American Indian Participation in Higher Education:

NEVADA PERSPECTIVES

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Table of Contents, Tables and Figures

Chapter 1 – Understanding Nevada American Indian College Participation: The Context
  College: A Gateway to Higher Well-Being ........................................... 1
  A Brief History of American Indian Education .................................... 2
  Pre-Colonization .............................................................................. 2
  The Boarding School Era ................................................................. 3
  Self-Determination ......................................................................... 4
  The Footprint in the Sand ................................................................. 4
  Examples of Successful Strategies ................................................. 5
  Tribal Colleges .............................................................................. 7
  Summary ....................................................................................... 8

Chapter 2 – American Indians in Nevada
  Types of American Indians in Nevada ............................................. 11
  Nevada Indian Tribes ..................................................................... 12
  Summary ....................................................................................... 18

Chapter 3 – American Indian K-12 Education
  School Age Challenges of American Indian Youth ......................... 21
  American Indian Alaska Native (AIAN) Youth in K-12 Educational Systems ... 21
  College Readiness for American Indian Youth ............................... 24
  Possible Solutions ......................................................................... 26
  Tips for Educators ......................................................................... 26
  Summary ....................................................................................... 28

Chapter 4 – American Indian College Education
  American Indian Student Enrollment at Nevada’s Colleges ................ 31
  Recruitment Strategy for American Indian Students ....................... 32
  Retention Strategies for American Indians in Postsecondary Institutions ... 35
  The Importance of Community Colleges and Tribal Colleges for American Indian Students .................................................... 35
  Summary ....................................................................................... 36

Chapter 5 – Educational Needs and Interests: Survey Results
  American Indian Higher Education Needs Assessment ..................... 38
  Areas of Educational Interest ......................................................... 40
  Tuition Cost .................................................................................. 43
  Barriers of College Attendance ..................................................... 43
  Surveying American Indians for the Tribal College Project ................ 44
  Discussion and Implications .......................................................... 45
  Summary ....................................................................................... 46
Chapter 6 – Voices of the People: Nevada Tribal Focus Groups

Factors Impacting College Attendance and Retention .......................... 49
Benefits of Tribal College .............................................................. 53
Summary ....................................................................................... 54

Bibliography ................................................................................. 56

Table 1: Location of Reservation Schools and Number of Students .............. 10
Table 2: Nevada College Enrollment for American Indian Students .............. 32
Table 3: Graduation Plus Transfer-Out Rates for American Indian Students ...... 34
Table 4: Nevada Indian Tribes Identified by Respondents ............................. 39
Table 5: Respondent Identification With an American Indian Tribe .............. 40
Table 6: Medium to High Educational Interest Priorities .............................. 41
Table 7: Priorities for Occupational Interest ............................................. 42
Table 8: Logistical Barriers of College Attendance ...................................... 43
Table 9: Social and Academic Barriers .................................................... 44

Graph 1: Concerns Based on the Annual Cost of Tuition .............................. 43

Figure 1: Earnings by Generation ......................................................... 2
Figure 2: Population Distribution of American Indians .............................. 23
Figure 3: Deans Future Scholars Middle School Mentorship Model .............. 33
Figure 4: Deans Future Scholars High School Mentorship Model ............... 33
Understanding Nevada American Indian College Participation: The Context

Learning Objectives:

- Discover the historical issues influencing college attendance for American Indians.
- Explore the barriers to college attendance for American Indians.
- Learn about the best solutions to helping American Indian youth succeed in college.

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) reports that there are 562 Native American tribes across the United States, with 229 tribes located in Alaska and the remaining 333 located in 33 states across the United States. Across these tribes, American Indians have lower rates of college attendance compared with non-Indians. This trend is evident in Nevada as well, impacting the capacity of many Nevada tribal people to secure employment and earn a solid wage. This chapter provides a brief overview of the literature on the context, historical issues and barriers to college attendance for American Indians.

College: A Gateway to Higher Well-Being

College is not for everyone. Apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and military service are among the many other pathways available to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to secure meaningful work and earn a good wage. Yet, attending college is associated with increased opportunities. Those who graduate from college earn a higher wage, have less unemployment, are less likely to live in poverty, and have higher overall job satisfaction (Bowen, Chingos, McPherson, & Tobin, 2009; Caumont, 2014). As the Pew Research Center data show, young adults in 2013 with bachelor’s degrees typically earned $17,500 more per year than high school graduates.

Participation in higher education for American Indians has ramifications well beyond individual well-being. The passing of knowledge through oral tradition, the preservation of language and culture, and the continuation of tribal sovereignty are objectives that are more plausible with a well-educated American Indian society. American Indian tribal leaders need knowledge and skill often gained in higher education to maneuver through the complexities of tribal law and government-to-government consultation (Nizhone, 2015).
American Indian youth face historical barriers that have led to disparities in educational attainment compared with non-Indian youth. Some of these barriers are rooted in the European colonization of America, which led to American Indian communities experiencing genocide (the intentional killing of a group of people), pandemics (widespread diseases), involuntary relocation (driving American Indians off their homelands), and forced acculturation (imposing the customs and beliefs of the White culture onto American Indians). The history of American Indian education is inextricably entwined with these historical traumas and with related federal Indian policies across the eras (Nizhone, 2015).

Pre-Colonization

Before European colonization, there was an era of Native education in which American Indian tribes educated their own children using traditional methods, such as storytelling; art; symbolism; and hands-on learning of practical American Indian skills, such as hunting, preparing food, building shelters, and the passing of knowledge through oral tradition. Many tribes also used different alphabet systems, and relied on spiritual ceremony and prayer to pass on knowledge to the younger generations. Some tribes developed highly accurate star charts used for the teaching of astronomy and for spiritual practice.
The Boarding School Era

The early years of colonization through the early 20th century was an era of federal government boarding schools and missionary education. The Bureau of Indian Education funded residential boarding schools and day schools, educational environments where cultural assimilation was often the central goal. The government policy for solving the “Indian problem” was to assimilate the population, by taking children away from their American Indian parents and moving them to boarding schools. In the boarding schools, the missionaries would mitigate the influence of parents by teaching American Indian youth White cultural customs. In boarding school, cultural expressions, native language, sweat lodge ceremonies, the Sun Dance and other traditions were suppressed and even severely punished. Male children were forced to cut their braided hair, and traditional Indian clothing was forbidden. The forced removal and assimilation of children to boarding schools splintered families and led to cultural confusion for children (Evans-Campbell, 2008).

As is often the case, history has gifted us with more than one interpretation of the Indian boarding school era. Few deny that during this era boarding schools were a means of forced assimilation where families were broken and students were robbed of their native culture, language and traditions. Yet, traumatizing as many of these boarding school experiences were, some boarding school participants describe being saved by the kindnesses of missionaries. Others report having gained valuable skills and knowledge. Boarding schools differed in the levels of forced acculturation and militaristic style. Some schools even allowed expression of Native culture and Indian language.

According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Stewart Indian School in Nevada was a boarding school charged with the task of educating and assimilating American Indian students. The Stewart school, located just south of Carson City, opened in 1880 with 37 students from local Washoe, Paiute and Shoshone tribes. By 1919, the Stewart Indian School had 400 students. Many of the students were taught stone masonry skills by Hopi stone masons, enabling them to participate in the building of over 60 structures at the school. Much of the curriculum taught at Stewart was vocational, until there was a shift towards academics in the 1960s. Stewart was closed in 1980 and is now listed on the National Historic Register (Nevada Indian Commission, www.stewartindianschool.com).

Though the boarding school era left irreparable damage to American Indian culture and created an unfortunate link between trauma and education, the mission of total elimination of Native culture failed (National Museum of the American Indian, 2007). This is perhaps a testament to the resiliency of American Indian peoples.
Self-Determination

In the 1920s and 1930s, federal Indian education policies and practices came under fire. New laws were enacted, ensuring rights for American Indian students. By the 1960s, the era of self-determination was in its peak, evidenced by the establishment of Native-ran schools. It was during this era that the first tribal college was established in 1968. A return to tribal sovereignty had begun (Reyhner, 2013).

Yet, even during the era of self-determination the traumas of colonization and of the boarding school era were impossible to erase. Trauma responses and the tendency toward anxiety, learned helplessness and mistrust were passed down through the generations. The cycle of traumatic stress became self-perpetuating (Levine, 2001). This phenomenon has been coined “historical trauma,” and has been extensively explored in scholarly literature.

The Footprint in the Sand

Though today self-determination and tribal sovereignty are upheld and federal government policies support tribally owned and operated schools, the history of genocide, forced removal and boarding schools have left a perpetual footprint on the educational achievement of American Indians. Researchers report that American Indians continue to face the long-term effects of this historical trauma (Pupavac, 2002; Stone, 2003; Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen, 2004). According to the American Indian College Fund (2016), 28 percent of American Indians live below the poverty line, in comparison to 15.5 percent of the American population. High levels of unemployment and low levels of education accompany this poverty. Census Bureau data shows 24.1 percent of American Indian people were without health insurance in 2010 (Census Bureau), resulting in primary and behavioral health disparities. American Indian youth are three times more likely than the national average to be arrested in adolescence, and about 75 percent of deaths amongst American Indian youth are between the ages of 12 and 20 (www.NIEA.org). Within the population of American Indian youth age 15 to 24, suicide is the second leading cause of death. American Indian youth experience alcohol abuse at a 10 percent higher rate than non-Indian youth (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration). One in every three American Indian youth have a substance abuse problem, and Alcohol-related mortality is 514 percent higher in American Indian populations compared with the general population. American Indian youth face higher rates of mental and behavioral health struggles, and yet do not have equal access to appropriate health care compared with non-Indian youth. School achievement for American Indian youth has been greatly affected, especially within educational systems where American Indian youth are a tiny minority group and their particular needs may not be recognized or addressed. National graduation rates for American Indian high school students are consistently below that of their non-native peers, 49.3 percent compared with 76.2 percent for White students. American Indian students are expelled or suspended from school at higher rates than Whites, and are more likely to be labeled as special needs (www.NIEA.org). The Surgeon General’s report on
Mental Health and Ethnicity (U.S. Public Health Service, 2001) indicates that historical context; as well as current demographic, social and cultural factors; racism; discrimination; and poverty significantly contribute to the disproportionate struggles of American Indian peoples. The report also suggests a link between educational achievement and negative consequences of historical trauma, evident in American Indian children falling behind educationally between fourth and seventh grades. This educational achievement gap widens dramatically in late adolescence.

Given the history of the boarding school era, American Indian families are likely to have significant fear and distrust of the educational system, a system dominated by non-Indian teachers, school counselors and administrators. For their part, school systems are often under-resourced and are consequently unable to address the needs of tribal students who constitute a small percentage of the population in many schools. The barriers for American Indian students are particularly challenging in schools that fail to address the trauma or lack the capacity to engage the resiliency factors of American Indian students. Research has shown that embracing American Indian culture and tradition in educational settings is empowering to American Indian students, who often experience tension between the values of the White education system and their cultural beliefs and practices.

