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Emergent and Revolutionary: Telling Native Peoples' Stories at Tribal Colleges
Volume 28, No. 3 - Spring 2017 **Cheryl Crazy Bull** ♦ February 19, 2017

I cannot speak to the role of tribal colleges and their commitment to Indigenous studies within their unique missions without recalling the words of Dr. Ned Hatathli, the first Navajo president of Navajo Community College. When asked at a news conference in Washington, DC, to share one thing that made his college different from other two-year colleges, he stated, “Well, we don’t teach that Columbus discovered America” (Stein, 1992).

Thus the role of Indigenous studies and history at tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) is summed up in one statement—we teach our own truth about our experience. Native studies is a broad and inclusive field, but at the heart of it is our peoples’ history. Through this lens we seek to transform our communities into prosperous, healthy environments. Indigenous studies—its mission, teaching strategies, curricular focus, research, and academic and community engagement—makes it possible for tribal colleges to fulfill the dream of our founders: the dream of a post-secondary education rooted in our histories and cultural knowledge, and one that prepares us to preserve, restore, and manage our resources while leading quality lives as tribal citizens. Indigenous studies is about who we are as tribal people, our spirituality, our languages, our economic and political systems, our social structure, and our homelands.

ORIGINS OF NATIVE STUDIES AT TRIBAL COLLEGES



Photographs

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The development of Native studies programming at TCUs is both an emergent and a revolutionary experience. It is emergent in that it comes from self-knowledge and from our own observations, practices, and history. It is based on our experiences and knowledge that resonate from within our memory. Native studies at TCUs is also responsive to influences and it represents dynamic aspects of our past, our knowledge, and our societies.

And it is rooted in acts of revolution. Native studies approaches education from the perspective of American Indian people and creates an educational experience that intentionally promotes

tribal self-determination. Native teachers, researchers, and tribal college leaders accomplish goals that defy the expectations of the national higher education community, policymakers, and legislatures, and sometimes even our own tribal organizations.

In the very first issue of *Tribal College Journal*, historian Steve Crum explored the concept of tribal higher education, which advocates had been promoting as early as 1911. August Breuninger, a mixed-blood Menominee writing to Carlos Montezuma, a wellknown Native physician, stated:

A University for Indians is the greatest step that we educated Indians could make in uniting our people... It would eliminate the general conception of the people that an Indian consists of only feathers and paint. It would single us out to the Indians and the rest of the world as REALLY PROGRESSIVE INDIANS. It would give us a better influence with the rising generation, by setting out our character in such conspicuous a manner as to be the means of being observed and imitated by them.

This statement illustrates that even in the early vision of tribal higher education there was a desire to influence the lives of people by reminding them of the rich cultural knowledge that Natives possess.

In 1968, upon the establishment of the first tribally controlled college, Navajo Community College (now Diné College), Navajo cultural experts defined the foundational role of Diné philosophy and teachings in the post-secondary work of their college. With each new tribal college came an increased commitment to preserve and teach cultural knowledge, practices, and history. In the beginning of the tribal college movement, the terms “Indigenous studies” or “Native studies” were rarely used. Instead, each institution named its cultural studies department after the tribe, and often coursework had broad terminology such as “American Indian Culture and History” or “North American Indian Art.” Over time, Native studies became more defined and coursework became more specific to tribal groups, so now there are departments like “Dakota Studies” or courses such as “Navajo Fundamental Law,” “Anishinaabe of the Lakes,” and “Lakota Tradition, Philosophy, and Spirituality.”

In his recent book, *Capturing Education: Envisioning and Building the First Tribal Colleges*, Paul Boyer speaks to the intentions of the founders of the tribal college movement: “All felt, and some felt strongly, that their colleges should also reflect and promote the values and traditions of the tribe or tribes they served. Remembering the trauma of assimilationist education policies, tribal college leaders believed that their institutions should work to restore what was lost and rebuild respect for traditional values.” This vision underlies organizational priorities and the allocation of resources toward a tribal college identity that is formed by the mission of cultural restoration and tribal self-determination. The creation of this vision is itself revolutionary, but its enactment through the design and delivery of culturally rooted education is groundbreaking. It is the “really progressive Indians” that Breuninger referred to that made both tribal colleges and Native studies a reality.



