself; to care for others your care comes first. It is not selfish to ask, "Creator help me. Help open my heart to understand. Help me hear your words and guidance. Help me feel better and stronger to face this world." In doing so you will notice the care and goodness in the world that already exists around you. Prayer is a most powerful form of grace you give yourself and your ancestors to know and feel great love and connection.

Grandmother's Words

Another source of grace and medicine is the knowledges that Elders pass down. Teachings also come from the world around you, nature, and the elements. I once sat at the river in grief and sadness, and the more times I went back and became familiar with the sounds of the water flowing, the better I got at listening. I finally heard a soft and silent message in the River's

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words: you are not alone, we cry the tears and they flow away to heal us. Teachings are everywhere. This is the natural way of our world.

Again, you may or may not be familiar with hearing these words. You may or may not have ties or connections to your Elders, to be next to them, to listen, and hear their spoken words. Their words are carried through many avenues. If you grew up outside of your home or outside of your village with distance between people it's easy to mistake that space for feeling alone. This fragmentation is masterful in disintegrating our belief system. Do not be fooled. We are connected to our ancestors through our bloodlines and it takes more than distance to break these bonds. You are from many wombs before you.

I lost both my paternal grandmother and my maternal grandmother during the application period and the coursework period in this doctoral program. They were always my closest confidantes. They held joy in watching my life grow and in how I was raising my family and serving our community, the way they once did. In reflecting on this journey, I feel like their strength was with me when I started to become a doctor and it remains with me as I finish. I feel like it will always be there and always has been.

All things are done with faith in yourself and your people.

You are strong, beautiful and wise.

huyəxw čəd. I am done.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Nisqually Teachings of Our People

ʔalʔal ti syayus



sq'aliʔucid	meaning
tiit ʔaʔ k ⁽ⁱ⁾ bək ^w stab g ^w əʔluwiəʔ ^w səx ^w ʔal tiit ʔuslali(l)s	If someone is greedy they will lose everything in the end.
tiit suluʔluʔ tud ^{ix} ʔaciʔtalbix ^w , g ^w ətashaydx ^w həlg ^w əʔ g ^w əsəsg ^w ədil ʔəsʔəci(l)ʔəci(l). bələd ^w əlaʔads həlg ^w əʔ g ^w ələ ʔal ʔu ^w bid həlg ^w əʔ ʔə ʔaʔəʔ	Our traditional way is to feed and make strangers comfortable.
tiit ʔilʔluʔluʔ wiwsu g ^w əl ʔəslab həlg ^w əʔ tiit maʔmad wiwsu	Our older children, they look after the younger children.
ʔəshik ^w cəb tiit luʔluʔ g ^w əl səshaydx ^w həlg ^w əʔ bək ^w stab ʔaqid həlg ^w əʔ x ^w iʔ k ⁽ⁱ⁾ səsjiw ^w bicəbs həlg ^w əʔ sʔaqid həlg ^w əʔ d ^{ix} ʔal tiit ʔa ʔaciʔtalbix ^w	We respect the old ones for their wisdom; they are not cast aside, but continue to hold a place of honor in our families and communities.
slaʔiday ʔə suq ^w abic g ^w əl həlg ^w əʔ dx ^w dig ^w itubuʔ həlg ^w ə ʔal tiit wiwsucəʔ	All natural things are our brothers and sisters; they have things to teach us if we are aware and listen.
ʔuyayus cəʔ ʔəsq ^w uʔ bək ^w ʔəsq ^w uʔ dx ^w ʔal tiit haʔ ʔə tiit ʔaciʔtalbix ^w cəʔ	We work cooperatively together for the good of our people.
ʔəshig ^w əd cəʔ tiit ʔaciʔtalbix ^w dx ^w ʔal tiit tusuhuy suk ^w ax ^w ads ti luʔaciʔtalbix ^w s x ^w iʔ ləsuk ^w ax ^w acuts	We honor a person for what they have done for the people; not for what they have done for themselves.