Another key barrier to American Indian college and career readiness is the disconnect between American Indian students and higher education faculty and administration. American Indian students report that they often feel like outsiders, and that faculty frequently fail to recognize their disenfranchisement and marginalization. Two possible reasons that may explain the outsider problem: higher education pedagogy may be dismissive of traditional American Indian forms of knowledge and wisdom, or, college professors have cultural or behavioral biases against American Indian students (Collins, 2013).

Examples of Successful Strategies

The future of Indian education hinges on federal policies impacting Indian education. Though a complete review of these federal policies is beyond the scope of this document, one promising movement in federal policy is the funding of culture and language preservation programs, which inadvertently provide opportunities for education. The continuation of Title VII Indian Education programs, as well as funding for tribal-only initiatives, such as Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s Circle of Care may yield promising results for American Indian students (Nizhoni, 2015).

In-depth interviews with successful American Indian postsecondary students revealed the following factors to be paramount to academic persistence: family support, structured social supports within the educational institutions, warmth and caring from faculty and staff, early exposure to college and career information, developing independence and assertiveness,
institutional respect for spiritual practices such as ceremonies and prayer, developing the capacity to cope with racism, and nonlinear academic path options. One further ingredient for success was supporting the students in developing the ability to navigate the paradoxical cultural pressures that on one hand drive them toward college, and on the other hand, pull them toward home (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003). Referred to as Crab Bucket Syndrome or Crab-in-Bucket, American Indian students who attempt to attend college are sometimes shamed, ridiculed or isolated by their own community in an effort to retain these individuals within the community (Ness, 2001). This is also known as system homeostasis.

The study of the success stories in Native higher education is critical to designing programs to support American Indian students. Keene (2016) describes the study of Native higher education:

“The study of Native higher education examines how students make the transition to college and navigate the college environment, and it may be possible to draw on the challenges and successes of these students to understand the experiences of Native students applying to college. Studies demonstrate success factors such as access to financial aid (Tierney, Sallee, & Venegas, 2007), mentoring (Shotton, Oosahwe, & Cintrón, 2007), the role of family (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008), and supportive college environments that are affirming to Native cultures (Martin, 2005) ...movement to reframe the conversation around the success, joy, strength, and power in Native communities around education. My work with College Horizons seeks to fill the gap in literature on college access programing for Native students while maintaining a commitment to documenting the good in Indian Country.” (Keene, 2016)

Educational programs that foster opportunities for American Indian students to embrace and integrate Native traditions within their higher education experience have been found to be effective to the recruitment and retention of American Indian students in college. Keene’s highly successful American Indian college access program, College Horizons, has led to a deeper understanding of the critical importance of cultural identity development in college success. Though the College Horizons program encompasses helping American Indian students to write college admissions essays and provides students with technical assistance for completing financial aid and scholarship applications, these program components were found to be much less critical to student success than exploration of American Indian identity.

Another successful programming approach has been embraced by some of the institutions within the California State University system. Klasky (2013) addresses the issue that many American Indian students are marginalized within postsecondary institutions, and indeed by mainstream society. His successful work in the California State University system is built around engaging American Indian students through addressing marginalization. Klasky’s approach is to integrate American Indian culture and practices within the educational systems, including acknowledging and valuing traditional Native knowledge, such as elders, stories, and experience. Klasky also
points out the need for safe places to practice Native ceremonies, the importance of positive American Indian role models, and adequate support in the technological aspects of their chosen educational programs. Adelman et al. (2013) found that programs and policies supporting success in postsecondary education for the American Indian population are often piecemeal and inconsistent. He highlights the problem of too-little-too-late, by stating that social and financial struggles in elementary school must be addressed early if we are to usher more American Indian students into college.

**Tribal Colleges**

Tribal colleges are unique higher education institutions specifically designed to meet the needs of American Indian students. There are 32 fully accredited Tribal Colleges and Universities in the U.S., and enrollment is on the rise. While the broad mission of these institutions is similar to other colleges in that they provide courses that are transferable to mainstream universities, their mission is also to support and encourage the exploration of traditional tribal culture. Tribal colleges typically serve isolated populations and are often located on reservations. Much like community colleges, accredited tribal colleges usually have open admissions policies. The U.S. Department of Education (2016) reports that though American Indian graduation rates from mainstream colleges and universities are low compared with other ethnic groups, 86 percent complete their program of study when enrolled at tribal colleges.

Tribal colleges are funded primarily through federal funds, as part of the federal government treaty obligations to sovereign Indian nations. A strong source of funding has been through the University Assistance Act of 1978, administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Because tribal colleges are often located on reservations that are federal trust territory, they are unable to levy local property taxes like other community colleges, and receive little or no state funding.

The power of tribal colleges is evident in this statement by DeLong, Monette, and Ozaki (2016). “In many respects, the resiliency of the tribal college movement parallels the struggles American Indian people have endured throughout the centuries of attempts at termination and forced assimilation perpetuated by the United States government. Tribal colleges have emerged as a major factor in cultural and academic success and continue to move forward in the ongoing struggle of the American Indian survival movement.”

Nevada does not have a tribal college, but efforts to determine the feasibility of a tribal college for the State of Nevada are underway. The Nevada American Indian College Survey data reported in Chapter 5 and the tribal focus group results discussed in Chapter 6 are initial steps in a needs assessment that may lead to a tribal college initiative for the State of Nevada.
Summary

Comprehending the multigenerational effects of the history of genocide against tribal peoples is an important context for understanding the barriers to American Indian college and career readiness. The barriers to college attendance are exacerbated by poverty, low levels of education, and mental and behavioral health problems. Health and education disparities for American Indians have been identified by agencies within the federal government, but efforts to reduce the disparities have yielded only minimal success. Among positive solutions are programs that recognize cultural factors. In addition, tribal colleges are understood to be powerful agents of change for American Indian youth.
Chapter Review:

1. Describe in your own words the relationship between the history of American Indian education and the struggles of American Indians today.

2. After reading the chapter, you should have some understanding of the challenges of American Indian students in regard to education. Describe two barriers related to college participation for American Indian youth.

3. Using ideas from the chapter but also your own ideas, what viable solutions do you see to the American Indian educational struggle described in this chapter?
C H A P T E R  T W O

American Indians in Nevada

Learning Objectives:

- Understand where American Indian youth in Nevada are receiving K-12 education.
- Outline the number of American Indian Tribes in Nevada.
- Increase awareness of tribal sovereignty, how the reservations in Nevada were set up, and when tribal governments were established.

There are Paiute, Shoshone and Washoe Indians in Nevada who are representative of 19 federally recognized tribes and 27 reservations and colonies. Each Tribe in Nevada has its own unique story and is a sovereign nation. Tribal councils have jurisdiction over educational activities occurring on the lands that they govern. It is imperative to understand how the reservation was established and how a tribal government was created. It also is important to understand how a tribal council operates to implement current and future educational initiatives.

There is only one “Tribal School” in Nevada, the Pyramid Lake Jr./Sr. High School located on the Pyramid Lake Reservation. This school is run by a five-member school board of tribal members. There are four members elected and one member appointed by the tribal council. While there are other schools located on the different reservations in the state, they are operated by a county school district. These school districts have agreements or work closely with tribal government in the operation of the schools. Table 1 reflects schools located on Nevada reservations.

Table 1: Location of Reservation Schools and Number of Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>School District</th>
<th>Reservation School</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe</td>
<td>Washoe County</td>
<td>Natchez Elementary (K-6)</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe</td>
<td>Tribal School</td>
<td>Pyramid Lake Jr. High School (7-12)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walker River Paiute Tribe</td>
<td>Mineral County</td>
<td>Schurz Elementary School (K-6)</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duckwater Shoshone Tribe</td>
<td>Nye County</td>
<td>Duckwater Elementary / Middle School (PK-8)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoshone Paiute Tribes of Duck Valley</td>
<td>Elko County</td>
<td>Owyhee Combined Schools (K-12)</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort McDermitt Paiute Shoshone Tribe</td>
<td>Humboldt County</td>
<td>McDermitt Combined Schools (K-12)</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Student population numbers were obtained from the schools, except for Duckwater and Natchez, which were obtained from the school district websites.
Those working with American Indians in Nevada will benefit from understanding how Nevada Indian Country evolved and its heritage. The following chapter portrays the linkages and differences among the different tribes based on how the land base was established, when and how the tribal government was established, how many tribal members each tribe has, and where the tribal population receives its K-12 education. Realize that each tribal government structure is different, and what may be workable for one tribe may not be workable for another tribe.

**Types of American Indians in Nevada**

The Paiute people historically was made up of many different bands of Indians that were located across a large part of the western United States. The Paiutes call themselves “Numu,” meaning “The People.” Over time, the bands were relocated and placed on land bases that we call reservations today. In Nevada, there are the Southern Paiutes and Northern Paiutes. Prior to contact with Europeans, the Southern Paiutes occupied more than 30 million acres of present-day southern California, southern Nevada, south-central Utah and northern Arizona. They lived a nomadic lifestyle in independent groups, moving frequently based upon food supplies. Spanish settlement greatly impacted the Southern Paiutes, introducing a slave trade, and as settlement increased, epidemics of smallpox, cholera and other diseases swept through the bands of Indians. The Southern Paiute in Nevada lived in about 15 bands across southeastern Nevada and neighboring states. There are two federally recognized tribes as a result of the bands in Nevada. The two bands are the Las Vegas Paiute and the Moapa Band of Paiutes.

The Northern Paiute in Nevada lived in several bands that spanned across Oregon, California, Nevada and Idaho. There are five federally recognized tribes as a result of the bands in Nevada. These bands or “Tribes” as they are called today are the Lovelock Paiute Tribe, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, Summit Lake Paiute Tribe, Walker River Paiute Tribe and the Yerington Paiute Tribe.

The Western Shoshone Indians are “Newe,” (Nu-wee) meaning “The People” with a traditional territory covering southern Idaho, the central part of Nevada, northwestern Utah and the Death Valley region of southern California. The Western Shoshone historically survived by hunting, gathering, fishing, foraging and some farming. They have a unique social structure stretching throughout their territories, with all groups meeting up at least once a year, but also breaking up into small groups to follow food sources. The different groups (villages) of Indians are connected or linked based on economic and social activities, and through marriage (Clemmer, 2004). There are four Shoshone Tribes located in Nevada, which are the Te-Moak Tribe of Shoshone, Duckwater Shoshone Tribe, Ely Shoshone Tribe and the Yomba Shoshone Tribe.

There are several federally recognized tribes that are both Northern Paiute and Shoshone. The majority of the time, land was purchased, set aside or allocated for the Indians living in the area. At other times, they would relocate groups of Indians to a particular land base. This all resulted in Paiute and Shoshones making up the demographics of one tribe. The Paiute and Shoshone
tribes in Nevada are the Duck Valley Tribe of Shoshone and Paiute Indians, Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe, Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe, and the Winnemucca Paiute and Shoshone Indian Colony.

The Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California is located in western Nevada and eastern California around Lake Tahoe, specifically Cave Rock. Washoe or “Washo” is derived from “WA SHE SHU” meaning “The Washoe People.” The Washoe people historically were divided in three different groups. The groups are identified as “Wel mel ti,” (the northerners), “Pau wa lu” (lived in the Carson Valley), and “Hung a lel ti” (lived in the south). The groups would come together throughout the year for special events and gatherings (Washoe Tribe, 2017). The tribe is discussed below.

Nevada Indian Tribes

There is a description below of each of the tribes in Nevada. This description will provide insight into how the reservation was set up and how the government was established. Tribal membership is also provided to give an idea of the population.

Southern Paiutes

Las Vegas Paiute

The original land base for the Las Vegas Paiute was a federal land purchase of about 16 acres in 1911 for Indian use. This land base was primarily within a residential community of Las Vegas. The federal land base for the reservation was increased through Public Law 98-203 on Dec. 2, 1983, to add an additional 3,850 acres at Snow Mountain, just north of Las Vegas. The tribal government was set up under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, with the Secretary of the Interior approving the Las Vegas Paiute tribal constitution and bylaws on June 24, 1970. The tribal membership is estimated at 292 members. The youth attend various schools in Clark County.

Moapa Band of Paiute Indians “Nuwuvi”

The original land base for the Moapa Band of Paiute was established through an executive order on March 12, 1873, establishing 2,000,000 acres for Indian use. In 1875, the reservation land base was reduced to 1,000 acres until an act of Congress in 1981 restored 70,565 acres. The tribal government was set up under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, and the constitution and bylaws were ratified on April 17, 1942. The tribal membership reported by the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act housing authority was 311 members in 2012. Youth attend schools in Clark County.
Northern Paiute Tribes

**Lovelock Paiute Tribe**
The original land base for the reservation was a 2-acre purchase for an Indian school in September 1907. The colony was established on Nov. 1, 1910, when 18 additional acres were purchased and the Secretary of Interior allocated the entire 20 acres as a reservation. The tribal government was established under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, with a constitution and bylaws adopted on March 14, 1968. The tribal membership is estimated at 292 members. Youth attend schools in Pershing County.

**Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe**
The original land base for the reservation was ordered reserved for Indian use by the federal government on Nov. 29, 1859. The land base was confirmed by executive order in 1864. The reservation comprises 475,000 acres, of which 112,000 surface acres are occupied by Pyramid Lake, with a shoreline of 125 miles. The tribal government was set up under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, and the constitution was approved on Jan. 26, 1936. There are three principle communities on the reservation: Nixon, Wadsworth and Sutcliffe. The tribal headquarters is located in Nixon, although the majority of the population resides in Wadsworth. Tribal enrollment is estimated at 2,167 members. Pyramid Lake Jr./Sr. High School is located in Nixon, and Natchez Elementary School is located in Wadsworth. Some youth also attend schools in Reno and Fernley, Nevada.

**Summit Lake Paiute Tribe**
The original land base for the reservation was established by executive order on Jan. 14, 1913. The reservation land base is 11,591 acres, with 560 acres of the surface area being Summit Lake. The tribal government was established under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, and the tribal constitution was approved on Jan. 8, 1965. Tribal enrollment is estimated at 94 tribal members and the closest schools are located in Winnemucca.

**Walker River Paiute Tribe**
The Walker River Paiute Tribal land base was established by a recommendation from an Indian agent in the Utah Territory in 1859. This land base was confirmed by an executive order in 1874 by President Grant, which provided the northeast part of the Walker River Valley, including the name Walker Lake, for Indian use. The reservation was allotted by the Indian Appropriations Act of 1902, which provided that the Walker River Reservation in Nevada, irrigable from existing ditches or extension thereof, be allotted in 20-acre
parcels to heads of households. There were 10,000 acres allotted on the reservation. The tribal headquarters are located in Schurz in Mineral County, Nevada, and there are approximately 2,500 tribal members. Schurz Elementary School on the reservation is comprised of 60 students in kindergarten through sixth grade. Seventh-through 12th-grade students have a choice to go to Mineral County schools, Lyon County schools or Churchill County schools. Buses are provided to Mineral County Schools and Lyon County schools.

**Yerington Paiute Tribe**

A congressional act on May 18, 1915, established the Yerington tribal colony with about 9 acres, with an additional 12.91 acres purchased in 1978. A ranch, 1,019 acres, was purchased in 1936 under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, with 120 acres added in 1941 and 480 acres added in 1979. The tribal government was set up under the Act of 1934, with a constitution and bylaws ratified in 1937. There is a tribal enrollment of approximately 1,107 members. All youth attend schools within the City of Yerington in Lyon County.

**Western Shoshone Tribes**

**TE-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians of Nevada**

The Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians in Nevada consist of four different bands with completely different land bases, with a constitution and bylaws created under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. The Te-Moak Tribe’s constitution and bylaws were amended and sanctioned on Aug. 26, 1982. The tribal government is located in Elko, Nevada. The Te-Moak tribal council has total jurisdiction over all tribal lands, and the colonies retain sovereignty over other affairs.

- **Battle Mountain Colony:** The original land base was set aside by executive order on June 18, 1917, for 677 acres for Shoshones living near Battle Mountain and Winnemucca. A congressional act in 1967 added an additional 6.25 acres to the reservation. The tribal government operates under the constitution and bylaws of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians. Tribal membership is estimated at 575 members. All youth attend schools within the Lander County School District in Battle Mountain.

- **Elko Colony:** The original reservation land base was established by executive order on March 23, 1931, with 160 acres near Elko, Nevada. An additional 33 acres was purchased by a warranty deed in 1931. The tribal government operates under the constitution and bylaws of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians. The tribal membership is estimated at 1,564 members. All youth attend schools in the Elko County School District in Elko.
• South Fork Band Colony: The original land base for the reservation was established by executive order in 1941 under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, and lands were purchased to make up the 13,000 acres, 28 miles from the City of Elko, Nevada. The tribal government operates under the constitution and bylaws of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians. Tribal membership is estimated at 226 members. All youth attend schools within the Elko County School District in Spring Creek.

• Wells Band Colony: The original land base was established by an act of Congress on Oct. 15, 1977 (PL 95-133), to set aside 80 acres a quarter of a mile from the City of Wells, Nevada. The tribal government operates under the constitution and bylaws of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians. Tribal membership is estimated at 203 members. All youth attend schools within the Elko County School District in the City of Wells.

Duckwater Shoshone Tribe
The original land base for the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe was established by proclamation on Nov. 13, 1940, under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. There were 3,273 acres of land purchased at that time, and in 1943 another 398.76 acres were purchased. The reservation was expanded again in 1955, with an additional 143 acres, and was recently involved in a land exchange with the Bureau of Land Management for additional acres. The tribal government was created establishing a constitution and bylaws adopted on Nov. 11, 1940. The tribal membership is estimated at 355 members. All youth attend elementary school (K-8) in the Duckwater community. High school students attend Eureka County High School in the town of Eureka.

Ely Shoshone Tribe
The original land base for the Ely Shoshone Tribe colony was established by a congressional act on June 27, 1930, when the purchase of 10 acres was authorized, where the Indian camps were residing. The colony was expanded in the 1970s with a lease through White Pine County, where homes were built, and the tribe purchased this land in 1992. The tribe also acquired another 90-acre parcel and is working with the Bureau of Land Management for another 20,000-acre increase in land base. The tribal government was established with the approval of a constitution and bylaws in 1966. Tribal membership is estimated at 599 members. All youth attend schools within the White Pine County School District in Ely.

Yomba Shoshone Tribe
The original land base for the Yomba Shoshone Tribe was established by an act of Congress on June 18, 1934, and three different ranches were purchased in central Nevada. The tribal government was established under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act.
Act, and the tribal constitution and bylaws were approved in 1939. The reservation land base is comprised of 113 acres of wetlands and 371 acres of forested lands (Tiller, 2015). Tribal membership is estimated at 189 members. All youth attend the Nye County School District within the City of Gabbs.

Paiute and Shoshone Tribes

Duck Valley Tribe of Shoshone and Paiute Indians

The Shoshone Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Reservation was established by executive order on April 16, 1877 by U.S. President Hayes. On May 4, 1886, an executive order by U.S. President Cleveland expanded the reservation, adding more acreage to accommodate Northern Paiutes upon their release from a prisoner war camp after the Bannock War of 1878. U.S. President Taft further expanded the reservation by an executive order on July 1, 1910. Total acreage of the reservation currently is 289,819. The tribal government was established under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, and the constitution and bylaws were approved on April 20, 1936. Tribal membership is 2,147 tribal members. The Elko County School District provides elementary and secondary education through Owyhee Elementary School (195 students) and Owyhee High School (105 students) located on the reservation.

Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe

The original land base for the Fallon reservation was established under the 1887 General Allotment Act. Fifty 160-acre allotments were provided to heads of families on Feb. 8, 1887. In 1902, the federal government urged the Indians to divide up the 160-acre parcels to 10-acre parcels with water rights. The tribal government was established under the constitution and bylaws ratified on June 12, 1964, with amendments in 1971 and 1980. Tribal Membership is estimated at 2002 members. All youth attend the Churchill County School District with schools in the City of Fallon.

Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe

The original land base of the reservation was created by executive orders in 1867 and 1889, which set aside reservation lands. There are 16,000 acres in Nevada and 18,000 acres in Oregon. The reservation was impacted by the 1887 General Allotment Act, and individual parcels were allotted to heads of households in 1892. Several congressional acts added to reservation lands from 1934 to 1944. The tribal government was organized under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, and the tribal constitution and bylaws were adopted on July 2, 1936. Tribal membership is estimated at 1029 members. All youth attend schools in Fort McDermitt under the Humboldt County School District.
**Winnemucca Paiute and Shoshone Indian Colony**

The original land base for the colony was established under an executive order on June 18, 1917, for 60 acres. Another executive order in 1918 added an additional 60 acres to the colony which is located in Winnemucca and just out of town. The tribal government was established under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, with the constitution approved on March 5, 1971. All youth attend schools in the Humboldt County School District in the town of Winnemucca.

**Washoe Tribe**

**Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California**

The Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California is comprised of five different bands. Each band has its own community council, with the exception of Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, which has a voting seat on the tribal council, but is autonomous in all other matters. The Washoe Tribe is comprised of about 10 different tracts of land. This land makes up the home base for the different bands discussed below.

- **Carson Colony:** The original land base for the Carson Colony was purchased through a congressional act on May 18, 1916. The tribal government was established under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, and the constitution and bylaws were adopted on June 16, 1967. They were revised in 1966 and adopted in 1967 under the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California’s Articles of Association, and there is a community council with jurisdiction over the colony. There are two representatives from the community council that hold a seat on the Washoe Tribal Council. There are about 1,582 enrolled tribal members. All youth attend schools in the Carson City School District.