TEACHING AND LEARNING NATIVE STUDIES AND HISTORY

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The role of Native studies at tribal colleges is all encompassing. Tribally specific studies are focused on providing a deep examination of tribal knowledge. This knowledge is then passed on in multiple ways, including through cultural integration, Native studies coursework, research, and publication. Although tribal studies departments and faculty exist at TCUs as standalone departments and positions, the integration of Indigenous knowledge throughout the curriculum at TCUs is important in all programs of study.

Sharon Kinley, the founding director of the Coast Salish Institute at Northwest Indian College, explains, “Tribal colleges teach Native students, they don’t teach about Natives.” Thus the intention of Native studies programs at tribal colleges is distinguished from other Indigenous studies programs at mainstream institutions. This is not to say that Native studies programs at mainstream institutions are not of tremendous value, but rather to note that the purpose of tribal studies at TCUs is the promotion of the sovereignty of students in the context of their history, identity, and the preservation of peoplehood. While this can be true of Native studies programs at mainstream institutions, there is no denying that those programs often teach a significant number of non-tribal students who influence the content and context of the coursework.

Moreover, Indigenous studies programs are created and delivered differently at tribal colleges because each institution has its own unique mission and characteristics. Programs are generally tribally specific, except in the case of institutions that serve broader regional or national constituencies. Even in those cases, TCUs establish strong working relationships with their local tribal communities and create opportunities for their students to share tribally specific knowledge.

One of the most valuable contributions of tribal colleges is their commitment to telling the story of their own tribal communities and to correcting the historical record about the experiences of tribal people, pre- and post-contact. The responsibility of tribal colleges to focus on cultural preservation and restoration is well established. Indeed, it is one of the core arguments for the existence of tribal colleges. Dr. Richard Littlebear, longtime president of Chief Dull Knife College, explored this purpose, stating, “It is therefore, the role of tribal colleges and universities to set the tone for which direction the whole tribe should take” (Littlebear, 2009).

In her essay, “World View and Cultural Behaviors: Strategies and Resources Determination in the Tribal Academy,” Ojibwa scholar Rosemary Ackley Christensen shares the common instructional methodology of circle teaching, rooted in oral learning and the foundational tribal values of reciprocity, relationship, and respect. This method incorporates one of the most important learning and research strategies in tribal communities: storytelling. This method requires us to listen carefully to learn, to develop our ability to use words and movement to share teachings. Storytelling can be used in all contexts, including for comparisons, contrasts, values transmission, historical perspectives, and exploration of contemporary issues.

While storytelling is a central instructional methodology, there is usually considerable effort to identify and access existing information to serve as the basis for the curriculum when TCUs first establish tribal studies programs. In nearly all situations, tribal scholars engage their own knowledge, that of their extended family, and of their communities and societies. They employ all of these sources to form the content of their curriculum. In the early stages of preparing for a particular topic, faculty may identify significant information gaps that they must then fill through a variety of strategies such as interviews with community elders, participation in community engagement activities, and interaction with scholars from mainstream institutions who studied their tribe.

Indigenous studies cannot occur without research. Tribal cultural informants are often the most knowledgeable researchers, possessing significant information about their people, contributing to community-based research approaches, and offering evaluation insights about the impact of programs on their people.

Faculty may find that identifying the “right” information is challenging because interpretation is at risk due to outside influences. Community-identified scholars such as fluent language speakers, local historians, and cultural experts are often well-educated in tribal teachings but have limited knowledge of research and teaching methodologies—knowledge that is necessary in organizing and delivering academic programs within a post-secondary, higher education environment. It can also be challenging when scholars and teachers are charged with both interpretation of knowledge and its translation in modern society.

We have Native researchers who possess tribal knowledge and share it using traditional methods such as storytelling and demonstration. We also have Native researchers who possess tribal knowledge and use contemporary approaches to teach, including organized coursework and experiments, and have learned Western methods such as quantitative research with variables. And some have both tribal and Western knowledge and research skills.