Appendix B

Nisqually Indian Tribe Resolution 9-2024 "Building A Healthy Foundation"

Nisqually Indian Tribe
Tribal Council Resolution No. a -2024

A Resolution Adopting the Nisqually Tribe's "Building A Healthy Foundation" Policy

WHEREAS, THE NISQUALLY INDIAN TRIBE IS THE SUCCESSOR DESCENDENT ENTITY OF THE NISQUALLY NATION, SIGNATORY TO THE TREATY OF MEDICINE CREEK OF 1854 (10 STAT. 1132), AND UNTO THIS DAY HAS RETAINED AND MAINTAINED ITS TRIBAL IDENTITY, ITS GOVERNING BODY, AND ITS SOVEREIGN POWERS; AND

WHEREAS, the Nisqually Indian Tribe is a federally recognized American Indian Tribe organized under its governing Constitution and Bylaws approved by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior on September 9, 1946 and amended on October 28, 1994, pursuant to Section 16 of the Indian Reorganization Act, 25 U.S.C. 476; and

WHEREAS, the Nisqually General Council is the duly constituted governing body of the Nisqually Indian Tribe, and the Nisqually Tribal Council is the duly elected representative body of the General Council by the authority of the Tribe's Constitution and Bylaws, as amended; and

WHEREAS, the Nisqually Tribal Council desires to adopt a policy for "Building a Healthy Foundation" to guide Tribal Programs, Departments, and Leadership as they build a foundation for the next 7 Generations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Nisqually Tribal Council hereby adopts the following as the Tribe's "Building a Healthy Foundation" Policy.

BUILDING A HEALTHY FOUNDATION:

1. Language:

- United States vs. Washington, Boldt Decision, 1974, 1979
- How we communicate with one and another.
- How we treat one and another.
- How we Learn from and Teach each other.

2. Family and Community:

- United States vs. Washington, Boldt Decision, 1974, 1979
- How we hold our Family accountable.
- How we hold our Community Accountable.
- Respect for each other.
- Teaching the next set of Leaders.

3. History and Cultural Responsibility:

- United States vs. Washington, Boldt Decision, 1974, 1979
- Teaching with a good heart and mind.
- Learning with a good heart and mind.
- Respect for Ourselves.

4. Reserved Treaty Resources:

- United States vs. Washington, Boldt Decision, 1974, 1979
- The Tribe owns none of the Resources promised to us in the Treaty.
- Protecting and Preserving for the next 7 Generations.
- Learning history before exercising Treaty Rights.

Appendix C

Acknowledgement from Nisqually Tribe



NISQUALLY INDIAN TRIBE

4820 She-Nah-Num Drive S.E.
Olympia, Washington 98513
360.456.5221 (main)
www.nisqually-nsn.gov

May 23, 2025

University of Washington – Tacoma
School of Education

Re: Cheebo Frazier - Doctoral Research Investigation
Institutional Review Board (IRB) Letter of Support

The Nisqually Tribal Council is pleased to provide this letter of support for the doctoral research proposal by UW – Tacoma doctoral student Cheebo Frazier. Ms. Frazier's research inquiry focuses on critical ethnography and critical policy analysis of the Tribal governance systems applicable to self-determination as it applies to community voice and involvement in Education. Her study proposes to organize forums for collecting community feedback about traditional and customary ways of self-governing Education in all its facets and forms. These groups will progress toward Indigenizing policy and regulation that centers the people and their needs, thoughts, and ideas on Education.

The Nisqually Tribe is fully supportive of Ms. Frazier's research proposal and looks forward to seeing the results of her work.

Sincerely,

E. Ken Choke
Chairman, Nisqually Indian Tribe

Appendix D

University of Washington IRB Determination Letter (Exemption)



NOT RESEARCH

November 20, 2025

Dear Cheebo Frazier:

On 11/20/2025, the University of Washington Human Subjects Division (HSD) reviewed the following application:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	Balancing Power and Building Agency: Creating Educational Pathways within an Indigenous Community
Investigator:	Cheebo Frazier
IRB ID:	STUDY00024348
Funding:	None
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None

HSD determined that the proposed activity is not research, as defined by federal and state regulations. Therefore, review and approval by the University of Washington IRB is not required.

This determination applies only to the activities described in this application. Depending on the nature of your study, you may need to obtain other approvals or permissions to conduct your activity. For example, you might need to apply for access to data or specimens (e.g., to obtain UW student data). Or, you might need to obtain permission from facilities managers to conduct activities in the facilities (e.g., Seattle School District; the Harborview Emergency Department).

HSD does not make determinations on behalf of other institutions. If other institutions are involved in the proposed activity, they may need to make their own determination or they may decide to be guided by our determination.


If you need to make changes in the future that may affect this determination or are not sure, contact us or submit a new request for a determination. You can create a modification by clicking Create Modification within the study.

We wish you great success.

Sincerely,

Deborah Dickstein, MSPH
Human Subjects Review Administrator, reviewing for Team D
206-543-5971 dickstei@uw.edu

Appendix E
Parent Survey



Parent Survey

Help me get to know your child.

What school does your child attend?

Are you or do you know anyone on a Parent Committee?

How can the Tribe help you and your student?

Thanks!

Appendix F

Conversation Guide for Co-Researcher Storytalk

Indigenous Research Participant Talking Circle Conversation Guide

**Balancing Power & Creating Agency
Toward Educational Pathways within Indigenous Communities**

Co-Researcher Questions

1. What was your research aim in college? Describe your problem(s) of practice and research inquiry(ies).
2. Did that aim change or continue through the years?
3. What does your research aim look like now?
4. Have your perspectives changed over time or remain relatively similar? In what ways?
5. What were your challenges in research?
6. How did you design your research?
7. Did portions of your research become activated, moving from theoretical to praxis?
8. Are there areas that you wish you could have spent more time on?
9. What is missing from the research you have done?
10. Is there something you wish you would have attended to during research?
11. Where were there barriers to your research?
12. If resources were unlimited, what more would you have done?
13. Did you work with communities toward resolving problem(s) of practice?
14. How did the community respond? Were there varied responses? What is the spectrum of response to your work and interventions?
15. Are some of your praxis methods still relevant and in practice today?
16. What did your research teams or implementation teams look like?
17. Did you hold leadership roles?
18. Did you apply your knowledge to policy development?
19. How did research shape your educational leadership?
20. Is it possible for another researcher to continue your exploration(s)?
21. Where would you like others to start in following your lead?
22. Do you see change since your last research project to present day?
23. How do you see the field of education and Tribal leadership shaping the future?
24. Who do you feel are the right collaborators on Native education?
25. What gets in the way of evolution and transformation of Native education?
26. How do we future-proof advancements in Tribal leadership in education?

Appendix G

Research Consent Form

Research Consent Form

Indigenous Research Participant Consent Form

**Balancing Power & Creating Agency
Toward Educational Pathways within Indigenous Communities**

haʔt sləxil. (Good day).

You are being invited to participate in a research project entitled **Balancing Power & Creating Agency Toward Educational Pathways within Indigenous Communities** that is being conducted by Cheebo Frazier.

Cheebo Frazier is a 3rd year Doctoral Student in the department of School of Education at the University of Washington, Tacoma. If you have further questions about the research project, you may contact her at:

Cheebo Frazier, MBA
2448 Ba Kwom Dr SE
Olympia, WA 98513
Ph: 360-870-6917
Email: cfraz122@gmail.com

As a Graduate student, the primary researcher is required to conduct ethical research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Education Leadership. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Michelle Montgomery and Dr. Dawn Hardison-Stevens. You may contact the supervisor(s) at the following:

Michelle R. Montgomery, MA, MPP, PhD
School of Disciplinary Art and Sciences
University of Washington-Tacoma
214H JOY (Russell T. Joy)
Box 358436
1900 Commerce Street
Tacoma, WA 98402
253.692.4671 office
Email: montgm2@uw.edu

Dawn Hardison-Stevens, MAT, PhD
School of Education
University of Washington-Tacoma
316 WCG (West Coast Grocery building)
Box 358435
1900 Commerce Street
Tacoma, WA 98402
253.692.4372 office
Email: dawnes@uw.edu

This research is being **funded** by Cheebo Frazier and potentially by in-kind donations, and/or grant funding from Tribal community departments, agencies and institutions.

The **purpose of this research** project is to examine historical archives from a perspective of Indigenous worldview, to conduct a needs analysis for Indigenization of Tribal governance and

Research Consent Form

policy, and to propose policy based on these findings. The praxis will culminate in Tribal Community consideration for abandoning Westernized policy models and moving toward development of systems and frameworks that align with Tribal values.

Research of this type is important because the Nisqually Tribe has faced uncertainty in their belief of their own ability to self-govern and has in past times and recent times, over-relied upon non-Nisqually Tribe expertise, governance and consultation embodying Westernized systems. Additionally, our governance regulation, policy and practices reflect a Westernized structure that continues to oppose and erase our Traditional knowledge systems and traditional ways of knowing and being. This overreliance and lack of agency has resulted in marginalization of our Tribal community including land displacement and dispossession, loss of food sovereignty, health disparities, forced assimilation and environmental degradation. We hope to overcome these inequities and challenges through healing praxis and decolonization.

You are being asked to participate in this research project because you are a Nisqually Tribal Community member, employee or an ally of the community in our practice toward community healing, wellbeing and self-governance. Our sovereignty and self-determination depends on a vision of futurity, survivance and the voice of our people to lead us now and in the future.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include survey participation, video storytelling, community circle discussions, community reconciliation dinners and sharing of results in public forum. These activities will take place in Nisqually and surrounding communities. Research can be completed at or near other reservations and within records retention facilities. Archival records review and photo collection and review will be key aspects. Participants will be asked to share their views about Tribal governance practices and to co-develop ideas, plans and systems using real-world scenarios, resources and policy shaping processes.

RESEARCHER PLEDGE TO MITIGATE RISK

There are some **potential risks** to you by participating in this research and they include emotional and psychological impacts due to topics involving historical and generational trauma.

The researcher will **mitigate risk** by pledging the following:

- Use culturally appropriate and trauma-informed responses, support and resources.
- Actively work to prevent exploitation or misrepresentation of Indigenous knowledge or traditions shared by participants.
- Work to ensure that our participatory and Tribally-driven research project aligns with Tribal values and priorities.
- Work with our Tribal community to caretake the research data, ensuring it is used for the intended purposes.
- Honor the relationships created in trust and reciprocity.
- Prioritize collaboration, transparency and respect for the Tribal community.
- Safeguard sensitive cultural and personal information, disclosing or using it only in ways

Research Consent Form

that align with Tribal priorities and sovereignty work.

- Use careful and thoughtful Interpretations and representations of research findings.
- Respect Indigenous knowledge systems.
- Seek approvals from participants, co-researchers, the community and the Tribe to ensure that findings and outcomes benefit the collaborators.

The **potential benefits** of your participation in this community-driven participatory research include:

- Documenting and preserving traditional knowledges, ways of being and knowing, and enlivening culturally-based value systems.
- Empowering the voice of the community through partnership, collaboration, and storywork.
- Building relationships, networks and community connections that will built the foundation for future and ongoing systemic change that can balance power dynamics for Indigenous communities and Individuals.
- Create positive and sustainable change with broad Impacts that will have a ripple effect Into the future.

To **compensate** you for your participation, please check the applicable box expressing your Interest In receiving the following: [The researcher humbly offers your choice of the following, please check the box of your interest]

- Recognition by name - final document publication
- Declination of name - removal or redaction of name In final document publication
- Honorarium _____ (specify type or amount and frequency or unit)
- Traditional Gift
- Invitation to Final Presentation of Dissertation
- Invitation to Potlach Graduation Celebration
- Declination of compensation
- Reserving the right to discuss and agree upon compensation at a later date

Your **participation** in this research must be completely voluntary.

- If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation.
- If you do withdraw from the project, your data will not be used without permission specifically granted In the request to withdraw.
- If permission Is explicitly granted, data will only be used to the degree or manner as specified In the ongoing permissions and as stated.
- Despite withdrawing from the research project, compensation will be honored.

Research Consent Form

To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, the researcher will continue to collaborate with you by committing to regular-check ins and updates about any changes especially with regard to draft materials and preparing for finalizing the research materials.

Your **confidentiality** and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by securing research data and records in a password protected file folder. The research will also be restricted to limited access to only the research team.

It is anticipated that the **results** of this research will be shared with others in the following ways:

- Potential to expand knowledge in a specific field to further research on Tribal self-governance and self-determination of Education policy in Tribal Communities.
- Providing a model for organizing community reconciliation and community forums on policy analysis and development strengthening and preserving sovereignty.
- Helping the community engage and collaborate together toward positive outcomes.
- The published work may serve as materials to be used in research papers, coursework, workshops or training programs.

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this project include the primary researcher, Cheebo Frazier, and her Co-Chair dissertation committee members, Dr. Michelle Montgomery and Dr. Dawn Hardison-Stevens at the addresses listed in this consent form.

Your **signature** below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this research project and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

ʔəsk'wədiicid čəd. (I am grateful to you).

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent form will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix H

Community Introduction



Prepared by Cheebo Frazier, M.B.A.

Prepared for Nisqually Tribal Community

DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE RESEARCH INQUIRY

W As a part of graduation requirements, the 3rd Year Educational Leadership doctoral students of the Muckleshoot Tribal Cohort at the School of Education, University of Washington, Tacoma, must complete a dissertation. The title is *Balancing Power & Creating Agency Toward Educational Pathways within Indigenous Communities*.

Introduction

This inquiry focuses on the reunification of community planning where we have been historically fragmented, disrupted, disparaged, and erased. Our voice and agency in educational policy that governs our role in Native education and the extension of the education of Native students in public institutions have been compromised by systemic racism and oppression. In essence, the research aims to show we are stronger collectively.

Objectives

Primary Aim: The disregard for the role of parents/ family/ community in the instructional core and the everyday learning experiences of native students. We are first teachers at home.

Secondary Aim: The overreliance on westernized systems driving standards and processes that dismiss Indigenous worldviews and our needs as native communities in care of learners.

Relevance: This study has the potential to shift the engagement and participation of parents/families/community in policy making and how we as a Tribe engage with external partners and collaborators to drive the educational experience of our students.

Methodology

Research type	Quantitative Data - story work, counter story, policy analysis.
Data collection methods	Surveys, focus groups, interviews, observations, or other secondary data
Demographics	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Nisqually Tribal Community - parents & families2. Tribal Government and Administration3. My parents as guides, mentors and co-researcher
Start date	28 Jun 2025
End date	30 Apr 2031

Theoretical Frameworks

Tribal Insurgent Research

Collaborative with Community toward change, transformation and voice
Answerable to Community
Grounded by Indigenous worldviews

Tribally- Participatory Driven Research

Seeks empowerment of Community and its Leadership
Decolonizes and Indigenizes self-governance systems
Collaborative toward policy development and implementation

Community & Tribal Collaboration & Planning

Community Cafe Talking Circles

These Tribal Gatherings will represent reconciliation work, including traditional hospitality and dialogue about our role as parents, families, caregivers, and community leaders, and how we view the educational opportunities that our children face.

Critical Tribal Policy Analysis

Self-governance means we have the power to promulgate rule toward self-determination. Additionally, our customary and traditional ways of knowing and being supersede Westernized frameworks. Together we will examine, dismantle and rebuild a set of policy, procedure, regulation or Tribal Law, as co-creators.

Appendix I

Thank You Letter

hawadubš čələp

Thank you all so much!

Dear Nisqually Community,

ʔəsq̓wuʔ čəl - I greet you with gratitude and respect. Over the past three years, our Tribe and Community have supported my studies and encouraged our cohort of Tribal students and Native relatives to pursue doctoral degrees in Education, which is part of the continued work by Indigenous Scholars toward improving the educational experiences of our children for the present and the future.

I take this time now to say hawadubš čələp (Thank You All) for sharing this journey with me.

The dissertation I present, called *Balancing Power and Creating Agency Toward Educational Pathways within Indigenous Communities*, is a reflection of our collective voices, community vision, and our heartwork toward community healing and well-being.

This project could not have been done without our students, parents, extended relatives, and especially the groundwork laid by our Elders to leave an enduring legacy.

I am reminded how important traditional and cultural ways are to our sovereignty and self-determination as a Native Nation.

You have shaped this collective research, which began with the belief that we are enough and that we have the heart, spirit, and strength within us as a people to safeguard our children and to strive for continuity of our culture, our medicines, and our traditional ways.

To each of you who offered your talks, encouragement, guidance, and stories, it has been a great honor for you to share your gifts of love and laughter along this journey.

ʔəsk̓wədiitubułəd čəd. I am grateful to you all.

Cheebo Frazier
UW Doctoral Candidate