- **Dresslerville Colony:** The original land base was established through an act of Congress on May 18, 1916. The colony land base is about 40 acres. The tribal government was established under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, and a community council serves as the governing body. The Dresslerville Colony constitution and bylaws was adopted in 1967 under the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California’s Article of Association. There are two representatives from the community council that hold a seat on the Washoe Tribal Council. The estimated tribal membership is unavailable. All youth attend schools in the Douglas County School District in Gardnerville, Nevada.

- **Stewart Colony:** The original land base was established through an act of Congress on May 18, 1916. The colony land base is about 196 acres. The colony is home to Stewart Indian Boarding School, which is currently owned by the State of Nevada. However, the land around the school was provided for the Washoe Tribe of Nevada
and California through a congressional act in 1980. The tribal government adopted Articles of Association under the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California in 1990. There is a community council that serves as a governing body on the colony, and there are two seats on the Washoe Tribal Council. The estimated colony population is 196 people (US Census, 2000). All youth attend the Carson City School District.

- Woodfords Colony: The original land base was established by a congressional act in 1970 that set aside 80 acres for the Woodfords Community. The community sits just over the Nevada border in California. The tribal government adopted Articles of Association under the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California in 1980. There is a community council that serves as a governing body on the colony and there are two seats on the Washoe Tribal Council. The estimated colony population is 219 people (US Census, 2000). Most youth attend schools in the Douglas County School District.

Reno-Sparks Indian Colony

The original land base for the reservation consisting of 20 acres was authorized by a congressional act in 1916, and was located in the center of the City of Reno. An act in 1926 purchased an additional 8.38 acres. In 1986, the tribe acquired 1,949.39 acres under an additional congressional act, in the area known as “Hungry Valley” outside of Reno. Additional lands have been recently added. The tribal government was established under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, and the constitution and bylaws were adopted on Jan. 15, 1936 and amended in 1971. Reno-Sparks has its own tribal council. There is one seat that sits on the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California Tribal Council. The colony is home to Washoe, Paiute and Shoshone Indians with a tribal enrollment of about 1,582 members. All youth attend schools in the Washoe County School District in the City of Reno and outside of Reno in Sparks.

Summary

Reservation land bases in Nevada were a result of executive orders and congressional acts. Some of the land was purchased for Indian use, and other land was allocated by the federal government. All of the tribal governments were set up under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act with constitutions and bylaws adopted. Several of the reservations are home to elementary schools. There are some reservations that also have high schools. Each reservation and tribe has its own unique story, and what may be workable on one reservation is not necessary workable on a different reservation.

Tribal governments have jurisdiction over educational activities and initiatives on the reservation lands that they govern. It is important to remember that each tribal council operates differently and is set up differently. Collaborations and agreements will need to be implemented for successful implementation of educational programs.
While this chapter discusses the difference of educational systems on reservations in Nevada, there was not a discussion on the needs of students who are attending a rural tribal school versus an urban school. This may need to be discussed further with additional research to identify college preparedness.
Chapter Review:

1. All tribal reservation land bases in Nevada were set up by executive order.
   a. True  b. False

2. What are the two different American Indian Tribes in Nevada that have band/community councils under their tribal government structure?
   a. _______________________  b. _________________________

3. Do you think that every reservation should have a school on the reservation?  
   Why or why not?

4. All Nevada tribal governments were set up under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act.
   a. True  b. False

5. How would you approach a higher education initiative to get reservation youth prepared to go to college? Discuss how you would approach the tribe? How would you involve the school district? Are there other partners that would be needed?
CHAPTER THREE

American Indian K-12 Education

Learning Objectives:

- Examine American Indian Alaskan Native youth school-age challenges.
- Explore American Indian Alaskan Native Youth in K-12 educational systems.
- Learn about college readiness for American Indian youth.
- Discover culturally appropriate actions and possible solutions for American Indian educational challenges.

School-Age Challenges of American Indian Youth

Adolescent American Indian Alaska Native (AIAN) populations report a high occurrence of psychosocial risk factors that adversely affect educational attainment, such as high school attrition, teen pregnancy, and substance abuse (Freeman, Coll, Two Dogs, Two Dogs, Iron Cloud, & Robertson, 2016; Manson, 2001). Indeed, Aguirre and Watts (2010) and Beals (1997) compared education-related problems of AIAN youth with nonminority children and found that AIAN youth were more likely to report significantly higher rates of school failure. AIAN scholars point to historical and multigenerational trauma as a root cause. For example, during the boarding school era (from about 1880 to 1960), youth were removed from their homes and placed in residential schools where every effort was made to eradicate culture. Garrett and Pichette (2000), Manson (2001), as well as Robertson (2012) noted that certainly much of the current educational problems (e.g., low grades, poor high school graduation rates) with AIAN youth can be tied back to historical cultural trauma (e.g., outlawing of Native religions, the relocation of reservation Indians to urban areas), and therefore cultural sensitivity is of particular importance when working with this population. In fact most agree that the history and political context surrounding educational issues among AIAN youth clearly emphasizes the need for more attention and resources in the area of culture identification (Dorgan, 2010; Hawkins, Cummins, & Marlatt, 2004). Fostering culture in AIAN youth can be a potentially powerful ally in a successful educational experience (Lane & Simmons, 2011; Freeman, et al., 2016; Johnston, 2002; Moodley & West, 2005).

American Indian Alaska Native (AIAN) Youth in K-12 Educational Systems

Understanding Nevada American Indian education in particular, requires first taking a look at the context of education for American Indians in the United States. American Indian education
policy is deeply embedded in the issue of tribal sovereignty, a term used to recognize the unique, nation-to-nation relationship between each of the federally recognized tribes and the federal (not state) government. As indicated in Chapter 1, Indian education is historically tied with the governmental policy of assimilating the American Indian community into White culture. A phrase associated with this government policy approach was “kill the Indian; save the child” (Captain Richard Pratt, Carlisle Indian School). As a means of acculturating American Indians, the federal government made a promise to accept responsibility for Indian education, a promise that was codified through treaties and laws. The establishment of the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) is one representation of this trust relationship, representing the funding of American Indian schools throughout the nation.

Thirty-three percent of American Indian children are living in poverty nationally (NCES, 2008). AIAN children have child mortality rates of 59.2 per 100,000 children at ages 1-4, 17.4 per 100,000 children at ages 6-9, 22.0 per 100,000 children at ages 10-14, and 93.6 per 100,000 children at ages 15-19 (NCES, 2005). In 2004, although nearly 7 percent of American Indian Alaska Native students’ highest educational attainment level was high school or less, 21 percent of AIAN seniors were expected to attend college, an additional 25 percent were expected to graduate from a university, and thirty-one percent of AIAN students’ highest educational attainment level was graduate/professional school (NCES, 2004).

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI, 2016) reports that 644,000 American Indian youth are enrolled in K-12 public schools throughout the United States, the equivalent of about 1.2 percent of total public school enrollment nationally. NCAI (2016) data shows that 90 percent of American Indian youth attend public school, about 8 percent attend schools through the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), and 2 percent are homeschooled or attend other types of schools (NCAI, 2016). The majority of American Indian youth live in Western or Southwestern states. Among the states with the highest percentage of American Indian youth are Alaska (27 percent), Oklahoma (19 percent), Montana (11 percent), New Mexico (11 percent) and South Dakota (11 percent) (NCAI, 2016). The state of Nevada ranks 15th in the highest number of American Indian youth. According to the NCES (2006), there are approximately 51,000 AIAN individuals who live in Nevada making up approximately 2 percent of the population.

Nationally, 83 percent of students enrolled in public high schools graduate (NCES, 2015). Graduation rates are highest for Asian/Pacific Islander students (90 percent) followed by White students (88 percent) enrolled in public high schools. American Indian high school students have the lowest national graduation rate at 72 percent, 9 percent lower than the national average (NCES, 2015). In 2014 the percentage of American Indian public high school freshmen who graduated with a regular diploma within four years (the adjusted cohort graduation rate) was 70 percent, the lowest out of all ethnic groups. American Indian students have the highest drop-out rate of any ethnic group, with 11 percent of 16 to 24-year-old American Indian students dropping out in 2014 (Kena, Hussar, McFarland, de Brey, Musu-Gillette, Wang, et al; 2016).
In fact, Camera (2015) asserts that the graduation rate may be even lower; “Today, native youth post the worst achievement scores and the lowest graduation rates of any student subgroup. Last school year (2014-15) 67% of American Indian students graduated from high school compared the national average of 80%. And many of their school facilities have been equally neglected lacking even basic essentials such as heat and running water.” (p. 2).

**Nevada’s Context**

As shown in the map from the National Center for Educational Statistics, in 2015 only three states had lower cohort graduation rates than Nevada. A cohort graduation rate takes into account transfer students, and considers the percent of students who were in the district in ninth grade and graduated on time in 12th grade. The low high school graduation rate is the product of a cumulative performance problem. In 2015, Nevada fourth-graders performed significantly lower than the national average in math, reading and science (NCES, 2015). Important contextual factors are that in the state of Nevada in 2015, 11.7 percent of Nevada students were special education, 16.4 percent had limited English proficiency, and 52.2 percent were on free and reduced lunch. In the U.S. News and World Report (2017) comparison of the quality of education by state, Nevada is ranked 50th in K-12 education.

Figure 2: Population Distribution of American Indians

According to the Bureau of Indian Education (2017), there are 2 tribal schools funded in the state of Nevada: Duckwater Shoshone Elementary School (grades K-8) and Pyramid Lake Jr./Sr. High School (grades 7-12). About 18 students are enrolled in Duckwater Elementary/Middle School, and 50 percent of the students are American Indian (Bureau of Indian Education, 2017).
Pyramid Lake Jr./Sr. High School was established in 1978 and is a fully accredited BIE Tribal Grant School, one that serves American Indians from across the state of Nevada. Cultural concepts are infused throughout the curriculum.

Despite the many efforts of the BIE, in recent years the trust responsibility for American Indians has been challenged by some lawmakers who subscribe to the viewpoint that federal funding for the education of United State citizens is adequate; no special funding for American Indians is needed. This perspective has been denounced by other lawmakers as denying the unique history of tribal communities and the negative impact on education of the stripping of Native language from generations of American Indians (Meza, 2015). There is some support for growth in American Indian education programs. In March 2016, the U.S. Department of Education (2016) established a committee to update the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The Act reauthorization is proposing to strengthen tribal control of education, preserve and revitalize Native languages, provide tribes with access to tribal member student records and encourage tribal/state partnership (NCAI, 2016). It is hoped that restructuring the Act will strengthen the capacity of American Indian youth.

The high school dropout rate for American Indian students in Nevada is consistently higher than that of the entire state student population and than other ethnic minority groups. Many American Indian students drop out during their senior year of high school. Nevada Department of Education data shows that for academic year 2013-2014, there were 613 12th-graders who self-identified as American Indian students in the state of Nevada. In the class of 2013, only 38 percent of these students graduated (Nevada Department of Education, 2016).