Access to cultural informants who are literally sharing knowledge that comes from their experience or that has been directly passed on to them is invaluable and unique to tribal colleges. Helping these individuals become part of a more formal teaching environment is a challenge. Although TCUs have led the way in the identification of certification processes for non-formally

trained
Native



educators, they must still ensure that these individuals are able to fulfill the requirements of post-secondary instruction, including the development of syllabi with outcomes, assessments and requirements, identification of instructional materials, and use of effective teaching strategies.

INDIGENOUS STUDIES IS TRIBAL SELF-DETERMINATION

Photographs Credit: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Edward S. Curtis Collection, [reproduction number, [reproduction number, LC-USZ62]

In order to achieve credibility and strengthen the value of tribal college education, TCUs have opted to participate in the regional accreditation model for post-secondary institutions. This model requires institutions to engage in a rigorous peer-review process. Since the beginning of this experience, regional accrediting agencies have struggled to align the standards promulgated through accreditation with the unique characteristics of tribal colleges, including TCUs' focus on Native self-determination.

The development of Native studies as a discipline and the focus on the qualifications of faculty teaching in Native studies resulted partly from the accreditation experience. These developments are also closely linked to the evolution of Native studies nationally in higher education. Mainstream institutions began the process of establishing their own American Indian studies departments as early as 1969, and the connections between Native scholars at those institutions and at tribal colleges were often essential to strengthening both programs.

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, a Dakota writer and intellectual, has written extensively about the vital role that Native studies has had in promoting tribal self-determination and the decolonization of Native minds. Her scholarship, particularly the book *New Indians, Old Wars*, is rich with provocative discussions about the role of American Indian studies and the critical necessity of the “defensive, regulatory, and transformative functions of Indian Studies.” Cook-Lynn describes accurately, and from an academic perspective rooted in her own Dakota identity, the very outcomes of Indian studies desired by the tribal college founders, concluding,

Therefore, Indian Studies as a discipline has been in the process of emerging, not as a “corrective” or a “replacement” body of work, but rather as an autonomous approach to a vast body of knowledge concerning the cultures and histories of native peoples on this continent and the development of “endogenous” methods” (Cook-Lynn, 2007). The socialization of our children is extremely critical given the current socioeconomic conditions in our communities. Tribal colleges contribute to the restoration of socialization practices through their adherence to traditional values and knowledge. An ongoing commitment to pedagogy, curriculum, research, and publication aids this restoration. Indigenous studies strategies help tribes preserve societal knowledge and norms, assuring that foundational knowledge is accurately transmitted to increase both individual and communal prosperity.

Also unique to Indigenous studies programs are the practices of providing knowledge that is age and gender appropriate, geared to the circumstances of the individual, family, and community, respectful of the life stages of citizens, and sensitive to cultural expectations such as ownership of private knowledge. I am reminded of the teachings of Tom Sampson, a Tsartlip elder with whom I worked at Northwest Indian College, and the late Albert White Hat, a Sicangu Lakota scholar. Both shared that it is important for educators at tribal colleges to be aware of the readiness of young people to participate in cultural and life teachings and experiences. They, along with many others, stress that we can only transform lives if we are aware of the ability of the recipient to both receive knowledge and then to act on it.

Many institutions have expanded the reach of their tribal studies curriculum and methodologies through deliberate interactions with area schools, early childhood education programs, and community education. Teacher education offered at tribal colleges integrates cultural knowledge throughout the curriculum and requires students to take courses in Native studies.

All TCUs require at least one course in tribal studies, and many require more as part of the general education requirements of degree programs. Some degree programs may require specific Native studies courses as part of both required and elective coursework. Institutions offer a significant number of specific Native studies degrees, such as the Crow studies Associate of Arts degree offered at Little Big Horn College or the master’s degree in Lakota leadership at Oglala Lakota College. Many institutions support community outreach focused on Indigenous studies. Bay Mills Community College offers three courses in Native studies, free to members of federally recognized tribes, in an effort to promote Indigenous knowledge and identity.

Faculty and scholars at TCUs are also sensitive to the influences of Western belief systems in the interpretation and design of Indigenous studies. Each tribe has its own description of human development, its history, the status of women or gender roles in their society, and the qualities of



leadership. These areas, along with many others, have been heavily influenced by the views of Western anthropologists, historians, sociologists, and political scientists. Critical to the success of Native studies in achieving its mission of self-determination is to overcome those influences and to present a true picture of Native society and its values and contributions.