In the 2015-2016 academic year, 3.5 percent of American Indian students in grades 6-12 dropped out of state-funded schools, compared with 2.7 percent of the total population (Nevada Report Card, 2016). Even for those AIAN youth that do graduate, college and career readiness is often an issue.

**College Readiness for American Indian Youth**

College entrance exams such as the SAT and ACT provide college readiness benchmarks to help ascertain if youth are ready for college. Readiness, in this case, refers to the likelihood that they will succeed if they enroll in college. According to the 2016 state-administered ACT exam, the 328 American Indian students who completed the exam scored a mean composite score of 16.1. The statewide mean was 17.4. In the context of the graduates from across the State of Nevada, the Nevada Systems of Higher Education reported that 54.9 percent and 57.7 percent required remediation to be college ready in 2013 and 2014. Similarly, 58.7 percent of American Indian students required remediation in 2013, and 57.7 percent required remediation in 2014 (Nevada Systems of Higher Education, 2015). To be college ready, remediation is necessary for over half the graduates from Nevada high schools, with a slightly higher rate for American Indian students.
This high rate of remediation shows that even for the youth that choose to pursue higher education, many are not well prepared academically for college courses. Remedial courses constitute a significant barrier, as they add extra cost and can delay college academic progression.

The 2011 ACT exam showed only 14 percent of American Indian males and 10 percent of females met college-readiness benchmark scores. Though SAT and ACT tests may be culturally biased, they are still often used for college entrance and first-year course placement purposes. Average SAT scores for American Indian students were below total averages across all subject areas (Ross, Kena, Rathbun, KewalRamani, Zhang, Kristapovich, & Manning, 2012). Most alarmingly, within the past decade, American Indian youth have been the only ethnic population to show no improvement in reading and math scores nationwide (Ross, Kena, Rathbun, Kewal, Ramani, Zhang, Kristapovich, & Manning, 2012).

While higher education enrollment and completion are increasing for minority groups in the U.S., they are actually decreasing for American Indians and Alaskan Natives (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). The lack of education is becoming a nationwide epidemic for American Indians and Alaskan Natives, often compounded by the problem of poverty. The American Indian College Fund (2016) reports that American Indians make up 1 percent of all college-enrolled students, and just above 13 percent of American Indians who enroll in college complete their college degree.

College participation rates for American Indians matter because poor college participation rates limit opportunities. It is consistently documented that higher levels of education create access to more opportunities for employment and higher pay. Better employment then creates access to health care and other resources that are necessary to build individual and community stability and opportunity. We know that lack of educational attainment can increase probability of unemployment, and in the American Indian population, this is particularly evident. In 2015, only 51 percent of 20-to 24-year-old American Indians who had attained less than a high school diploma were employed, whereas those who had a high school diploma were employed at a rate of 66 percent, and those who had some college were employed at 78 percent. American Indians holding bachelor’s degrees or higher were employed at the rate of 89 percent. The poverty rate for children under age 18 was 33 percent in 2009 and rose to 35 percent in 2014 (Kena, et al; 2016 ). In the state of Nevada, 12 percent of American Indian students who graduated from high school in 2015 enrolled in a Nevada institution of higher education (Kena, et al; 2016 ).

In summary, the disparities that American Indian students encounter, especially here in Nevada, are enormous. American Indian students are often the smallest minority group in schools and therefore are at high risk for marginalization. Drop-out and remediation rates are often the highest when compared with other groups. Participation in further levels of education is very low compared to other groups. Adelman, Taylor and Nelson (2013) note that much is known about
the disparities and inequities in Native postsecondary education, and many programs, policies and strategies exist, however there is little evidence of any improvements in issues relating to postsecondary education for Native students relating to readiness, access, retention, and transition. Because American Indians are a relatively small ethnic group, overlooking American Indians in education reform efforts is common. And as discussed here and in Chapter 1, American Indian students face additional hurdles related to intergenerational trauma.

Possible Solutions

A Nevada Success Story: Natchez School

The principal at Natchez Elementary School (100 percent AIAN youth enrollment) is changing the climate from focusing on the limitations of the school and the students to focusing on the uniqueness of each student and the culture of the students and their community (McAndrew, 2017). She makes relationships and connections with her students a priority and wants her teachers to not only know the names on the students in their classrooms but to know all the students in the school. It is not uncommon for the principal to come to every classroom each day, where the students know her and she knows each of the students by name. The principal and teachers recognize the value of community and culture within the tribal community (McAndrew, 2017). She stays involved with the tribal council and the families on the reservation. She wants the students in her school to learn about Native American history, and learn about and embrace Native American culture. She is also implementing Paiute language classes.

The principal recruits teachers who wanted to be part of changing Natchez School (McAndrew, 2017). The school is known for having low test scores, and approximately half of the staff is replaced each year, as they find jobs closer to town, but this is changing. With a clear mission and actions, the principal is finding teachers who are deeply invested in their students.

The key ingredients at Natchez School are culture, relationships and teachers (and leaders) who are invested in their students.

Tips for Educators

The Importance of Culture

Educators should adopt the philosophy that AIAN youth are best understood when viewed through the lens of cultural context. Traditional healing and practices are common in many AIAN communities (Manson, 2001). Specifically, ethnographic studies indicate that traditional healing and related practices reduce depression and substance-related disorders. Moreover, traditional healing and related approaches frequently operate in cooperation with Western psychotherapeutic...
interventions (Csordas, 1999; Freeman et al., 2016; Guilmet & Whited, 1989). Strengths should be accented (e.g., social adaptability) to build upon. Any cooperating family members should be included in traditional healing processes and consulted along with the youth, and treatment should be family centered, as suggested by Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (1998), and Burden, Miller, and Boozer (1996).

Discussions with American Indian youth, counselors and teachers reveal that this culturally relevant strategy is working, and American Indian youth are responding very enthusiastically (Coll, 2017). For example, anecdotal feedback indicates that youth and especially their parents/caregivers are appreciative about the acknowledgement of the importance of their culture as well as the practical help coming from traditional interventions. One very powerful educational tool is Andrew Hunt’s culture card, which can be used to provide guidance on AIAN culture when providing culturally appropriate treatment (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014). A precursor training to implementation for teachers and educational leaders is strongly suggested before implementation per the Culture Card, including discussion of myths and facts, tribal sovereignty, regional and cultural difference, customs and spirituality, and cultural identity (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014).

The Importance of Relationships

Educators should draw upon youth’s relationship with others (especially extended family). As indicated in Garrett’s research (1999), many AIAN children tend to define themselves less by possessions, and more by family ties and traditional customs and beliefs. As previously indicated, he noted that AIAN children are often particularly susceptible to encountering a variety of difficulties (including depression and suicidal thinking) in a (school) system that emphasizes individualism, competition and achievement over contrasting values of group harmony, cooperation and sharing. Therefore, educational staff should promote and expand extended family involvement and participation in the AIAN youth’s development (Kenyon & Carter, 2010).

For example, with cooperation and approval from the American Indian youth’s tribe, educational systems could promote access to school-sponsored activities and caregiver participation in the youth’s educational progress on a formalized, intentional basis. AIAN youth have often been painted in the literature as ‘not as good as’ than non-native groups (Freeman, et. al., 2016). The resiliency factors of strong relationships and community mindedness do not support this notion. Indeed, a reasonable conclusion is that in spite of high risk, these youth are able to succeed. This supports the growing literature that educators need to emphasize the strong resiliency of American Indian populations (Freeman, et al., 2016).
The Importance of Invested Educators

Recruiting teachers who are deeply committed to promoting successful education with AIAN youth through culture and relationships is paramount. Formal orientation and screening will bring the most success. One extensive study of educational strategies that work suggests prospective and new teachers working with AIAN youth learn early that they are expected to a) meld the traditional AIAN culture with the contemporary, b) use native studies as a hook for student engagement, and c) act early to avoid problems (e.g., tutoring, counseling, referrals) (Education World, 2017). Such expectations for teachers will enhance promotion of culture and relationships and their commitment, and reduce teacher attrition.

Summary

This chapter examined AIAN youth school-age challenges, including historical and multigenerational trauma. It also explored AIAN youth in K-12 educational systems in the U.S. and in Nevada, noting that achievement scores and graduation rates are low, and their school facilities are woefully neglected, with many lacking even basic essentials such as heat and running water. Likewise, college readiness for American Indian Youth is lagging, nationally and in Nevada, with the disparities and inequities prevalent, often because American Indians are a relatively small ethnic group, and therefore overlooking them in education reform efforts is common. There are, however, reasons for optimism. With the key ingredients of culture, relationships and invested educators, k-12 education for American Indians can soar, as evidenced by the example included.
Chapter Review:

1. What is one major American Indian and Alaska Native youth school-age challenge?

2. How do the high school drop-out rates for American Indian and Alaska Native youth in K-12 educational systems in the U.S. and in Nevada compare with the overall high school drop-out rates in the U.S.?

3. What are two culturally appropriate actions (and possible solutions) for better educating American Indian and Alaska Native youth?

4. What are two college readiness challenges for American Indian youth?

5. In order to gain a more complete understanding of K-12 education for American Indians in Nevada, what additional information do you need? Where might you be able to access that information?
Owyhee High School, Nevada
American Indian College Education

Learning Objectives:

- Learn the racial/ethnic breakdown for Nevada students in pre-K through 12th grade.
- Examine the data regarding American Indian students within the Nevada System of Higher Education.
- Understand American Indian Transfer Students and the barriers they encounter.
- Learn why community colleges and tribal colleges are important for American Indian Students.
- Incorporate recruitment and retention services in community colleges and universities to better serve American Indian students.

Within the State of Nevada, American Indian students tend to make up a small percentage, both at the pre-K to 12th grades and postsecondary educational systems. However, if they attend college, many start at a community college or tribal college. They are inclined to start at a community college because they often fit the model of a transfer student who might not know exactly what they want to do for a career or have a great deal of financial support. A tribal college can mirror a community college by providing more recruitment and retention services, offering lower tuition costs and acting as a bridge to a university. A tribal college can also help American Indian students with culturally relevant curriculum.

Demographics for the State of Nevada pre-K to 12th Grade

According to data provided by the Nevada Department of Education and Enrollment for 2016-2017, there are 473,695 students from pre-K to 12th grade in Nevada. The racial/ethnic breakdown is: Asian 26,049, Black 51,239, White 157,242, Hispanic 199,350, American Indian/Alaskan Native 4,355, and multi-race 28,870. Washoe County School District contributes approximately 66,671 students (October 1, 2016). Hispanic/Latino students have the largest enrollment numbers in the public school systems, and American Indian students have the lowest enrollment members in Nevada’s pre-K to 12th grades.

American Indian Student Enrollment at Nevada’s Colleges

The numbers and percentages of American Indian students continue to be low at post-secondary institutions within the state. Table 2 shows fall enrollment for American Indian students for the
The data shows American Indian students are decreasing at many Nevada colleges. The decreasing enrollment of American Indian students at Nevada community colleges affects their enrollments in four-year institutions within the state.

Table 2: Nevada College Enrollment for American Indian Students

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Why is the enrollment of American Indian students declining at many Nevada postsecondary institutions? One reason is the lack of active recruitment of American Indian students. American Indian students make up such a small percentage of the student body that many colleges find it unimportant to recruit this population and perceive their resources can be better spent recruiting elsewhere. Another reason could be that American Indian students are typically first-generation and might not have the support or encouragement to attend college and/or do not see the need to attend.

**Recruitment Strategy for American Indian Students**

The recruitment of American Indian students needs to come early within their education. In most cases, colleges and universities are beginning to recruit these students very late, starting in high school. The earlier a college or university receives buy-in from the families about this possibility for their children, the more likely the children will attend a postsecondary institution. A recruitment program in the state that is producing impressive results is the University of Nevada, Reno’s underrepresented students initiative, the Dean’s Future Scholars (DFS) program through the College of Education. This model could be adapted for the recruitment of American Indian students. In the DFS model, mentoring, family buy-in and summer enrichment programs are all provided to students beginning in the sixth grade. The American Indian model could start even earlier, in fourth or fifth grade, creating a longer time for buy-in and trust from the family unit. In the DFS model, the mentoring portion starts in the seventh grade. The mentoring sessions are essential when trying to eliminate stereotype threats that the student might encounter. During this mentorship, students are also provided tutoring and counseling. Again, in the recruitment
model for American Indian students, mentoring could start earlier, in the fourth and fifth grade. The figure below provides a visual model of what the middle school recruitment for DFS entails.

Figure 3: Dean’s Future Scholars Middle School Mentorship Model

The DFS model for high school students has the same concepts but focuses on college readiness. Students are able to take credits at both the university and local community colleges. They attend career exploration courses for dual credit and receive college credit for the courses they take. At the end of their senior year, students are able to receive a paid internship and gain six credits of university credit. This high school model for DFS can also be easily adapted for the recruitment of American Indian students. The figure below illustrates the DFS program for high school students.

Figure 4: Dean’s Future Scholars High School Mentorship Model
American Indian Transfer Students

Many American Indian students start at a community college, as seen in Table 1. Transfer students tend to be very different from traditional freshmen who attend a four-year university. A descriptive comparison study done by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2003-2004) found that, “community college students were more likely to be: financially independent; first generation college students; less academically prepared; working part or full time during college; having lower degree aspirations; attending college part-time; delaying enrollment into college following high school; receiving less financial aid; and earning a lower GPA during the first year of college.” (Seidman, 2012, p. 144). The Center for Education Statistics (NCES) additionally reported, “of the students who entered a community college with the intent of transferring to a four-year institution and graduating with a bachelor’s degree, only about 20-25% ever achieved this goal.” (Harlow & Bowman, 2017 p. 513). A community college student typically requires more attention, often not because they cannot succeed, but because of the barriers they have to overcome. These barriers are much like those that many American Indian K-12 students encounter and have to overcome.

American Indian Graduation and Transfer Rates

It is also important to provide support once American Indian students are recruited to attend college. This support can come from different departments. Many American Indian students tend to gravitate to certain sympathetic/empathetic individuals, whether it be in student services or an academic department. This is where it is important to have dedicated staff to support this student population. Table 3 illustrates the graduation and transfer rates for Nevada’s community college continue to decline, and at the universities, the graduation rate is lower as well. One can speculate this is due to the lack of staffing dedicated to this student population.

Table 3: Graduation Plus Transfer-Out Rates for American Indian Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College of Southern Nevada</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Basin College</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truckee Meadows CC</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Nevada College</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Nevada, Reno</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Nevada, Las Vegas</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Shaded boxes for universities represent graduation rates of American Indian students.
Retention Strategies for American Indians in Postsecondary Institutions

The rate at which American Indian students attend a community college or university is just part of the complex picture. American Indian persistence after their first or second year often decreases. This could be due to a variety of reasons, such as monetary support through financial aid or tribe, motivation, family, and/or support services through the college. A way to combat the retention problem for American Indian students is to have dedicated staff and faculty for this student population. By having faculty and staff committed to and focused on this student population, successful learning communities can be created. In these learning communities, students will connect and support each other while taking their first-year classes together, and possibly in the second-year classes, depending on their major. The courses students take together are usually core coursework in math, science and english. The courses they take together could be interdisciplinary and culturally relevant. Research shows that American Indian students stay engaged and learn more successfully when the subject matter is relatable and culturally relevant. The learning communities can be organized either at a community-college level or at a four-year institution.

Another model that could be used for retention of American Indian students is a dual-credit program, like the Jump Start Program coordinated through Western Nevada College (WNC). In this program, students are able to take college credit while still in high school. The program extends across northern Nevada, servicing many rural high schools. Through the program, students are able to not only earn college credits, but also can obtain their transferable associate’s degrees. Students can complete their first two years of college courses while still in high school. Through this experience, many gain confidence and motivation, and have the necessary courses and incentive to continue and earn their bachelor’s degree. Once they enter a university, they will most likely be in upper-division courses, where classes are smaller, professors are more approachable, and support services more accessible. Mentoring throughout the aforementioned learning communities would also be important as they transition.

The Importance of Community Colleges and Tribal Colleges for American Indian Students

One of the reasons community colleges were developed was to “relieve the universities from having to deal with freshman and sophomores less pronounced because the universities would not relinquish their lower divisions. Instead, community colleges made it possible for them to maintain selective admissions requirements and thus to take only those freshmen and sophomores they wanted.” (Cohen, Brawer, & Kister, 2014). Community colleges made postsecondary education a possibility for everyone who wanted more education to be a better professional and person in society. It can be speculated that many American Indian students in Nevada fall into the category of a transfer student because they often are first-generation, low-income and older; have lower GPAs and test scores; and need to work to support a family.
Tribal colleges work a lot like community colleges, but tend to concentrate on the needs and culture of American Indian students. They also are inclined to provide more support, due to the aforementioned student characteristics, such as first-generation and low-income. Students are able to receive the information and motivation to succeed when attending smaller institutions as well, with more one-on-one support.

Summary

American Indian students are becoming less and less prevalent in our postsecondary education systems. In the State of Nevada, this is obvious when looking at the data regarding enrollment and graduation rates. The cause of these low percentages can be tied to the lack of resources put toward this population. Community colleges and tribal colleges serve as bridges to the universities. With the barriers that many American Indian students face, community colleges and tribal colleges are very viable options for students because they are more focused on students who face barriers to obtaining a college education. The way colleges and universities recruit and retain American Indian students needs to be holistic, and should include cultivation of trust, buy-in and motivation.
Chapter Review:

1. What is one reason enrollment might be down for American Indian students at postsecondary institutions?

2. Where do American Indian students usually start their college career?

3. What are three characteristics of a transfer student?

4. How does a tribal college reflect a community college?

5. What could be a reason for American Indian students not graduating from community colleges and/or universities? Are they different? How?
CHAPTER FIVE

Educational Needs and Interests: Survey Results

Learning Objectives:

- Explore American Indian demographics in Nevada.
- Examine survey results of educational interest, and logistical, social and academic barriers of going to college.
- Discuss implications of survey results.

There is an opportunity to increase knowledge regarding higher education for American Indians in Nevada through evaluating perceptions and attitudes of future, existing, and past higher education students. The insights in this chapter pertain to the educational interests, logistical barriers, social barriers and demographics of American Indians in Nevada. The research presented is a glimpse of those potential or past students living on reservations.

American Indian Higher Education Needs Assessment

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension conducted a research study through an American Indian higher education needs assessment process. The needs assessment process is designed to help higher education professionals better understand American Indian perceptions and attitudes about going to college, and to provide valuable information through a feasibility study to create a tribal college in Nevada. Participation in this needs assessment survey was voluntary.

The survey questionnaire featured 105 questions to assess educational interests, barriers of going to college, demographic questions about reservation life, and questions about a possible tribal college in Nevada. Pretesting of the survey questionnaire was completed with four tribal college faculty in fall 2015 to ensure that the questions were clearly articulated and that researchers and respondents would interpret the survey in the same way (Ruel, Wagner, & Gillespie, 2016). Suggestions for survey design, content and terminology were discussed, and feedback was implemented into the final survey questionnaire. The areas of educational interest were taken from the employment opportunities and needs for the State of Nevada and matched with employment opportunities in tribal communities.

The needs assessment survey questionnaire was made available in February 2016, and the last surveys were collected in August 2017. A mixed-mode data collection method was used due to
budget constraints. This method targeted tribal education departments in an effort to increase response rates (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). Each of the tribal education departments was sent an original email with three follow-up emails, which included an online survey link.

Paper surveys were made available to tribal education departments as well as an online survey to send out to the community. Paper surveys also were available at the focus group sessions. (See Chapter 6.) The research protocol was modified in 2017 to accommodate the high school on the Duck Valley Reservation. Surveys were collected from Owyhee Combined School juniors and seniors.

**Results**

Ninety-four percent of the 166 survey respondents were American Indian/Alaska Native. When asked which American Indian tribe they were affiliated with, over half of the 160 reservation respondents identified with the type of Indian they were, rather than with their specific tribal enrollment. Seventy-eight percent were enrolled with a federally recognized tribe, 5 percent were with a locally recognized tribe, 5 percent had a certificate of degree of Indian blood from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and 13 percent did not know their tribal affiliation. Seventy-four percent of respondents currently live on a reservation, and 26 percent did not, with 63 percent of respondents being female and 37 percent being male. Sixty-four percent of respondents were under the age of 36 years old. Table 4 reflects how respondents identified with a Nevada Indian tribe. Table 5 reflects how respondents identified with the type of Indian.

Table 4: Nevada Indian Tribes Identified by Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nevada Indian Tribe</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duck Valley Shoshone-Paiute Tribe</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duckwater Shoshone Tribe</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reno-Sparks Indian Colony</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walker River Paiute Tribe</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yerington Paiute Tribe</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer the question</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>167</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Forty-seven percent of respondents reported an annual household income below $24,000 a year. Twenty-five percent reported an annual income between $25,000 and $34,999, and 14 percent reported an annual income between $35,000 and $49,000. There were 16 percent of respondents who wanted to seek an associate degree and 56 percent wanted to seek a bachelor’s and master’s degree.

### Areas of Educational Interest

Part I of the survey questionnaire was designed to assess areas of educational interest. Questions 1 through 22 were identified areas of educational interest. While the total number of respondents was 151, there were several respondents who did not answer this section of the survey. Table 6 lists the high to very high interest in a certain area of study. Respondents also could respond
“other” to this question and write in their educational interest. Comments received included kinesiology, sports medicine, vet science, vet (marine life), music, art and theater.