WE ARE OUR HISTORY AND WE ARE THE FUTURE

Photographs Credit: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Edward S. Curtis Collection, [reproduction number, [reproduction number, LC-USZ62]

Indigenous studies at tribal colleges is adaptive. Teachers, community connectors, leaders, and researchers have all evolved their Native studies programs and resources according to the life cycle and seasons of the institutions and the communities they serve. As tribal colleges mature, the quality of their curriculum improves. As more scholars and teachers are trained, the quantity and breadth of knowledge increases. And as more students are educated, tribal quality of life gets better.

Integrated Native studies requires a level of trust and communication across disciplines. It requires interaction within and among communities and individuals. To be comprehensive invites interaction with Native scholars in mainstream institutions. We have made remarkable progress contributing to an incredible wealth of knowledge. We still have more to do.

Cheryl Crazy Bull (Sicangu Lakota) is the president and CEO of the American Indian College Fund.

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‘Women in Water’ Symposium Focuses on Career Opportunities and Advancement

By Debbie L. Sklar, Times of San Diego, 12/27/18

Girls and women interested in learning about career and advancement opportunities in the water and wastewater industry are encouraged to register for the Cuyamaca College Center for Water Studies’ second annual Women in Water – Exploring Career Pathways symposium on Jan. 17. The all-day conference comprises two tracks of speakers: one for women contemplating a career change, military veterans transitioning to civilian life, and women already in the water and wastewater industry who are seeking professional development opportunities; the second for scores of high school girls in the region wanting to learn more about career opportunities as they near graduation.

Public comment sought on Klamath dam report By Holly Owns, Herald and news, 12/27/18

Public comment is sought for a draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for surrender of the Lower Klamath Project license, according to a news release from the California State Water Resources Control Board. The license surrender is one step toward the proposed decommissioning and removal of four PacifiCorp dams on the Klamath River. The Klamath River Renewal Corporation (KRRC) applied to the board in September for a Clean Water Act section 401 certification for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license surrender of the Lower Klamath Project.

Our Favorite Recycled Book Art

<https://www.hometalk.com/13060003/our-favorite-recycled-book-art>

2 Materials: \$10 10 Days Medium Difficulty

We picked 3 of our favorite recycled book art projects to share and inspire you to DIY your own ! If you want to give it a try...look for our LIVE video tutorial with Hometalk here: <http://bit.ly/2jtjiPU>

We made this book art last year for our local university - but there's absolutely no reason why you can't recreate the same effect for your home.

It's simply a matter of folding and rolling the pages of books that are no longer being used for reading.

The Redskins Aren’t Very Good on the Field. Off It, They’re Even Worse.

By KEVIN DRAPER

Poor play, muddled stadium plans and off-field controversies are distancing a once-proud fan base from the team. It shows in poor attendance numbers.

(So why doesn’t a coalition of tribes buy the franchise? sdc)

Ohieyse Charles Eastman “Soul of an Indian” documentary on PBS website until Jan 4 2018



[UNLV launching new drone certification program](#)

UNLV will offer a new unmanned aerial systems certification program in the upcoming spring semester, broadening the local workforce's skillset as the demand for drone pilots increases across industries.

Earthwatch

Step away from your desk and out of the classroom for an outdoor environmental learning experience! As a Teach Earth fellow, you'll learn the scientific process first-hand and help to solve some of the world's most pressing environmental challenges. Return to the classroom with new perspectives and knowledge, invigorated and inspired to share the experience of real discovery with your students. Applications for 2019 fellowships are due January 10. Applications are open to K-12 teachers of any subject within the U.S.



In loving memory

DON MELENDEZ

October 22, 1928 - December 27, 2018



A funeral service will be held on Friday, January 4th at 11:00am at the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony Gymnasium.

Burial will be at the Hungry Valley Memorial Cemetery followed by dinner at Reno-Sparks Colony Gym.

Viewing will be on Thursday, January 3rd from 5:00-7:00pm at Walton- Ross Burke Knoble Mortuary
2155 Kietzke Ln. Reno, Nevada.