Table 6: High to Very High Educational Interest Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Area of Educational Interest</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Respondents (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>American Indian Studies</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teacher Education</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Business Management</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Anthropology, Archaeology and History</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Agriculture and Natural Resources</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Judicial Studies</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Liberal Arts and General Studies</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Geology</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part II of the survey questionnaire was designed to assess areas of occupational interest. Questions 23 through 53 identified job or occupational interests. Table 7 reports the high to very high interest in the identified job and occupations with the percentage of interests and the number of respondents. Respondents also could respond “other” to this question and write in their occupational interest. Comments received included sports management, media (blogger), gym trainer and occupational therapy. The number of respondents are different for each area of interest because not all respondents answered every question.
### Table 7: High to Very High Priorities for Occupational Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Area of Occupation; Interest</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Respondents (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Carpenter/Builder/Construction</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Medical Assistant</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Physical Therapist</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Business Owner</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Paramedic/EMT</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Police Officer</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mechanic</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Welder</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Wildfire Management</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Food Preparation/Chef</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Physician's Assistant</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Medical Billing and Records</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Dental Assistant</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Medical Imaging</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Day Care Provider</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Certified Nursing Assistant</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Truck Driver</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Bookkeeper</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Miner</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Realtor</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Plumber</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Gaming Service Worker</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Gaming Dealer</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Bank Teller</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Tuition Cost**

Respondents were asked to identify their concerns about the costs of going to college. Specific questions were related to the cost of tuition. Graph 1 illustrated the shifts that occur as the annual tuition cost goes from $0 to $20,000 a year. Major concern starts to increase as tuition cost reaches over $6,000 per year.

**Graph 1. Concerns Based on the Annual Cost of Tuition**

---

**Barriers of College Attendance**

Respondents provided their perceptions and identified their concerns about the logistical barriers and issues that keep individuals in their communities from going to college. Table 8 provides the logistical barriers that are a concern. These logistical barriers are the opinions of respondents about what youth in their communities are facing when deciding to go to college.

**Table 8: Logistical Barriers of Going to College**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Respondent (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Money (financial)</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tribal financial support</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Distance from school</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Place to live</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Car (transportation)</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Parental financial support</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Application paperwork to go to college</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Logistical barriers of going to college... 1 = Not a concern; 5 = Major Concern
In addition, respondents provided their perceptions and identified their concerns about the social and academic barriers that keep individuals in their communities from going to college. Table 9 provides the social and academic barriers that are and are not a concern. The social and academic barriers are the opinions of the respondents about the youth in their communities and the situations that they are facing when deciding to go to college.

Table 9: Social and Academic Barriers of Going to College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Respondent (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Can’t afford it</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>College is too hard</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Have to leave my family</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lack of confidence in my ability</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Low test scores ACT/SAT</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Have to leave the reservation</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Low grades in high school</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Don’t know how to enroll in college</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>No reason to because jobs on the reservation don’t require an education</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Friends don’t want me to go to college</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Parents don’t want me to go to college</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surveying American Indians for the Tribal College Project

American Indian communities are difficult to reach in Nevada because of geographic isolation, access to reservation residents, and the reluctance of American Indians to participate in surveys. There are several thought processes that must happen before creating a research protocol with American Indians. The thought process must include what is the definition of American Indian, availability and accuracy of address listings, telephone access, household mobility, and language and cultural barriers (Lavelle, 2009). This research protocol was designed to target on-reservation residents through tribal education departments because of the size and locations of Nevada reservations and the resources available to the project. Researchers also identified relationships among tribal education departments, the tribe and reservation residents.
Research protocol also involved focus groups through participating tribal education departments. Focus groups are another way to discuss a problem informally, and to gain information and insight to the problem and potential solutions (Dillman, 1994). Focus groups were used to stimulate ideas about higher education and elicit ideas related to higher education and American Indians going to college in Nevada (See Chapter 6).

**Discussion and Implications**

The results of this research identify that over half of the respondents identified with the type of Indian that they reported they are, instead of with a federally recognized tribe. There is evidence that this may have occurred because federally recognized tribal enrollment can be difficult if a particular tribe has a blood quantum and does grant membership based on direct descendants. In this case, an individual who does not meet a blood quantum can identify as being Indian through paperwork provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, documenting ancestry. However, this does not grant tribal membership. It is also important to note the different types of Indian that are present in Nevada that reach ancestral homelands as far away as Alaska to New York and from Montana to Arizona.

The high to very high priorities provide a place to start building curriculum in current Nevada System of Higher Education entities, and a roadmap for the creation of a tribal college. These priorities are a starting point, and are valuable as a place to build upon for the future needs of American Indian students. Higher education can utilize the resources they already have and reach out to this demographic. There could be some communication barriers in what is already offered to American Indian Students, and how it is offered at different campuses across the state. The top barriers are financial. The income reported is at or below the poverty level. This, combined with the distance from schools, finding a place to live, and having to leave the family unit, are barriers that tie together. It was interesting that one of the lowest barriers is that they don’t know how to enroll in college, and a barrier of concern was the lack of self-confidence in the ability of a student to be successful. This could be due to the historical trauma experienced by the different tribal people throughout history (See Chapter 1).

There is opportunity to provide earlier intervention with reservation youth while they are attending K-12 education in different school districts. This preparation for college, building job skills, and test-taking skills could build self-esteem and assist with social barriers of “Can’t afford it” and “College is too hard.” Early interventions could provide the framework for American Indian students to integrate into Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) or a tribal college to increase retention rates and the number of students attending college.
Summary

This research provides a glimpse of the issues facing American Indians in Nevada when deciding to go to college. It also provides insight into the educational and occupational interests of those living on Nevada reservations. The perceptions of tuition costs and barriers provide a roadmap to issues that can be addressed by working through tribal education departments, Nevada System of Higher Education, and K-12 schools.

The question regarding the location of a tribal college provided insight that respondents wanted the tribal college close to them, on their reservation, or within close proximity. The top two locations identified by respondents were the Reno/Sparks Indian Tribe Cultural Center in Reno and Stewart Indian School in Carson City. However, these were two locations identified in the survey. Other choices written in by respondents included the towns of Fallon, Elko, Yerington and Las Vegas, Nevada. This provides challenges in the future as to how to offer higher education to all 19 federally recognized tribes in Nevada.

The data provided is a starting point to address higher education needs of American Indians in Nevada. These results need to be combined with other results to provide overall decision-making. There may be more research needed to narrow down the focus of topics.
Chapter Review:

1. List the top educational and occupational priorities. What do you think about the priorities, and do they match other research or information that you have gathered?

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What do you think?

2. Discuss logistical and social barriers. Are they unique to American Indian populations? How could they be addressed?

4. The geographic location of Nevada reservations and access to reservation residents impacts survey response rate.

   a. True   b. False

   Discuss how you feel about this, and why you believe this to be true or false?
Voices of the People: Nevada Tribal Focus Groups

Learning Objectives:

- Learn to define a focus group.
- Gain an understanding of the perspectives of Nevada American Indians on barriers to entering college.
- Learn perspectives of the college experience though the direct words of American Indian Nevada residents.

The survey percentages reported in the prior chapter offer a quantitative (numeric data) perspective on Nevada American Indians and higher education participation. Qualitative data (non-numeric data, often consisting of personal stories) add depth of understanding to survey data. One method of collecting qualitative data is to lead focus groups with key stakeholders, those who are concerned about the issue at hand. A focus group is a guided discussion with a small group of people for the purpose of gaining an understanding of their perspectives on a topic of common interest—in this case, college attendance and barriers to college attendance for American Indian youth in Nevada.

To gain an understanding of the interest and barriers associated with college attendance, seven focus groups were conducted in tribal communities in Nevada. The same semi-structured approach using open-ended questions with follow-up discussion was used in all focus groups. Most of the tribes in Nevada have Indian education directors, professionals who provide college and career readiness and other educational assistance to American Indian youth in Nevada. Nevada Indian education directors arranged for the focus groups and recruited American Indian participants, including individuals who were currently attending college, had attended college in the past, or had never attended college. Thus, the participants were homogenous (like one another) in terms of rural and reservation lifestyle, and heterogeneous (different from one another) on higher education participation. The names of the tribal communities are not shared, in order to ensure the privacy of the participants. The number of participants in each focus group ranged from four to 15. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 69. Thirty-one percent of the participants were male, and the other 69 percent were female. Participants represented nine different tribal affiliations.

The focus groups were semi-structured and included primarily open-ended questions. The beginning question, designed to put participants at ease, was, “What is the first thing you think
of ‘when you hear the word, ‘college’?” Following the first question were other questions that increased in complexity throughout the focus group session. With permission from the participants, the focus groups were electronically recorded and the recordings were transcribed. Applied thematic analysis was used as a structure to identify common themes across the focus groups. Following applied thematic analysis, the transcripts were read several times, and core ideas across transcripts were identified. In applied thematic analysis, core ideas are based upon the overall synthesis of the focus groups, not on counting the number of times a concept is mentioned. The core ideas were then validated by two researchers. The data analysis led to nine themes: Lack of Academic Preparation, Learned Helplessness, Lack of Trust Stifles Help-Seeking Behavior, Family Support, Lack of Financial Support, Being the Outsider, Homesickness, Culture Shock, and the Benefits of a Tribal College.

**Factors Impacting College Attendance and Retention**

1) Lack of Academic Preparation

There are many barriers to college enrollment for Nevada’s American Indian youth, but one overarching theme was the lack of academic preparation for admission and success in college. Participants agreed that many students were struggling to succeed prior to even entering college and, if accepted into college, were essentially set up to fail academically. Lack of academic preparation was discussed by participants as lack of high school academic readiness and lack of support from schools. Several participants talked about the failure of local public school systems to prepare youth for postsecondary education. One participant specifically said, “I think there’s a remediation thing too because we’re seeing some of the students that are attempting to go to college and their level of readiness is not quite there. They need a lot of remediation, things that they should’ve learned in sixth grade, seventh-grade you know, sentence structure, spelling.” Stated simply by one participant, “We struggle to get them through high school.”

One factor in lack of academic preparation may be the practice of passing American Indian students through to the next grade, despite weak performance. Stated by one participant, “Most of the time it’s the reading that’s low, if the reading is low, they can be continued to the next grade, but they’re still behind. If they start behind, they stay behind. They don’t catch up. There’s nobody working one-on-one with them and saying ‘OK you’re at reading level now.’ It’s slower paced than that. I don’t know... They’re struggling to do the work. If they had all the tools to do it, like food at home, or a peaceful house or stuff like that, they could do it just fine. But here there’s a lot of barriers like where they slept that night, who they’re staying with, or if they’re staying in a house at all...stuff like that.” As is evident in the quote, the contextual factors discussed in Chapter 1 were understood by this participant to be integral to the problem of lack of academic readiness.
2) Learned Helplessness

The theme, “Learned Helplessness,” is exemplified by the statement: “I’m going to fail anyway, so why try?” Learned Helplessness encompassed feeling of inadequacy as well as lack of confidence in decision-making. One participant shared her story about the fear of making decisions at a young age when she said, “Well some of us are just scared to make a decision when they’re 17 or 18. You’re just scared to get set for life. We get scared to make a decision and so then we start doing other stuff…drinking, this other stuff… But I think it does start at home. Somebody saying ‘education, education.’ That’s gonna drive a lot of students to go, but not if they didn’t have that or if their parents didn’t go to school.” Inadequacy often presented itself in the form of not feeling as smart as others or in having trouble making decisions that would change their entire lives. One participant described the process of overcoming fear of inadequacy in the following way: “I learned like, you know you’re just as smart as anybody else, no matter what nationality you are. And I found out I was as smart as anybody else, you know, I wasn’t a dumb Indian or anything like that.”

Another aspect of learned helplessness was dependence on the welfare system. One participant said: “The TANF [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families] program has kind of swallowed the culture and the education…you know like the Social Services they kind of swallowed that because they get the federal money. I see in this community a lot of people who have been on TANF for years and years and years and there’s really no motivation to get outside of that because they get the aid.” They know they will receive money from the government, so they have no desire or motivation to go to college. Dependence upon the welfare system was manifested as a lack of motivation to pursue education. While some American Indian students lacked confidence, others simply weren’t accustomed to the concept of working for accomplishment. One participant described it in the following way, “We have a different way of learning, and it may be the motivation, it may be the confidence level that actually kept us from going on, you know.” Another participant explained, “I think motivation is a big issue for most people. The new generation these days get a lot of stuff handed to them. You don’t have to work for stuff, you know what I’m saying? So they expect their whole life to be like that. But then you got to work for something and you got to go out and do stuff. You can’t just be scared or shelled-in.”

3) Lack of Trust Stifles Help-Seeking Behaviors

As discussed in Chapter 1, the genocide against American Indians left a legacy of trauma, a legacy passed from generation to generation. Part of that legacy is a lack of trust, a natural by-product of broken promises to American Indians. The theme, Lack of Trust Stifles Help Seeking Behaviors, is based in participant comments about the struggle to trust individuals who are not from their culture. One participant said, “Yeah you just have to get out there in the community. And people have to know you, before they turn in any paperwork they have to trust you with their kids. There is a big... it’s almost like a wall…in that they don’t want service, you
can’t keep forcing it on them… like through TANF, there are all these other departments that are trying different ways, like through truancy, and it ends up going to court and all that. It’s just a big cycle I think.” Participants reported that there are many avenues to receive help, including breaking the law, but that trust is a key issue in the willingness to accept available help.

4) Lack of Family Support

The theme emerged as a substantial obstacle to college attendance and college success. For individuals who do not have family members who attended college, their family may not prioritize the experience, be supportive, know how to be supportive, or think it is important to be supportive. Congruent with the Crab-In-Pot concept discussed in Chapter 1, participants expressed a general lack of support for further education, even within their own family systems. One participant explained, “I think a lot of times the family is the barrier too for a lot of them to go to school, because they’re needed at home. They benefit the family more than they would help themselves. They don’t really have anybody who’s going to college in their family, so they don’t really know what the next step is anyway.”

Another participant said, “I guess in this community the kids that are going to school are already doing it and the kids that need help, the ones aren’t going to go to school, are the ones that need to help the most. But then in the end it just falls back on the parents. Maybe they didn’t push them hard enough in school or in life. And now they kinda just go with the flow and don’t really push themselves.” Another participant noted: “We have one young man who’s a freshman right now and he just started playing football. He’s a smart kid, I’ve been with him in his class and he’s pretty sharp, but…the home expectations are not there. His parents don’t know what college is like or what possibilities there are for him”.

5) Lack of Financial Assistance

Lack of financial resources to be successful in college was another theme that emerged across focus groups. There may be resources available, however, American Indian students may not know about available resources or how to access them. One participant said, “You know, I had to quit going to college to make money. The money was there…there’s plenty of college money for students…I just didn’t quite have the guidance. I just didn’t know how to look for it. Or where to get it, how to sell myself, you know, how to acquire the funds. This is something I learned through all the other people that I work with. They go for nursing and their higher education stuff…it’s almost a full-time job just to get the funding and the grants and what not. If I had known how to do that I probably would have finished school. That’s what comes to mind.”

If school is not part of the cultural experience and no other family members have attended higher education, there is a lack of understanding of the steps and procedures that are part of the college
admissions and financial aid processes. As one participant explained, “Even the smart ones, they just stay home, they’re taking care of kids, their auntie’s kids, their cousin’s kids and they don’t go to school, and they don’t see that potential. And then they’re asking, you know years down the line ‘can you help me get into school?’ Yes we can help you get into school, but they don’t know what the steps are. They don’t even know how to fill out the FAFSA or how to complete a college application.”

6) Being the Outsider

Being the Outsider is a theme designation used to encompass feelings of not fitting in, racism, loneliness and isolation from families and culture. One participant described this fear, stating: “I felt like I was Native and I didn’t really fit into other communities because I was brown. And I still felt that when I went to work after I finished college, working in the public schools. I was the only brown person in the school. And people let you know it. You have to learn how to deal with that and it’s not always easy.”

7) Homesickness

Homesickness, not uncommon for first year college students, may be experienced more severely when conjoined with being the outsider. Homesickness was an issue reported by the majority of participants, even those who attended a tribal college or school with a strong tribal support program. One participant said, “There are people who go all the way to Haskell [Tribal College in Kansas]. We have two people who are going to Haskell right now, and that is a long ways away. And a lot of people here that have gone to Haskell and come back, you know because they didn’t finish. They get homesick or they felt too far away from home.”

Attending mainstream institutions was particularly isolating and lonely. “Even if it was just going to University of Nevada, Reno the mindset is ‘well I want to go back home’ and just being homesick…I took a lot of breaks and eventually dropped out… And then I went to tribal college even though I had the skills to make it at UNR. There was something that I longed to be around, other people that were like me and so that’s why I went and I used tribal college as a stepping-stone to go to another four-year university. Then I went to grad school and so I think that was successful for me.”

8) Culture Shock and Cultural Disconnect

The theme, Culture Shock, refers to the adjustment of the student to multiple aspects of college culture. In the focus group data analysis process, culture shock first emerged as a theme because of participant comments describing the shock of moving to the city. Participants noted that Nevada American Indian students who had never lived off the reservation nor in a city were unprepared for what life was like when they came to college. One participant said, “With the
students I work with… a lot of them aren’t ready for city life. It is a big cultural shock. So I think, a tribal college to start with would be great, but for them to have that opportunity to be able to move on to something after that... However the kids I work with in the high schools, are all about, as soon as they’re graduating, they’re leaving, you know, they’re getting out of here. They’re not always successful doing that you know. They drop out that first year.”

Participants indicated that culture shock is compounded by feelings of being disconnected from tribal culture while in college. The sense of cultural disconnect is exacerbated by low numbers of American Indians in college and lack of infusion of material on American Indian culture into college coursework. One college student participant said, “You know, we get disconnected. I think most of the students here are disconnected from their culture, and a lot of it has to do with Indians not being talked about a whole lot in school. You know just a few teachers talk about American Indian education or American Indian history so the students don’t really know their own history. You know they don’t know some of the stuff that went on, and then they just take it at face value.”

American Indian youth grow up on the reservations with other American Indian people. When they enter higher education institutions, they are part of a cultural minority group. Students who live on the reservations frequently have to take long bus rides to attend school. Referring to American Indian students attending a predominantly White off-reservation high school, one participant said: “We have a lot of kids there at that high school, and they stick together. That has been a huge complaint--that our kids congregate. Some think that they’re a gang, and they think that they’re instigating problems, because they all sit together. But what they don’t understand is that our kids are afraid. They don’t mix well.”

Another participant talked about isolation and breaking out of the isolation in the following way: “When I moved up here I was a freshman in high school, so I know that when you go from this community you get bussed down. You’re in this little isolated group and you don’t know how to get out. I think the extracurricular activities, was like the outlet to get out of there and start meeting new people and then succeed, but I can see a lot of kids from here just kind of being in their little space and not wanting to leave the small group”.

**Benefits of Tribal College**

Across focus groups, participants noted the advantages of attending a tribal college, particularly as a transition between high school and college. One participant said, “I myself didn’t go to boarding school or anything but I did go to one tribal college, and loved it. It brought me out as a person. I don’t know what would’ve happened to me if I didn’t go. I really don’t. I don’t know if I would’ve done anything.” Another participant explained, “I’d like to say that I think if we did have a tribal college here our kids would go to school right after high school. They would go to the tribal college and then they’d move on to a university. You know it would
give them a chance to go to college and get that feel of what it’s going to be like to be in college. I think once they get that feeling they know what they really want. They know they can step up from there they can move from there and they can go on to university.”

One participant described the power of the tribal college experience as it related to a sense of belonging. “Haskell was the first place I’d ever gone to a prom. You know in public schools you just don’t participate. I never participated in anything. Prom, homecoming… At Haskell, I was on the swim team. I would never do that in regular public school. It’s just fear…they are not your same crowd.... and when you’re at Tribal College it’s like ‘who cares let’s just do it’ you know you can because we’re all the same. We all come from like the same area you know. Nobody’s going to make fun of you for trying to be on the swim team or trying to be homecoming queen or anything. There’s not barriers over there at Tribal College. You don’t have to go through any nonsense, like racial nonsense or poverty nonsense, those barriers aren’t there.”

Despite the long distance to the nearest tribal college, tribal colleges were portrayed as an acceptable choice to parents, as is evident in this participant quote: “I wasn’t going to go to college. I was one of those 18-year-old young mothers. And all I wanted to do was move out of the house when I was 18. Me and my daughter moved out. I had a job with Bureau of Indian Affairs, working the old switchboards. I had a job! ‘Yeah.’ I thought ‘oh I’m just going to do this job, start working…move out and get an apartment.’ Well my mom was smart. Pretty soon I decided that working was not what I wanted. I didn’t want to pay bills. So I went home and told my mom and she says ‘here…here’s your bus ticket. I signed you up for Haskell. Get going.’ And I did.”

Summary

In this chapter, themes from focus groups conducted on Nevada American Indian reservations were described. The themes included Lack of Academic Preparation, Learned Helplessness, Lack of Trust Stifles Help-Seeking Behavior, Family Support, Lack of Financial Support, Being the Outsider, Homesickness, and Culture Shock. The final theme was the Benefits of a Tribal College. Participants in every focus group made position contributions in relation to the benefits of tribal colleges.
Chapter Review:

1. What is a focus group? Is it a qualitative or a quantitative approach to data collection?

2. Summarize in your own words three barriers to educational participation for Nevada American Indians.
   
   Barrier 1:
   
   Barrier 2:
   
   Barrier 3:

3. What ideas do you have for solutions to increasing the participation of American Indians in the college experience?

4. What strategies should be considered by Nevada colleges and universities to increase retention of American Indian students?
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Chapter 2:


Chapter 3:


Chapter 4:


Chapter 5:


