

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF NATIONALLY CERTIFIED COUNSELORS WHO
ATTENDED AN EIGHT-DAY NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURAL IMMERSION
INSTITUTE

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State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to understand how Nationally Certified Counselors experienced an eight-day cultural immersion experience on a Native American reservation. This phenomenological study was designed to capture the essence of the cultural immersion experience. Individual interviews were conducted with 5 participants utilizing a semi-structured interview. One theme emerged from data, along with six sub-themes. The overarching theme that emerged from the data was cultural humility and the six subthemes included difficult conversations, appreciation and application of Native American spirituality, hearing the silent scream, desire to share lead to activism, learner's mindset, and connection. These themes described how Nationally Certified Counselors experienced the Native American cultural immersion experience. Implications from this research shed light on the significance of cultural immersion opportunities and how they can impact personal and professional growth.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all my ancestors and my all decedents. To my ancestors, miigwech (thanks) for all the sacrifices you made so that I could accomplish this important research and degree. Miigwech for your prayers that have led me here to this place in time. To my descendants, miigwech for giving me reason to write this.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
DEDICATION	vi
LIST OF TABLES	viii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	21
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	39
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	54
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS	69
REFERENCES	83

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Demographic of Participants.....	46
2. Examples of Significant Statements	49
3. Process of Creating Formulated Meanings and Sub Themes from Significant Statements.....	50

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to understand how Nationally Certified Counselors experienced the phenomenon of an eight-day cultural immersion event held on a Native American Reservation located in the Upper Midwest. Understanding this phenomenon has implications for counselors, counselor educators and supervisors, the counseling profession, and for all helping professionals working with Native American clients and/or working on Reservations. Literature regarding multicultural trainings for counselors has increased the awareness of how counselors are serving the Native American clients (Owen, Leach, Wampold & Rodolfa, 2011). This study could help expand multicultural and immersion training literature in the health professional fields.

Problem Statement

Racial and ethnic disparities in health care persist, even though considerable progress in expanding healthcare services and improving the quality of patient care has been made (Rose, 2013). This is especially true for Native Americans living on reservations. Elevating the visibility of Indian health care issues has been a struggle shared by Tribes, state and federal governments, and private practices. Health professionals are scarce in Indian Country in general; scarcer still are those with the requisite of being culturally competent and culturally humble. Most mental health counselors who serve the Native American population are not part of the Native American culture and may have limited understanding of the communities' values and beliefs. This lack of understanding can negatively influence the effectiveness of mental health services (Yoon, Langrehr & Ong, 2011). Counseling services on Indian reservations have suffered through high staff turnover, rapid burnout, and difficulty recruiting professionals for the critical role of guiding reservation community members through troubling times.

One attempt to address the lack of culturally competent and culturally humble counselors working on reservations was the National Board for Certified Counselors-International (NBCC-I) eight-day cultural training conference on a Native American Reservation in the Midwest held June 5-12, 2016. The model used for this professional development opportunity was created by NBCC-I and this researcher in hopes to help enhance cultural competency and cultural humility.

Statement of Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of the research project was to gain a deep understanding of the lived experiences of the counselors attending the eight-day cultural immersion training program. The goal of study was to get an understanding of what may have occurred personally or professionally to the participants during and after the training. This phenomenological study was guided by the following question: How did Nationally Certified Counselors experience an immersive experience on a Native American Reservation?

White Earth Institute

Overview

In this section, I will describe the White Earth Institute. The objective of the institute was to provide counselors a platform to learn from the White Earth Nation community about their resources and needs. A component of the institute that brought the participants and local health professionals together was a program called Mental Health Facilitation. The Mental Health Facilitator program is a mental health training created by NBCC International and initially developed in collaboration with the World Health Organization. The program aims to improve mental health care access in community settings by providing education on fundamental helping and referral skills. The dates of the immersion institute were June 5 to 12, 2016.

Presenters

The Professional Experts. Dr. John Gonzalez is a member of the White Earth Anishinaabe Nation and an Associate Professor of Psychology at Bemidji State University. He received his doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University of North Dakota. He is an alumnus of BSU where he received his undergraduate degree in psychology. Dr. Gonzalez's professional interests are in cultural psychology, multicultural psychology and community psychology. All these areas come together to provide a holistic view of people and their environments. Dr. Gonzalez's research interests are in the areas of mental/behavioral health for indigenous people and ethnic minorities. More recently, Dr. Gonzalez has investigated the racial experiences of American Indian students and Native people's racial experiences accessing healthcare.

Dr. Donald Warne, MD, MPH is the director of the Indians into Medicine (INMED) program at University of North Dakota. He is the former Director of the Master's of Public Health Program at North Dakota State University, and he serves as the Senior Policy Advisor to the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Health Board. In addition, he is an adjunct clinical professor at the Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law where he teaches American Indian Health Policy. Dr. Warne is a member of the Oglala Lakota tribe from Pine Ridge, South Dakota and comes from a long line of traditional healers and medicine men. He received his MD from Stanford University in 1995 and his Master of Public Health from Harvard University as a Commonwealth Fund/Harvard University Fellow in Minority Health Policy in 2002. Dr. Warne is a Certified Diabetes Educator (CDE), and he is a Diplomate of both the American Board of Family Practice and the American Board of Medical Acupuncture. In addition to Minority Health Policy, he completed a Fellowship in Alternative Medicine from the

Arizona Center for Health and Medicine. Donald Warne's work experience includes several years as a primary care and integrative medicine physician with the Gila River Health Care Corporation in Sacaton, AZ, and three years as a Staff Clinician with the National Institutes of Health in Phoenix where he conducted diabetes research and developed diabetes education and prevention programs in partnership with tribes.

Theda New Breast, M.P.H. comes from the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana. Theda is a founding board member and master trainer/facilitator for the Native Wellness Institute (NWI). She is one of the pioneers in the Native training field and an original committee member for the Men's and Women's Wellness gatherings. Theda has been a leading authority on Indigenous Cultural Resilience Internationally and has worked with over 500 Tribes in 34 years on Proactive Healing from Historical Trauma, Post-Traumatic Growth, Mental Health Healing, and Sobriety/Recovery/Adult Child of Alcoholic (ACOA). She is the co-founder and co-writer of the GONA (Gathering of Native Americans) curriculum, one of the Ten Effective Practices and Models in Communities of Color. Theda has facilitated over 600 GONA's. She lives on the Blackfeet Reservation in Northern Montana and is a Khan-nat-tso-miitah (Crazy Dog) Society member, herbalist, Sun Dancer, Pipe Carrier, and lives as Niitsitapi, like all her Ancestors for thousands of years. In 2013, The Red Nations Film Festival Honored Theda with a Humanitarian Award for her lifetime of healing work with tribes and with a Red Nations statuette for her documentary short called, *Why the Women in My Family Don't Drink Whiskey*. The Blackfeet Tribal Council has recognized her Leadership skills and appointed her unanimously to The Board of Trustees for Blackfeet Community College for years 2014-2017.

Gabe Desrosiers (Misko Ginew – Red Eagle) is Ojibwe and from Ontario, Canada. He is a highly respected and well recognized Anishinaabe singer, dancer, and language educator. Gabe

holds a Bachelor of Art degree from the University of Minnesota Morris in Native American Studies, a Master's degree in Education from the University of Minnesota Duluth in Indigenous Language Revitalization, and is currently a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota Duluth, pursuing his degree in Teaching and Learning Indigenous Education and Language. Mr. Desrosiers has traveled extensively both nationally and internationally to share his knowledge of culture, language, and dancing. He is currently a professor at the University of Minnesota Morris teaching Ojibwe Language/Dance/Culture courses.

The Indigenous Experts. Several local indigenous experts were used throughout the Immersion experience. Each person spoke about their own personal stories and how they ended up where they are in the lives. Experts included: Medicine men and women that helped with the opening ceremony, the Sweat Lodge, making Biidabin buttons, making medicine pouches, and making hand drums. An Indigenous plant expert explained the Spiritual and modern day uses of traditional medicines. Local pow wow dancers were brought in to teach the participants about dancing and the celebration of pow wows. Each of these local experts were offered tobacco and given gifts to help with the Institute.

Participants

There were twelve participants who completed the eight-day immersion program. All were female with master's degrees in counseling and were Nationally Certified Counselors.

Lodging

To deepen the immersion experience of the participants, lodging was on the White Earth Reservation at Maplelag Resort. Maplelag is located about one and a half hours' northeast of Fargo, North Dakota; it is four and a half hours' northwest of Minneapolis/St. Paul, and four hours south of Winnipeg, Manitoba. The surrounding area, which includes Maplelag, was settled

by Finnish pioneers around 1918. Maplelag is known for their beautiful conference center and lodging, their skiing/running trails, delicious homemade food, family owned and operated, and having no cellular phone service due to being so remote. Itasca State Park (the source of the Mississippi River), is less than an hour away. The participants were assigned rooms as they came to Maplelag on the first day. Those traveling together in the late afternoon stayed near each other and those arriving in early evening stayed near each other. Participants had their own bedrooms; however, the cabins had communicated living room and bathroom areas for up to four people per cabin.

Agenda

Day One. Participants flew into Fargo, North Dakota, the closest airport to the White Earth Indian Reservation. They were greeted by faculty of the North Dakota State University (NDSU) Counselor Education and Supervision program. The liaison between the National Board for Certified Counselors- International (NBCC-I) and the White Earth Institute, was also a student at NDSU. NDSU supported the Institute by having facility input throughout the process, arranging a welcoming reception on campus, and provided transportation to and from the White Earth Indian Reservation. The participants flew in at different times throughout the day, so the NDSU campus arranged a welcoming reception on campus where participants could relax, have snacks, meet others who would be part of the Institute, learn about the NDSU counseling program, and fill out pre-assessments for the researcher.

There were two different travel times arranged from Fargo to Maplelag resort. Half of the participants arrived to Maplelag in the late afternoon and the second half arrived in early evening. The researcher was at Maplelag with several community members from the White Earth Reservation, along with the medicine man who would be doing the welcoming ceremony when

the participants arrived. There was a traditional meal prepared for the participants when they arrived, including local wild rice and walleye. The community members were related to Biidabin, the young girl who had committed suicide, whose mental health services fell through the cracks as her and her family were reaching out for help after her sexual assault. Biidabin's mother and uncle welcomed the participants and told the story of Biidabin. They talked about the beauty of her Spirit, her personality, and the tragedy of her death by suicide. Her uncle also told of his dream about "Biidabin's buttons" and the origination of how they got started.

Day Two. The morning of day two started with a pipe ceremony with the medicine man. Everyone involved in the institute sat in a circle around tables and listened as the medicine man speak in the Ojibwe language. He asked Creator to bless the institute process and all those who were part of it. He loaded and smoked his traditional Native American pipe with ceremonial tobacco while the liaison played her hand drum and sang in the Ojibwe language.

As the medicine man smoked his pipe, he gave thanks to each direction, to Mother Earth, to Father Sky, and the Spirits around him that were helping who were there. When giving thanks to the Spirit Keepers of the East, he thanked them for the new day. He thanked them for reminding us that we can choose to start fresh. He thanked them for reminding us about commitment and how the Sun coming up each morning is such a beautiful way for us humans to realize that no matter how hard yesterday was, we get a chance to try again today. The Sun does not say "I had a crappy day yesterday, I don't think I am going to come up today", the sun comes up and shows us each day is a new beginning.

When he gave thanks to the Spirit keepers of the South, he thanked the Sun for the warm and light he (Grandfather Sun), brings to everyone. The Sun does not pick and choose who he is going to shine on or bring warmth to, he brings it to everyone no matter what. The sun shining at

the noon of day for everyone is a reminder to us humans that it is our job to love everyone, no matter what. That we grow when we can love those that are hard to love. It is easy to love those that love us and are kind to us, but the Spirit Keepers of the South reminds us to love all those that are in our garden, those people in our life; even the ones that challenge us.

When the medicine man gave thanks to the Spirit Keepers of the West, he thanked them for reminding us about challenges in our life and how we need to honor them, just like we honor the joyous times in our life. We do not have to jump for excitement when we are down or going through tough times, but that we should honor them as lessons to grow, to gain wisdom, to gain awareness about ourselves and the world around us. The Spirit keepers of the West also remind us of the Sun setting for the day. It is a reminder that we do not have to carry the worries or the burdens of the day, we can choose to let them go. As humans, we have the cognitive ability to let go of things that are no longer serving us. The Spirit Keepers of the West remind us that the end of each day can be like a death- in a good way, with death meaning that a beautiful re-birth can happen in the morning. We can get a good night's sleep and wake up in the morning as a new person, like a new baby. Anything we see as problems we can turn into opportunities of learning and growing.

When the medicine man prayed to the Spirit Keepers of the North, he thanked them each of our minds, bodies, and Spirits. He asked the Spirits to help us see the beauty in all of ourselves and all those that are around us. When giving thanks to Mother Earth, he thanked her for providing everyone with the food and nourishments of the day. He thanked Mother Earth for her medicines she provides and all the love she gives us with no expectations in return.

When the Medicine Man prayed to Father Sky, he gave thanks for the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Clouds, and all the weather systems we experience. He thanked Father Sky for

reminding us that even when storms come, we know they will not last forever and that we need rain for things to grow. This is a reminder that seasons come and go, they are natural. He asked that us humans be reminded that not every moment of every day will be full of rainbows and sunshine, that we need to embrace the weather as it comes and learn to “dance in the rain”. Lastly, the Medicine man asked that the Spirits around him and around the room look after everyone. He asked that they help keep everyone safe and that they help guide the process of the week ahead.

After the morning prayer and pipe ceremony, Native American Worldview Training began. This was led by Theda New Breast. Theda did an opening activity so that everyone could get to know each other. She introduced herself, where she came from, and told a piece of her story and how she ended up standing in front of everyone. The Native American Worldview approach used in the Immersion program was an approach to think circular, instead of linear. Western models often reflect linear thinking, with lists and blocks of time. Theda encouraged participants to be in the present moment with one another and not worry about taking notes about new things they may be hearing. Instead of engaging only the participants ‘minds, she wanted to engage their body and hearts. Medicine pouches were the main activity of day two of the training. Teachings around different medicines were given to the participants and they were able to choose which medicines they wanted in their pouches.

After dinner, Gabe joined the group. Gabe, a professor at the University of Minnesota-Morris, teaches Ojibwe culture and dance. He gave teachings about the ceremonial drums, other big drums they would be seeing at the upcoming pow-wow, and about hand drums. He spoke about the process of what would be happening to make the hand drums and what needed to happen that evening. The end of day two consisted of teamwork. Participants were given a piece

of deer hide, pre-cut in a circular pattern, a ruler, and a pencil. They needed to measure and mark 12 areas on the hide where they would be making holes in the hide to be able to tie the hand drum. The measurements were taken, and the holes were all made before each of the hides would be put in a large garbage can of water, so they could be soaked overnight.

Day Three. Day three began with breakfast, a prayer, and a check-in. Each participant reflected on their time so far and what they were thankful for. After the check-in, Gabe offered teachings on the Spirit of the Drum and how to care for it. He explained that the drum, after it was completed that day, will be a Spiritual item, it will have a life that needs to be taken care of. He explained that each of the drums will serve their own purposes and it's up to each participant on what they will do with it and how they will care of it.

In the afternoon, Dr. John Gonzalez, from the White Earth Nation, and a psychology professor at Bemidji State University showed up and helped Gabe, since the drums were not done. John has traditional Native American knowledge and teachings and was able to help Gabe and the participants with the last part of tying their drums. When completed, the drums were all put in an area where they could dry for a few days, a very important step. If they are tampered with before completely drying, they could get loose and would have to be re-made.

After the drums were put away, Dr. John Gonzales spoke about his life, his education, and his research. John grew up in White Earth and was one of the first students to attend the local Tribal School. The Circle of Life Academy tribal school was started by a group of students who felt racism at one of the public schools on the reservation. They walked out and worked with adults in the community to begin their own tribal school. He spoke about the hardships of walking in two worlds. He presented on cultural identity, his research, and his personal journey

of growing up on the reservation. He shared how a tragedy in his life led him to return to college as an adult and become a professor.

Following Dr. Gonzalez's presentation was Dr. Donald Warne. Dr. Warne is the former director of the Public Health program at North Dakota State University. He is a medical doctor and has traditional healing knowledge passed from his family of the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Dr. Warne spoke to the group regarding health disparities and inequalities with the Native American population. He gave a brief history lesson on the health of American Indian's from pre-colonial times to the present. He ended his presentation on speaking of the strengths of what is currently being done in Indian Country and all the positive initiatives that have been taken to decrease health disparities. North Dakota State University is the first University in the United States that offers an American Indian Public Health track within the Public Health program.

After lunch, all of participants, including Theda, loaded a bus to go on a tour of the Reservation. The tour began by visiting the Tribal Headquarters building. The building houses the departments of: Indian Child Welfare, Education, Enrollment, Natural Resources, Finance, Law Enforcement/Public Safety, Tribal Court, and Human Resources. The building is located one mile from the village of White Earth. There are roughly 200 employees that work in the building.

Next stop was at the White Earth Community Center. This building is used for multiple purposes and is only 500 feet from the Pow Wow grounds. During this stop, the participants met the Boys and Girls Club program coordinator Dennis. Dennis spoke with are participants about his role and the types of things that are done in the building during open hours for Boys and Girls Club members. He explained that the building was also used for funerals, baby showers, healing

ceremonies, community get-togethers and whatever else the community might need it for. He concluded by letting the participants know that they would be seeing him in a few days, as he and his family would be dancing for them, explaining about the different types of Native American dancing and telling them about what to expect at the upcoming pow-wow.

After leaving the community center, the bus toured about a Project Area of the village. The Projects are groups of housing within the village. In White Earth, there are the “new projects”, the “old projects”, and the “east projects”. The participants toured the “old projects”. They saw homes with boards covering windows and doors, which locals refer to as “boarded up”. This means that the housing authority for the Tribe deemed the home unlivable at the time, or that the residents of the home are temporarily not living there, sometimes due to being away at chemical dependency treatment or incarceration. The participants saw the Circle of Life Academy Tribal school, White Earth Housing Authority and the Shooting Star Casino and Event Center.

Day Four. Day four was the first day of Mental Health Facilitation training. Twelve local participants joined the NBCC participants. Included in the local participants were nurses from the tribal public health department, counselors, and an instructor from the White Earth Tribal and Community College. The training ended at 3:30 pm. The NBCC participants then traveled to the medicine man’s home, where his wife and son were as well. The participants were given teachings of the sweat lodge and instructions on how to help prepare for it. They helped the medicine woman, who would be facilitating the Sweat Lodge Ceremony. They helped put cedar bows around the parameter of the lodge, as they learned that cedar was a protection medicine that would be helping them throughout their time in the lodge. They entered the Sweat Lodge at around 9pm and it concluded a little after midnight.

Day Five. The morning of day five was spent finishing the Mental Health Facilitation training. Because day four went late into the evening, the afternoon of day five was given to the participants to rest, relax, and reflect. Dinner included a “Pow Wow 101” event. This event included a pow wow emcee and several local pow wow dancers. The emcee walked the participants through the history of pow wows, the significance of them, and gave them teachings about each of the dances they would be seeing in the following two days.

Day Six. Day six included leaving Maplelag resort and transitioning to the Pow Wow grounds. The participants went to a community members home for breakfast. The community member was my aunt Lisa. Lisa lives three miles from the village of White Earth and has lived her entire life on the reservation. She has worked for the Tribal government, in the finance department, for over 25 years. Her husband is a tribal cop, an investigator, and they have four grown children. My aunt, along with my mother and my grandmother, made brunch for all the participants and opened up her home and heart to them. My aunt was on a tribal committee that was looking at homelessness on the reservation and within the state. The committee had created a survey and was hoping those who attended the pow wow would fill it out so they could gather diverse data. As part of service learning, the participants for the institute received instructions on how to instruct people to fill out the surveys and how to get their names entered into a drawing for prizes. The brunch, informal visiting, and instructions regarding the survey lasted two hours.

The afternoon was spent unpacking and getting settled in at the pow wow grounds. Tents and mattresses were set up prior to the participants showing up. Surveys were also started. Most of the institute participants paired up and walked about the pow wow grounds, meeting people, and asking if they would want to fill out the surveys.

Friday night at 7:00 pm was the first Grand Entry of the Pow Wow weekend. The participants all sat together in the stands and they watched all the dancers enter the arena. Later in the evening, they danced during Intertribal dancing, which means when anyone can dance. Dancers do not have to be in regalia, their pow wow attire, to dance in the arena. The pow wow ended at 10:30pm.

Day Seven. Participants did not have a schedule to follow on Saturday and were able to choose from different activities. Several participated in a 5k walk/run in the morning. The run was sponsored by the Diabetes Project, part of the Health Division of the White Earth Nation. Other participants participated in a Flag Ceremony, which is a morning event at a pow wow where flags of fallen heroes are raised. Participants were able to walk around and visit with other campers, or just do whatever they felt they needed to do.

There were two pow wow sessions on this day. The first Grand Entry session was at 1:00 pm and the second one was at 7:00 pm. At 5:00 was a community feast where everyone that was in attendance of the pow wow could go and eat. The Pow Wow ended at approximately 10:30 pm again.

Day Eight. Participants woke up, had a process group with me, and then left back to Fargo, ND to get on their flights back home.

Researcher Reflexivity Statement

I am a student in the Ph.D. Counselor Education and Supervision program at a University in the Midwest. I was present during the eight-day immersion training and was the cultural liaison between the community of the White Earth Nation and the National Board for Certified Counselors-International (NBCC-I). I worked closely with NBCC-I to develop the cultural immersion program. We modeled the event using past programming NBCC-I had done in Africa

and Europe. I was responsible for setting the agenda, materials, bringing in all the presenters/community members, activities that were done, food/lodging, and lining up the transportation once they arrived at the airport in Fargo, ND. NBCC-I was responsible for advertising and applications.

Once NBCC-I approved all applicants, they were sent to me. I created a local application committee to review all applications and we ranked them. The application committee consisted of a local elder that taught courses at the local tribal college, an active community member, a medicine man, and a Native American sociology professor who worked closely with the tribal college and community. Since this was the first NBCC-I Institute event done domestically and, on a reservation, we kept the number of accepted participants to 12. The top 12 applicants were contacted by NBCC-I and were told they were accepted. NBCC-I took care of all the participants prior to the event. They gave them the agenda, what to expect, what they could read prior to coming, and answered any questions they had. If NBCC-I did not know an answer they would contact me and then they would get back to the participants. Prior to the event, I had only read the participants applications and biographies they submitted to NBCC-I.

I have had several personal and professional experiences in my life that shaped the passion for the immersion training. The specific event that prompted the birth of the training happened in 2012 when I was a school counselor at the local Bureau of Indian Affairs Tribal School. I was unable to help a child who opened to me a traumatic event that occurred one Saturday night. The child did not feel she could talk to anyone, so she waited until Monday morning to come into my office. She had not told her parents yet, so I called them. As her father sat in my office hearing what happened, tears were running down his face. Since the researcher could not provide mental health services, a referral was put in to the tribal mental health

program, which was one mile down the road. Time went by and the child had not yet been seen and nobody from the department had come to talk to the girl. It was heartbreaking that the holdup was just an eligibility form, which the staff had not tried to fill out with the family because they were waiting for a phone call back from the family to confirm that they wanted services for their daughter. Six weeks later, I was hugging that same father, as tears again were rolling down his face. This time with pain that cannot be articulated in words; his beautiful daughter had taken her own life. As I stood by this young girl's casket, a commitment was made. The commitment was that I would honor this young girl's life as I would make intentional decisions, both personally and professionally, to raise awareness of our culture and our relational ways of being to anyone that is working with the children in my community.

This prompted my return to graduate school to pursue an American Indian Public Health certificate and a Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision; along with the vision of bringing professionals to the reservation for immersion opportunities. It also prompted me to speak out about how relationships are so very important in the Native American culture. It prompted me to talk about the importance of going to homes to meet people, and not to wait for the phone call back, or wait for the form to come back in the mail. I had seen many wonderful employees leave the reservation because they had a hard time understanding the poverty, the lateral oppression that occurs, and the lack of knowledge of the Native American culture. Not just in terms of pow wows and ceremonies, but in the "how we roll around here" culture. I believed that the Nationally Certified Counselors who came to the reservation in June of 2016, did indeed, experience and learn about the culture. The depth had not yet been known, however with the qualitative research, there was hope that themes would emerge as the participants were able to tell about their lived experience of attending the eight-day culture immersion program.

Birth and Reflections of the Institute

A vision to bring counselors to my reservation for an experiential professional development opportunity came to life in 2016 at the White Earth Reservation Institute for Education in northwest Minnesota. For several months, I was consumed by the Institute—I ate, breathed, and slept the program. The opportunity was a dream come true, but as the big event grew nearer, my mind raced with questions. What should the participants learn? What should they do? What lessons did I want them to walk away with? Who should present? Which teachings would be important?

I decided I would introduce the participants to people who have touched *my* life—those who have given me the strength to be who I am today and those who have taught me valuable lessons in my journey thus far.

My Introduction to the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) Minority Fellowship Program

I was checking my email one fall day in 2015 when I noticed a notification that my advisor for my Ph.D. program sent me a message. The email contained encouraging words about how he thought I would be a good candidate for this certain fellowship through the National Board for Certified Counselors. I decided I had nothing to lose by applying for it, clicked on the website link, and submitted my application a few weeks later. Three months later I was notified I was selected as a receipt of this fellowship award.

Fast forward six months and I was boarding an airplane in Fargo, N.D., to attend the annual meeting of the Minority Fellowship Program (MFP). I was overwhelmed by what I would later learn was imposter syndrome. *Why me?* Why would the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) Foundation choose me for this fellowship—a little “Rez girl” who has

always stayed within the confines of her home reservation? As my plane began its descent, I decided not to listen to the tape running through my head, but to put both feet forward, hold my head high, and embrace this new journey.

At the MFP reception that afternoon, I met the vice president of NBCC International and, unbeknownst to me, my soon-to-be mentor. NBCC wanted to bring together Native Americans to look at a curriculum focused on populations overseas and contextualize it for Native Americans. The vice president of NBCC-I and I talked about the curriculum in depth before I told her about a vision I had to bring people to my reservation.

It had been just two years since the loss of the young girl from our local school. I told the story to the Vice President of NBCC-I and explained that if we could just get counselors to spend time at our reservations, they would be able to better help our people. She embraced the idea. She told me the infrastructure was “already in place in other countries.” Four months later, she was traveling to Minnesota for a 4-day mini-experience of my reservation. I knew then that what I had wished for was likely to happen. I told her I was willing, able, and committed to facilitating the first-ever domestic NBCC–I Institute.

Support and Hesitation from the Community

Although the community embraced the Institute and wanted to help, I also faced bouts of lateral oppression. “Who does Julie think she is?” “Is she really *pimping out* our culture?” The crab in the bucket was almost out, and a few people wanted to pull me back down where they think we all belong. My elders told me I was up against the Spirit of Depression, the Spirit of Suicide, and that this task would not be easy. They encouraged me to see the challenges that lay ahead as opportunities to gain strength and wisdom. With their guidance, I was able to overcome the doubting voices and find my own.

The Institute became an opportunity for counselors to learn about the White Earth Nation—to bring back to their communities and professions the beauty of our culture and an understanding of our relational way of being. I hoped this would have a trickle-down effect, reaching those who worked with our people. In our communities, an amiable approach is usually the most effective. For example, having a cup of coffee with a person at the onset of services goes much further than sending a packet of paperwork that needs to be signed before services can start. Spending time getting to know a family and their extended family is equally as important as getting to know the client. Listening to past pain and struggles can have a tremendous benefit when counseling the individual through current challenges. Knowing the true history of Native American genocide in the United States allows a helper in our community to reach out from a place of understanding.

My Expectations and Many Pleasant Surprises

What I had envisioned for the Institute was an open exchange of lessons, learning, and acceptance. However, what happened throughout the week far exceeded my expectations, as meaningful relationships bloomed between members of my community and the participants. I saw my community start to heal with the open ears and minds of empathic, caring adults, in a space where stories of joy, hurt, and pain could be shared. Watching this unfold was absolutely beautiful.

I was also surprised by the personal transformation I experienced at the Institute. I learned to truly “trust in the process” and the notion that when good people come together in a positive way, wonderful things can happen. What seemed like little bumps in the road were really opportunities for collaboration and creative problem-solving to accomplish the task at hand. At one workshop, team members collaborated to make hand drums. When we realized we

had forgotten rulers to measure holes in the deer hide covering the drums, the team quickly resolved the issue, with positive spiritual energy that was palpable. Later, the counselors banded together to assemble personal medicine pouches they would carry near and dear to their hearts. As they separated the healing plant leaves from their stems with great care, they honored the beauty and strength of our sacred medicines.

At the end of the week, the Institute concluded in the same way it had started—with trust and acceptance. NBCC strives to maintain transparency and build trust with counselors from around the country and world. Trust is what allowed the organization to bring people together for eight days on an Indian Reservation, and it is truly what made the Institute happen.” (Smith, 2016, p.1-3).

Summary

Native Americans living on reservations encounter high rates of health care disparities, which includes mental health. Most mental health counselors who serve the Native American population are not part of the Native American culture and may have limited understanding of the communities’ values and beliefs. The purpose of this study was to understand how non-native Nationally Certified Counselors experienced the phenomenon of an eight-day cultural immersion event held on a Native American Reservation. The research project was conducted to gain a deep understanding of the lived experiences of the counselors who attended the event. It is important for the researcher to disclose, discuss, and process assumptions and biases to assure the work and data process is looked at through a lens of seeing it for the first time.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

I conducted a review of the literature following the suggestions of Wolcott (1990) for conducting qualitative research literature reviews. According to Wolcott, the literature review may be distributed across rather than localized in the dissertation:

I suggest that you draw on the relevant work of others on a when-and-as-needed basis. By all means, flag important citations to the work of others. But do so sparingly, only as the references are critical in helping you to analyze and to situate your problem and your research within some broader context. In the normal course of things, the need for locating your work within a widening circle of concern is most likely to be toward the end of your study, where you begin to draw the strands together and ponder some broader implication. (Wolcott, 1990)

Conducting a review in this “as needed” manner assists the researcher in maintaining an open stance to the phenomenon under study.

Thus, the goals of the literature reviewed in this section is to provide a rationale for the research study and to set its context (Wolcott, 1990). This will be accomplished by relating the history and story from the perspective and narratives of Native American Anishinaabe/Ojibwe people. For example, at one point, the United States was not called the United States of America, it was only known as Mother Earth by over 5 million Indigenous people. Today these Indigenous people are known as Native Americans or American Indians. There is no question that times have changed and the same land that was once inhabited by only Native Americans is becoming more and more diverse in terms of cultures and ethnicities.

According to a 2010 Census Brief, there were 2.9 million people in the US who have identified as Native American or Alaska Native. This represents 1.7% of the total population.

Another 2.3 million identified as Native American or Alaska Native in combination with one or more races. The Native American or Alaska Native population has grown by 18% from 2000 to 2010. During this same period, the combined American Native and Alaska Native population grew 27%. Seventy-eight percent of Native Americans and Alaska Natives live outside of American Indian Reservations or Alaska Native Villages. The remaining 22% of the Native American (N = 1069,411; alone and combination) and Alaska Native population (N = 78,141; alone and combination) were living on American Indian Reservation or Alaska Native Village lands. Of the 1,147,552 alone or in combination living on these lands, 967,135 (84%) identified as Native American or Alaska Native alone.

The literature review explores the available written and oral history of the Native American Anishinaabe/Ojibwe people. Within this section, the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe value system, also known as the Seven Grandfather Teachings, will be covered. Next, the prophecies of the Anishinaabe people will be explained, which aligns with the migration from the East Coast of the United States to their current location of the Midwest. Native American Reservations, including the White Earth Indian Reservation, will then be discussed, as that was the location of the Cultural Immersion event. The literature review will be wrapped up with information regarding Native American health disparities and current cultural immersion literature. This background is necessary to understand the context and reasons for this study of counselors' experiences attending the eight-day cultural immersion training program.

The History of Native American Anishinaabe/Ojibwe People

According to Wikipedia (2018), Anishinaabe is the autonym for a group of culturally related Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the United States that include the Odawa, Ojibwe, Potawatomi, Oji-Cree, Mississaugas, Chippewa, and Algonquin peoples. The Anishinaabeg

speak Anishinaabemowin, or Anishinaabe languages belonging to the Algonquian language family. Traditionally they lived in the Northeast Woodlands. Anishinaabe is often mistakenly considered a synonym of Ojibwe; however, it refers to a much larger group of tribes. The word *Anishinaabeg* translates to "people from whence lowered." Another definition refers to "the good humans," meaning those who are on the right road or path given to them by the Creator Gitchi Manitou, or Great Spirit. The Ojibwe historian and author Basil Johnston (1999) wrote that its literal translation is "Beings Made Out of Nothing" or "Spontaneous Beings," since Anishinaabeg believe they were created by divine breath.

Unlike European history, where there is a great deal of literature, Anishinaabe history has scattered and sometimes unaligned narratives. It is known that throughout time there has been many peaceful interactions between the Anishinaabe and the European settlers; however there has also been a great deal of turmoil and conflict. The turmoil has cost many lives on both sides and has also resulted in the loss of cultural and spiritual identity to several generations of Native Americans.

For the Anishinaabe, "the fundamental essence of Anishinaabe life is unity... the oneness of all things" (Warren, 2009). In this view, history is expressed in the way that life is lived each day. The key to this is the belief that harmony with all created things has been achieved. The people cannot be separated from the land, with its cycle of seasons or from the other mysterious cycles of living things - of birth and growth and death and new birth. The people know where they come from. The story is deep in their hearts. It has been told in legends and dances, in dreams and in symbols. It is in the songs a grandmother sings to the child in her arms and in the web of family names, stories, and memories that the child learns as he or she grows older. This is a story of the spirit - individual and collective.

There is another story of the Ojibway people. This story tells of how European nations with their overwhelming power and numbers swarmed across the land, reshaping it for themselves and destroying the natural balance within which the Anishinaabe people had always lived. This is a story of trade and wars and treaties, of laws and governments, and above all of the long, stubborn struggle through which the Anishinaabe tried to preserve their own ways and their own identity.

The Anishinaabe first dealt with Europeans primarily through the fur trade. They traded with the Anishinaabe for their furs in exchange for goods and hired the men as guides. The Anishinaabe women began to intermarry with fur traders and trappers. Some of their descendants would later create the Métis ethnic group.

The earliest Europeans to encounter native peoples in the Great Lakes area were the French voyagers. These men were professional canoe-paddlers who transported furs and other merchandise over long distances in the lake and river system of northern America. Such explorers gave French names to many places in present day Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin. The French were mostly trappers and traders rather than settlers. They typically got along with the native peoples better than the English, who often were settlers and took the land from the native inhabitants of the country. Much more often French men intermarried with American Native women.

Anishinaabe Prophecy

Mary Lyons, Ojibwe elder, tells of the Seven Fires prophecies. The Seven Fires Prophecies of the Anishinabe predates the arrival of the Europeans. They represent spiritual teachings for North America and suggests that human beings can come together with respect and create peace once again. They offer great insight into both the wisdom of the Ojibwe people as

well as offers a solution to current environmental, social, and spiritual crises. Mary says, "Let us be the People of the 7th Fire, the Rainbow Warriors!"

Prophecy One. Then, the First Prophet said to the people, "In the time of the First Fire, the Anishinabe nation will rise up and follow the sacred shell of the Midewiwin Lodge. The Midewiwin Lodge will serve as a rallying point for the people and its traditional ways will be the source of much strength. The Sacred Megis will lead the way to the chosen ground of the Anishinabe. You are to look for a turtle-shaped island that is linked to the purification of the earth. You will find such an island at the beginning and at the end of your journey. There will be seven stopping places along the way. You will know the chosen ground has been reached when you come to a land where food grows on water. If you do not move you will be destroyed."

INTERPRETATION: It is conjectured that the Anishinabe once lived at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean where the Maritime Provinces (Canada) and Eastern Seaboard States (US) now lie. The Midewiwin Lodge is the Ojibwe sacred teachings and medicine society that has preserved their precious wisdom over the ages. This prophecy hails back to thousands of years, when the people could not imagine life changing in any way. The prophets knew that the people would not be safe unless their wisdom was protected, and their very lives were protected by moving inland away from the Eastern shores of North America. The sacred shell (megis) was found on what is now called Madeline Island in Lake Superior.

Prophecy Two. The second prophet told the people, "You will know the Second Fire because at this time the nation will be camped by a large body of water. In this time the direction of the Sacred Shell will be lost. The Midewiwin will diminish in strength, a boy will be born to point the way back to the traditional ways. He will show the direction to the stepping stones to the future of the Anishinabe people."

INTERPRETATION: The Midewiwin had a strong bond, however as time went on it weakened and there would come a time when they would need to practice their traditional ways if they wanted the future of their people to continue on.

Prophecy Three. The third prophet said to the people, "In the Third Fire, the Anishinabe will find the path to their chosen ground, a land in the west to which they must move their families. This will be the land where food grows on water."

INTERPRETATION: The land where food grows on water refers to the land around the Great Lakes where wild rice grew plentifully. The Anishinabe people devised creative ways to harvest the rice using their birch bark canoes to move through the rice without damaging it.

Prophecy Four. The Fourth Fire was originally given to the people by two prophets. They come as one. They told of the coming of the Light Skinned race. One of the prophets said, "You will know the future of our people by the face the Light Skinned race wears. If they come wearing the face of brotherhood, then there will come a time of wonderful change for generations to come. They will bring new knowledge and articles that can be joined with the knowledge of this country, in this way, two nations will join to make a mighty nation. This new nation will be joined by two more so that four will form the mightiest nation of all. You will know the face of the brotherhood if the light skinned race comes carrying no weapons. If they come bearing only their knowledge and a hand shake."

The other prophet said, "Beware if the Light Skinned race comes wearing the face of death. You must be careful because the face of brotherhood and the face of death look very much alike. If they come carrying a weapon...beware. If they come in suffering... They could fool you. Their hearts may be filled with greed for the riches of this land. If they are indeed your brothers, let them prove it. Do not accept them in total trust. You shall know that the face they wear is one

of death if the rivers run with poison and the fish become unfit to eat. You shall know them by these many things."

INTERPRETATION: This part of the prophesy is very easy to decipher. It obviously refers to the influx of European white voyagers, traders, explorers, and later settlers into the precious land of the Anishinabe.

Prophecy Five. The Fifth Prophet said, "In the time of the Fifth Fire there will come a time of great struggle that will grip the lives of all Native people. At the warning of this Fire there will come among the people one who holds a promise of great joy and salvation. If the people accept this promise of a new way and abandon the old teachings, then the struggle of the Fifth Fire will be with the people for many generations. The promise that comes will prove to be a false promise. All those who accept this promise will cause the near destruction of the people."

INTERPRETATION: This part of the prophesy refers to the coming of the missionaries and the trader- merchants who set up a system of barter and trade and began recruiting souls to organized Christianity. At first, the Anishinaabe embraced the new items available, believing they could use what served them without impact on their cultural ways and practices.

Prophecy Six. The prophet of the Sixth Fire said, "In the time of the Sixth Fire it will be evident that the promise of the Fifth Fire came in a false way. Those deceived by this promise will take their children away from the teachings of the elders, grandsons and grand-daughters will turn against the elders. In this way, the elders will lose their reason for living... they will lose their purpose in life. At this time a new sickness will come among the people. The balance of many people will be disturbed. The cup of life will almost be spilled. The cup of life will almost become the cup of grief."

INTERPRETATION: This prophesy talks about the influence of marginalization, segregation, acculturation, and the bastardization of the traditional Anishinaabe ways. Native American acculturation was enforced by United States government policies from 1890-1970 (Lomay & Hinkebein, 2006). Many policies that were enacted were culturally destructive, such as boarding schools and land redistribution. They were intended to eradicate cultural ideologies (Whitebeck, 2006). There were actual laws that prohibited Native Americans from using their own language and spiritual practices. Separating generations (through Boarding Schools) accelerated the acculturation of Western ideologies (Whitbeck, 2006). Even language and cultural everyday practices were considered suspect. Young children were brutalized for doing anything that came naturally to them.

"At the time of these predictions, many people scoffed at the prophets. They then had medicines to keep away sickness. They were then healthy and happy as a people. These were the people who chose to stay behind in the great migration of the Anishinabe. These people were the first to have contact with the Light Skinned race. They would suffer the most."

"When the Fifth Fire came to pass, a great struggle did indeed grip the lives of all Native people. The Light Skinned race launched a military attack on the Indian people through-out the country aimed at taking away their land and their independence as a free and sovereign people. It is now felt that the false promise that came at the end of the Fifth Fire was the materials and riches embodied in the way of life of the light skinned race. Those who abandoned the ancient ways and accepted this new promise were a big factor in causing the near destruction of the Native people of this land."

When the Sixth Fire came to be, the words of the prophet rang true as the children were taken away from the teachings of the elders. The boarding school era of "civilizing" Indian

Children had begun. The Indian language and religion were taken from the children. The people started dying at an early age... they had lost their will to live and their purpose in living.

In the confusing times of the Sixth Fire, it is said that a group of visionaries came among the Anishinabe. They gathered all the priests of the Midewiwin Lodge. They told the priests that the Midewiwin Way was in danger of being destroyed. They gathered all the sacred bundles. They gathered all the scrolls that recorded the ceremonies. All these things were placed in a hollowed-out log from the ironwood tree. Men were lowered over a cliff by long ropes. They dug a hole in the cliff and buried the log where no one could find it. Thus, the teachings of the elders were hidden out of sight but not out of memory. It was said that when the time came that the Indian people could practice their religion without fear that a little boy would dream where the Ironwood log, full of the Sacred Bundles and Scrolls were buried. He would lead his people to the place."

Prophecy Seven. The Seventh Prophet that came to the people long ago was said to be different from the other prophets. He was young and had a strange light in his eyes. He said, " In the time of the Seventh Fire, New People will emerge. They will retrace their steps to find what was left by the trail. Their steps will take them to the elders who they will ask to guide them on their journey. But many of the elders will have fallen asleep. They will awaken to this new time with nothing to offer. Some of the elders will be silent out of fear. Some of the elders will be silent because no one will ask anything of them. The New People will have to be careful in how they approach the elders. The task of the New People will not be easy."

If the New People will remain strong in their Quest, the Water Drum of the Midewiwin Lodge will again sound its voice. There will be a Rebirth of the Anishinabe Nation and a rekindling of old flames. The Sacred Fire will again be lit.

"It is at this time that the Light Skinned race will be given a choice between two roads. If they choose the right road, then the Seventh Fire will light the Eighth and final Fire, an eternal Fire of peace, love, brotherhood and sisterhood. If the light skinned race makes the wrong choice of roads, the destruction which they brought with them in coming to this country will come back at them and cause much suffering and death to the Earth's people.

Traditional Mide people from other Nations have interpreted the two roads that face the Light Skinned race as the road to technology and the other to spiritualism. They feel that the road to technology represents a continuation of Head-Long rush to technological development. This is the road that has lead to modern society, to a damaged and seared Earth. Could it be that the road to technology represents a rush to destruction? The road to Spirituality represents the slower path that traditional Native People have traveled and are now seeking again. The Earth is not scorched on this trail. The grass is still growing there.

The prophet of the Fourth Fire spoke of a time when "two Nations will join to make a Mighty Nation". He was speaking of the coming of the Light Skinned race and the face of brotherhood that the Light Skinned Brother could be wearing. It is obvious from the history of this country that this was not the face worn by the Light Skinned race as a whole. That the Mighty Nation spoken of in the Fourth Fire has never been formed.

"If the Natural People of the Earth could just wear the face of brotherhood, we might be able to deliver our society from the road to destruction. Could we make the two roads that today represents two clashing world views come together to form a mighty Nation? Could a Nation be formed that is guided by respect for all living things? Are we the New People of the Seventh Fire?" asks Elder Mary Lyons.

Seven Grandfather Teachings of the Anishinaabe

There are many teachings of the Anishinaabe. Teachings are gifts given to people to help them live a good life. Oral storytelling has been the main delivery system used to pass on teachings, however in recent years there has been teachings that have been made into written form. A well-known teaching among the Anishinaabe is called the “Seven Grandfather Teachings”. In 2004, Benton-Banai, published a book that outlined these Grandfather teachings. The seven teachings include:

- ***Nibwaakaawin*—Wisdom:** To cherish knowledge is to know Wisdom. Wisdom is given by the Creator to be used for the good of the people. In the Anishinaabe language, this word expresses not only "wisdom," but also means "prudence," or "intelligence."
- ***Zaagi'idiwin*—Love:** To know peace is to know Love. Love must be unconditional. When people are weak they need love the most. In the Anishinaabe language, this word with the reciprocal theme /idi/ indicates that this form of love is mutual. In some communities, ***Gizhaawenidiwin*** is used, which in most contexts means "jealousy" but in this context is translated as either "love" or "zeal". Again, the reciprocal theme /idi/ indicates that this form of love is mutual.
- ***Minaadendamowin*—Respect:** To honor all creation is to have Respect. All of creation should be treated with respect. You must give respect if you wish to be respected.
- ***Aakode'ewin*—Bravery:** Bravery is to face the foe with integrity. In the Anishinaabe language, this word's literal meaning is "state of having a fearless heart." To do what is right even when the consequences are unpleasant. Some communities instead use either ***Zoongadikiwin*** ("state of having a strong casing") or ***Zoongide'ewin*** ("state of having a strong heart").

- ***Gwayakwaadiziwin*—Honesty:** Honesty in facing a situation is to be brave. Always be honest in word and action. Be honest first with yourself, and you will more easily be able to be honest with others.
- ***Dabaadendiziwin*—Humility:** Humility is to know yourself as a sacred part of Creation. In the Anishinaabe language, this word can also mean "compassion." You are equal to others, but you are not better. Some communities instead express this with ***Bekaadiziwin***, which in addition to "humility" can also be translated as "calmness," "meekness," "gentility" or "patience."
- ***Debwewin*—Truth:** Truth is to know all these things. Speak the truth. Do not deceive yourself or others.

Brief History of Reservations

Prior and juxtaposed to assimilationist policies designed to “melt” the Native American’s into mainstream society, reservations were used as a place to isolate and contain tribes. According to Smith (1997), reservations were created by the federal government to segregate Native Americans from the general population to prevent further conflicts. Reservations are a unique characteristic of the Native American population and vary in size and land quality. Smith (1997) explained that Native Americans were forced to adapt to lifestyles that were different from that to which they were accustomed. As assimilation replaced segregation many people thought that reservation systems would disappear within a generation, and Native Americans would enter mainstream society. Some of the assimilation did occur, however reservations still exist today, including the White Earth Indian Reservation in northern Minnesota.

White Earth Reservation

The White Earth Reservation is named for the layer of white clay underneath its surface (Peterson, 2012). The land is typical of west-central Minnesota: prairie in the west, rolling hills and many lakes and rivers in the middle, and forest in the east. Indian communities include White Earth, Pine Point/Ponsford, Naytahwaush, Elbow Lake, and Rice Lake. Other villages were built along the railroad track running south to north in the western part of the reservation, Callaway, Ogema, Waubun, and Mahnomen (all incorporated cities).

There was tremendous pressure put on all Minnesota bands to relocate onto one reservation with the signing of the Treaty of 1867. The land had never been the home of any Ojibwe group; however, it became a reservation in 1867 in a treaty with the Mississippi Band of Ojibwe. It was meant to become the home of all of the Ojibwe and Lakota in the state; however, not all bands wanted to move onto one reservation and give up their reservation. Mississippi Band members from Gull Lake were the first group to come and settle around White Earth Village in 1868. In 1920, the census reflected that of those who had settled in White Earth: 4856 were from the Mississippi Band including 1,308 from Mille Lacs, the Pillager Bands had 1,218, Pembina Band 472, and 113 had come from Fond du Lac of the Superior Band.

The official White Earth Tribal website (n.d.) reports that much of the true story of American Indian people has been left out of history books. Most of these books were written by White historians who thought that the history of the land did not begin until Europeans visited it. But Indians, including the Anishinaabe, had full, rich cultures long before that. Some of the mistakes of White authors have been corrected by Chippewa historians like William W. Warren, whose relatives and descendants lived on the White Earth Reservation. Warren was born in 1825 and died at the age of 28. His father was a New Englander, and his mother was a granddaughter

of White Crane (Waubojeeg), a hereditary Chippewa chief at LaPointe, Wisconsin. After arriving in Minnesota in 1845, Warren lived with the Mississippi Chippewa Band at Crow Wing and Gull Lake. He spoke the Anishinabe language perfectly and held many long talks with tribal chiefs and elders. Based on these interviews, he began publishing Chippewa stories and legends in a St. Paul newspaper, the *Minnesota Democrat*, in 1851. A year later he wrote *A History of the Ojibway Nation*. Residents of White Earth Reservation also have written their own history. In 1886, they established a reservation newspaper called *The Progress*, which was later succeeded by *The Tomahawk*. These newspapers recorded daily events on the reservation and published many articles on Chippewa customs and traditions.

Native American Health Disparities

The U.S. National Library of Medicine Medical Subject Headings committee (2009) states that *healthcare disparities* are “differences in access to or availability of facilities and services” and *health status disparities* refer to “the variation in rates of disease occurrence and disabilities between socioeconomic and/or geographically defined population groups”. Health disparities among Native Americans have existed for well over 500 years. Jones (2006) believes that since the time of colonization the major genocidal weapons used towards Native American’s include the following: smallpox, measles, influenza, malaria, STDs, murder, mind control, rape, dehumanization, removal, hepatitis, plague, chickenpox, and diphtheria. These tactics have impacted the health and well-being of the Native American population. He found that New England tribal nations’s populations declined by 90-95% during the first century after first contact with the Europeans. For one example, the Arawak Nation population decreased from roughly 400,000 members in 1496 to 125 individual’s members in 1570.

Moving ahead over 400 years, disparities still plague the Native American population. Native Americans suffer from among the worst disparities in the nation along with a disproportionate death rate (Espey et al., 2014). *Healthy People 2000* (National Center for Health Statistics) documented reductions in health disparities among many races; the Native American population demonstrated the smallest improvement. The United States Center of Disease Control (CDC) Healthy People initiative provides science-based, national goals and objectives with 10-year targets designed to guide national health promotion and disease prevention efforts to improve the health of all people in the United States. Compared to the total U.S. population, more than twice as many Native Americans live in poverty (Austin, 2013). In 2013, Native American men and women were nearly twice as likely as Whites to be unemployed. The American Psychiatric Association (2010) states that Native Americans experience serious psychological distress 1.5 times more than the general population. In addition, they also experience PTSD twice as often as the general population. Suicide among Native Americans occurs 2.5 times more than any other United States racial group and the alcoholism death rate in ages 15 to 24 is 18 times as frequent (O'Keefe et al., 2013). Native American youth residing on or near reservations have the highest mortality rate of all groups in the United State (Henly & Moss, 2008).

The loss of culture, language, land, children, etc., along with the loss of feeling safe and secure has left many Native communities trying to restore balance. The historical and intergenerational trauma has impacted the mental and physical health of many Native Americans. However, on the flip side, there is historical and intergenerational wisdom. How come Native American's have not been wiped out completely? Why has the U.S. Federal Government not successfully implemented the "Kill the Indian and Save the Man" tactic? I

believe it is because of the intergenerational wisdom that is carried within our Anishinaabe blood. It is the gifts that Gichi Manidoo (Creator) gave us to center ourselves when things get tough. It is the perseverance that Gichi Manidoo gave us to keep going when things get tough. It is the unconditional love that Gichi Manidoo gave us to forgive others when things get tough. When a person can see the beauty of these gifts, when they can “walk a mile” in an Anishinaabe’s moccasins, they can start to understand this intergenerational wisdom.

ACEs

While boarding school experiences caused interruption of traditional parenting practices, many Native American children are experiencing adverse experiences still today. A traumatic experience occurring before the age of 18 that a person recalls as an adult describes an adverse childhood experience (ACE). In most ACE studies, traumatic experiences are categorized as abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction. The categories are further broken down into physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; emotional and physical neglect; and incarceration, parental separation or divorce, substance abuse, mental illness, and domestic violence for household dysfunction. The ACE questionnaire assesses exposure to trauma and records one point for each category of trauma a person has endured to quantify a persons’ ACE score. The ACE score does not capture the frequency or severity of any given ACE, it simply reflects the number of categories of trauma experienced. Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conducted the original ACE study in 1995; 17,000 participants were enrolled and continue to be studied today to assess the relationship between ACEs and health outcomes (Baum, 2014).

Research suggests that ACEs can cause toxic levels of stress, disrupting growth and development at a biological level (University of Harvard, 2010). When in a state of constant

stress the fight or flight region of the brain is strengthened and more easily triggered in the future, linking poor physical and mental health, chronic disease, lower education achievement, lower economic success, and impaired social success in adulthood. The loss of land, people, and culture occurring in the traumatic events of the past is strongly associated with ACEs and the health challenges and inequities among American Indians (Koss & Yuan, 2003).

Native American Cultural Immersion

Thus, the effectiveness of health professionals, including counselors, in part is linked to their cultural awareness, cultural humility, and cultural competency when working with this underserved, neglected, and marginalized population. Although the need is great, little has been done to improve the cultural effectiveness of health professional working with Native Americans. These efforts do not include those designed specifically for professional counselors.

Alexander, Veace., Lian, & LeRoy (2013) identified that cultural exchange experiences with genetic counselors created positive professional and personal development. Cushman, Delva, Franks, Jimenez-Bautista, Moon-Howard, Glover, & Begg (2015) introduced a mandatory, full-day cultural competency workshop for Master of Public Health students. The results indicated that the highest-ranking component of the workshop was the usefulness in increasing cultural self-awareness. In the field of nursing, a four-day cultural immersion training was held on an Indian Reservation for senior nursing students. The post-experience results indicated that the students became more culturally aware than culturally competency (Isaacson, 2014). Isaacson explains that cultural humility is needed more than cultural competency because it illustrates the importance of including the client's views in the interpretation of culture, while cultural competence implies that the professional has a priori understanding of the person's culture before engaging with the client. The absence of such culturally-specific experiences and

training for professional counselors working with Native Americans in relation to the need for it strengthens the narrative of Native American marginalization.

Summary

The research articles and journals reviewed herein begins with the history of Native American Anishinaabe/Ojibwe people. The Seven Grandfather Teachings of the Anishinaabe, along with the Anishinaabe prophecies that were predated prior to first contact with Europeans in North America are then examined in detail. Next, the brief history of reservations, including the White Earth Reservation was discussed. Native Americans have high rates of health disparities. The ACEs study helps to identify risk factors that may contribute to the health disparities. Finally, research in Native American culture immersion programming for health professionals working with Native American clients is scarce; therefore, this research aimed to provide insight into Native American cultural immersion programming for counselors.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The purpose of this study was to understand how Nationally Certified Counselors experienced the phenomenon of an eight-day cultural immersion event held on a Native American Reservation. Data were gathered and analyzed utilizing a transcendental phenomenological approach. This chapter presents the key findings obtained from five in-depth interviews with event participants. The findings from the study form an understanding of five nationally certified counselors who attended an eight-day cultural immersion on a Native American reservation. These counselors and counselor educators shared experiences, beliefs, feelings and views about the cultural immersion experience. The research question, “How did Nationally Certified Counselors experience a Cultural Immersive experience on a Native American Reservation?” was used to guide this study. In order to answer the research question, eleven interview questions were used.

Methods

Given this was the first immersive experience of its kind, a qualitative methodological design was deemed appropriate. Qualitative research is the study of a topic or phenomenon in the context in which it occurs (Hays & Singh, 2012). I studied the experiences of United States Nationally Certified Counselors who completed an eight-day cultural immersion program on a Native American Reservation. Different qualitative research traditions are available to researchers, including grounded theory, heuristic inquiry, and phenomenology (Hays & Singh, 2012). For this study, a phenomenological approach was employed. Establishing the rigor and procedural consistency in counseling research utilizing qualitative approaches is vital (Hays, Wood, Dahl & Kirk-Jenkins, 2016).

Understanding the researcher's theoretical framework is important because it describes his or her view of the world (Mertens, 2009). Flynn and Korcuska (2018) assert that understanding the researcher's nature of reality, known as ontology, and his or her nature of knowledge, known as epistemology, are also important in the qualitative research process. The phenomenological approach is often associated with realism. This ontological position of reality is that nothing can be entirely understood or known since phenomena have their own existence. Thus, a single phenomenon may be understood as having as many constructed realities as participants and observers of the phenomenon (Schwandt, 2001). The constructivist epistemological position posits that persons uniquely interpret their experiences (Creswell, 2009). Thus, meaning is constructed through social interactions with others.

There are variants of phenomenological methodology. These approaches to phenomenology may be placed into two main branches: hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology (Creswell, 2007). Creswell aligns Van Manen with the former and Moustakas with the latter. Furthermore, according to Creswell, hermeneutic phenomenology as the interaction between researcher and participants' description of the phenomenon. Phenomenology, sometimes referred to as descriptive or transcendental phenomenology, assumes that it is not possible to simultaneously see a phenomenon from all sides; thus, getting to a phenomenon's essence calls for an abstraction from the actual experience on an object (van Manen & Adams, 2010). Phenomenology is utilized to capture the participants' description of their experiences rather than on the researcher's interpretation of them. The goal of researchers utilizing phenomenology is to view the phenomenon "as if for the first time" (Creswell, 2007, p. 60) to abstract its essence.

Getting to the essence of an experience requires the researcher to get herself out of the participants' description of the phenomenon. Epoche is the process by which the researcher seeks to set aside her preconceived notions and judgements (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing is a term often used synonymously with epoche (Creswell, 2007). Husserl's approach is linked with both terms (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Bracketing is the task of sorting out the qualities that belong to the researcher's experience of the phenomenon (Drew, 2004).

Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step framework to phenomenology data analysis was employed. The interviews were transcribed. Each transcription included what each participant said verbatim, along with non-verbal sounds. Once the transcription was finished, all names and other personally identifying information of the participants was removed. To protect participant confidentiality, participants were assigned a code name. In the first step, the transcripts were read and reread to gain an overall impression of the data. Next, statements with significance to the research question were extracted, such as descriptions of how participants decided to apply for the immersion experience. To reflect the research data accurately, significant statements using direct quotations from the participants were used. Next, analyzing the significant statements was done, articulating what the statements may mean and creating themes from the meanings. Groups with similar themes were put together and then organized into categories. Lastly, a comprehensive description of the results was formulated.

Sampling Methods/ Procedures

For this research study, criterion sampling was used to select participants. This type of sampling is purposeful, which means researchers must develop specific standards for the participants prior to beginning the study (Hays & Singh, 2012). The criteria for selecting participants was those who have experienced the phenomena of completing an eight-day cultural

immersion program on a Native American reservation. The purpose of this type of sampling is to obtain the most information regarding the phenomenon of interest who can articulate these experiences (Bernard, 2002). The purpose is then to review all cases that meet the criteria (Hays & Singh, 2012). Their experiences related to this event were explored through interview and analysis of the written project.

Data Collection

After approval from the IRB, participants from the immersion experience were contacted via email by the researcher. The participants were invited to participate in a one-time interview about their experience and any impact it may have had in their personal and/or professional life. Participants were invited to choose a time which is most convenient to them and will allow for privacy. The researcher conducted all interviews via phone, as all participants resided out of the state in which the researcher will be. Interviews ranged from 30 to 50 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded for later transcription.

The primary instrument of this study was an interview. Bevan (2014) developed an explicit, theoretically-based approach for phenomenological interviewing which was utilized. The epistemological perspective for the method is post-modern, in that it recognizes that human experience is complex, is experienced intersubjectively, and has meaning (Mason, 2002). There are three question domains: (a) contextualizing experience, (b) apprehending the phenomenon, and (c) clarifying the phenomenon. Bevan (2014) believed this structure would be helpful for novice phenomenological researchers, such as myself, to develop an understanding of phenomenology and interviewing techniques.

The first domain, contextualizing, is based on the notion that to examine a person's experience the researcher needs to consider the context and biography from which the experience

gains meaning (Bevan, 2014). These questions allowed me to understand what prompted them to come to the reservation in the first place. What life experiences did they have prior to the event that made them want to come? This method aligns with Giorgi's (1989) description and interview process along with Seidman's (2006) focused life history.

The second domain, apprehending the phenomenon, uses more focused questions on the experience being researched (Bevan, 2014). The phenomenological method proposes that the identity of an experience has difference modes of appearance and can be experienced in many ways (Sokolowski, 2000). It is important that I asked more than one overarching descriptive question during this phase, as the participant's may describe their experience in different ways. Typically, a researcher will need to elicit clarity from the participant's descriptive responses, so structural questions will also be asked. Descriptive and structural questions complement each other and add depth and quality to information (Spradley, 1979).

The third domain is clarifying the phenomenon. Imaginative variation is used in this final phase, as an attempt to add clarity (Bevan, 2014). By using imaginative questions in the interview process, it allows the phenomenon to be examined actively and therefore makes it more dynamic (Husserl, 1967).

1. Please describe to me about how you decided to apply for the cultural immersion program? (Contextualization)
2. Please describe to me your knowledge and/or experiences with the Native American population prior to the cultural immersion program? (Contextualization)
3. Please describe to me your knowledge or experience of Native American Reservations prior to the cultural immersion program? (Contextualization)

4. Please describe to me your knowledge or experience of Native American Spirituality prior to the cultural immersion program? (Contextualization)
5. Please describe a typical day at the Institute (Apprehending the Phenomenon)
6. Please describe an experience throughout the eight-days that you feel was impactful. (Apprehending the Phenomenon). If needed: You mentioned _____, could do describe what you mean by that (Structural)
7. Please describe another experience throughout the eight-days that you feel was impactful. (Apprehending the Phenomenon). If needed: You mentioned _____, could do describe what you mean by that (Structural)
8. Tell me what you liked best about the Immersion experience? (Apprehending the Phenomenon)
9. Tell me how the eight-day immersion experience influenced your current view of Native Americans/Reservations/Spirituality? (Apprehending the Phenomenon)
10. Describe how you think the eight-day immersion experience would have changed if someone close in your life attended with you? (Clarifying the Phenomenon)
11. Anything I did not ask about that you would like to add?

Data Collection and Description of the Participants

Recruitment of participants began after North Dakota State University's (NDSU) IRB and the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) approved the study. Twelve participants attended the eight-day cultural immersion program, and all were solicited for the study. Recruitment was done via email and through a closed group on a social media site. Five participants responded and agreed to be interviewed. Informed consents were sent via email prior

to the interview and participants verbally agreed prior to the start of the interview. Table 1 shows the demographics of the research participants. The time lapse between the immersion event and the time of the interviews was about two years. This was to allow the participants to reflect on any changes in their world view and whether they transferred what they learned to their current personal and professional lives. The interviews were scheduled at times convenient for the participants. I conducted all the interviews by phone due to the participants varying locations across the United States. To ensure confidentiality, interviews were conducted in a secure and quiet location. During the interviews the office door was locked and a “do not disturb” sign was put on the outside of the door. All interviews were conducted on my iPhone X and recorded on a digital recording device owned by NDSU.

All the participants were female, with various years of experience working as a counselor or counselor educator. Some participants had been involved in counseling for as few as ten years, and others as many as twenty plus years. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect anonymity. Two interviewees hold master’s degrees and three hold doctoral degrees.

Participants were encouraged to talk freely and to tell stories of their experiences using their own words. Each interview lasted from 25-50 minutes and all of them were conducted by the main researcher. The recorded interviews were then transcribed word by word, including non-verbal sounds. The level of data saturation was determined by the main researcher and then reviewed by a secondary researcher. Saturation was based on consensus between both researchers. An example would be when the researcher kept hearing about the impact of the Sweat Lodge Ceremony. Each participant emphasized its importance and when the researcher brought this to the secondary researcher, it was agreed reviewed and agreed upon without hesitation.

Table 1

Demographic of Participants

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Years Counseling/ Teaching	Degree	Racial Identity
Mary	Female	>20	PhD- (Counselor Education)	African American
Lisa	Female	15-20	PhD- (Counselor Education)	White
Paulette	Female	15-20	Masters (Counseling)	White
Elizabeth	Female	10-15	Masters (Counseling)	White
Carla	Female	10-15	PhD (Counselor Education)	White

Data Analysis

I followed Colaizzi’s seven-step process for phenomenological data analysis (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). First, each transcript was read and re-read to obtain a general sense of the whole content. Next, each transcript was re-read and significant statements that pertain to the phenomenon under study were extracted. These statements were recorded on a separate sheet while noting their page and participant numbers. After the significant statements were recorded, meanings were formulated from the significant statements. The formulated meanings were then sorted into categories, clusters of themes, and themes. Findings of the study were then integrated into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon under study. The fundamental structure of the phenomenon was then described. Lastly, validation of the findings was sought from the research participants to compare the researcher's descriptive results with their experience. The detailed steps taken by the researcher are explained in detail next.

Step One

I read each transcript several times to gain a sense of the whole content. During this stage, any thoughts, feelings, and ideas that arose for me due to my previous work with the cultural immersion participants were added to the bracketing diary; feelings were also processed face-to-face with a trusted person who was part of research team. This helped me to explore the phenomenon as experienced by participants themselves. An example of bracketing occurred when I read, and re-read, a part of a transcript with the concept of the “silent scream”. When I first heard this description during the actual interview, I thought “this is interesting”; however when I read it on paper, I was like “YES, that is what is actually happening!” I started to have so many memories of talking to co-workers, classmates, friends, etc. and they just did not have a clue what had happened and what was happening in Indian Country. I recalled a time I was giving a presentation on historical trauma of Native Americans to my classmates in my second semester of my PhD program. When I finished and looked around, I perceived that my classmates had this collective sadness in their eyes. Most of them had not heard of Indian boarding schools and were shocked. I could usually understand when people had not heard of the true history of our United States; however, when my classmates in my PhD program did not know of these events taking place in our history, I was sad and angry. I was silently screaming inside. I had to process and bracket the silent scream dialogue through memoing and discussion with members of the research team until I felt confident that I could read that transcript and see it through the lens of a first-time reader.

Step Two

In this stage of analysis, significant statements and phrases pertaining to the cultural immersion event were extracted from each transcript. This was completed by hand after

transcripts were formatted and printed out. After extracting the significant statements using the print outs, I further extracted statements while reading the electronic versions of the transcripts. After the extracted statements were done for each interview, I went back to what was written by hand and compared the two. All statements, but four, were aligned and the ones that were not aligned were processed with a member of the research team until a consensus was made. Table 1 provides examples from the significant statements which were identified and extracted from the participant's interviews.

Step Three

Meanings were then formulated from the significant statements. Each underlying meaning was coded in one category as they reflected an exhaustive description. I compared the formulated meanings with the original meanings to maintain consistency of descriptions. Table 2 provides examples of how significant statements were converted into formulated meanings and then into themes.

Step Four

After the formulated meanings were extracted, the process of grouping all the formulated meanings into categories that reflect a unique structure of clusters of themes was initiated. Each cluster of themes was coded to include all formulated meanings related to that group of meanings. After that, groups of clusters of themes that reflect a particular part of the culture immersion experience were incorporated together to form a distinctive construct of theme. Later, the researcher compared the clusters of themes and checked the accuracy of the overall thematic map. One theme and seven sub-themes emerged from the data.

Table 2

Examples of Significant Statements

Significant Statements	Transcript No.	Page No.	Section
<i><u>"many of the things that we were exposed to, the activities, I have incorporated them in my women's group"</u></i>	1	3	1
<i><u>"I was enlightened, so to speak. I had a misunderstanding about the patriotism of Native Americans"</u></i>	1	3	5
<i><u>"I didn't know how you were doing it and yet I felt like we were united in that and so yeah, that was a really powerful way of people sharing common joy and common pain and common love... I just feel really honored and privileged to be part of that."</u></i>	2	4	4
<i><u>"I knew all along that it would be okay. I knew in my heart all along whenever I would be upset and be crying, I could just hear its voice saying "it will all be okay, you just have to believe""</u></i>	3	5	3
<i><u>"that whole story about the girl who committed suicide that was moving and sad. I think hearing about the lack of services and the trouble she had getting services, that was really powerful."</u></i>	5	5	3

Table 3

Process of Creating Formulated Meanings and Sub Themes from Significant Statements.

Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings	Theme Cluster
<i>"she said you can ask me anything you want and so I said 'why do you not hate us? Where does this capacity to love come from'? And she said 'if we don't just put the truth out there and move on, we won't survive' (Transcript 4, page 11, section 1).</i>	Freedom to have difficult conversations with others and self	Difficult Conversations
<i>"I use those interventions for myself....very helpful, the wipe off negative and wipe on positive ceremony" (Transcript 2, page 9, section 5).</i>	Ceremony, wisdom, community, graciousness, openness, patience, teaching, counseling, spirituality	Appreciation and Application of Native American Spirituality
<i>"What I felt emotionally, psychologically, was that for Native Americans it's a silent scream, nobody is listening.... It was a shift in terms of just truly understanding how difficult that must be" (Transcript 1, page 6, section 1).</i>	Empathetic understanding of the history and disparities of NA's and lack of acknowledgement from dominant culture	Hearing the Silent Scream
<i>"I feel like we were offered and given much more than we gave... we got this tremendous experience and I would have liked to have been able to do more, offer more" (Transcript 3, page 6, section 1)</i>	Being accountable and a desire to give back through service, teaching, counseling, and personal relationships	Desire to Share Leads to Activism
<i>"I teach an online course called Social and Cultural Foundations of Counseling. I knew very little about the Native American population...it was part of my attempt to become more knowledgeable, there was a personal interest as well" (Transcript 1, page 1, section 2)</i>	Open to experiences and willingness to learn	Learner's Mindset

Table 3. *Process of Creating Formulated Meanings and Sub Themes from Significant statements (continued).*

Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings	Theme Cluster
<p><i>“What I like best about the immersion was the feeling of community between the participants themselves, with my people that were coming and with your community, just the feeling that we were all in this together.” (Transcript 3, page 4, section 1)</i></p>	<p>Experiences of connection to NA community and immersion community</p>	<p>Connection</p>

Step Five

At this stage of analysis, all emergent themes were defined into an exhaustive description. After merging all sub themes, the whole structure of the phenomenon "The lived experience of Nationally Certified Counselors who attended an eight-day culture immersion program" had been extracted. I sought an expert researcher who reviewed the findings in terms of wholeness to provide confirmation that the exhaustive description reflects the interviews. Lastly, a validation to this exhaustive description was confirmed with the researcher’s supervisor. Finally, I met with Native American elders to review findings.

Step Six

In this step a reduction of findings was done in which redundant, misused or overestimated descriptions were eradicated from the overall structure.

Step Seven

This step was done to validate the findings using "member checking". I returned the research findings to the participants and discussing the results with them via phone. All of participants indicated they reflected their feelings and experiences. The last part of this step was meeting with Native American elders who were a part of the culture immersion program to share

and discuss the findings. Because elders hold the highest level of wisdom in my culture, a great deal of thought went into their feedback. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

Trustworthiness

Ideally, the qualitative researcher wants to demonstrate trustworthiness by providing rigor and strength to the study's credibility in all stages including data collection, data analysis and descriptions (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). Trustworthiness approaches, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were undertaken throughout the research study process. There were several strategies employed to add rigor to the study such as "member checking" which was achieved by getting agreement from the participants on the emerged results (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Additionally, I reflected on my thoughts and feelings regarding the participants and the culture immersion program using bracketing. As explained earlier, bracketing reduces bias inherent in researcher beliefs and attitudes (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Peer review of the emerging ideas through discussions with the researcher's supervisor and the independent researcher was also done. Finally, cross checking of the whole analysis process was done by my supervisor.

Trustworthiness Procedures

An essential part of the qualitative research process is developing trustworthy procedures (Creswell, 2013). Trustworthiness was gained by the researcher using several techniques. Creswell (2007) recommends using a minimum of two strategies. Triangulation strategies were implemented to ensure the data analysis is rich, well developed, and comprehensive. Methods triangulation includes checking the consistency of the findings. This was done by having a research team involved. The research team included the researcher (Julie Smith), her advisor (James Korcuska), a Native American professional counselor working on a Reservation (JoAnne

Riegert), and an outside non-Native counselor who recently graduated from the PhD counselor education program at North Dakota State University (Lynae Hemming).

We met to discuss the findings and look for any inconsistencies. Finding inconsistencies can be a strength, as it offers opportunities for deeper insight (Patton, 1999).

This research project included internal and external auditors along with memoing and keeping a reflexive journal throughout the design, data collection, and analysis process. The researcher journaled reflective thoughts, reactions, observations and biases related to the research process. The researcher made field notes and contact summaries following each interview. The purpose of these was to describe and analyze the findings as they emerged during the research process. Lastly, the researcher used the research team to discuss research data collection and data analysis.

Summary

This qualitative study is important because it is the first of its kind done in the United States and in Indian Country. The National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) have held cultural immersion programs around the world for counselors and counselor educators, but never within the United States and never on a Native American Indian Reservation. When we can gain an understanding of how the training affected the participants, we can use this information to grow and improve upcoming immersion trainings for counselors, counselor educators, and graduate students.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Chapter Four aims to relay all collected interview data from participants lived experiences and to move it to a full description of the participants' views and perceptions of their lived experiences of the cultural immersion event they attended on a Native American reservation.

After interviewing the counselors and counselor educators that attended the eight-day cultural immersion event and analyzing the data, one theme and six sub-themes emerged, which expand and enrich the understanding of the lived experience of counselors who attend cultural immersion programs. The main theme that emerged was cultural humility and the six sub-themes that emerged include difficult conversations, appreciation and application of Native American Spirituality, hearing the silent scream, desire to share leads to activism, learner's mindset, and connection.

Cultural Humility

The main theme that emerged was cultural humility. Cultural humility can be defined as: "Having an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented rather than self-focused, characterized by respect and lack of superiority toward an individual's cultural background and experience" (Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington, & Utsey, 2013). The data that was collected from the participants that attended an eight-day cultural immersion event on a Native American reservation point to the definition of cultural humility and is broken down with the six subthemes that will be discussed in detail next.

Difficult Conversations

The theme of difficult conversation arose from participants' stories of engaging in difficult conversations throughout the eight-day event. The participants were able to share, ask

questions, speak, and have conversations in an authentic and open manner with presenters and community members who demonstrated openness and authentically, even when sharing painful personal stories. Lisa shared her feelings after hearing from the family of the young girl who committed suicide, “I was so overwhelmed, it was just not what I was expecting... I mean those are such painful experiences, I mean it’s such a great loss and for them to sit there in a group of Europeans and tell us what’s on their heart just moved me so much”.

Participants embraced difficult conversations, in part because they received new insights and hope from presenters and community members. Lisa recalled a conversation she had .after watching an interaction between another participant and a vendor. Lisa was walking around the pow wow grounds with the Native American participant and they went up to a vendor stand to look at some crafts. Lisa remembers the vendor looking at the Native American participant and immediately asking “what tribe are you from?”. She replied “Lumbee”. The two exchanged greetings and the vendor asked “how many of you are left?”. She told him around 20,000. The vendor asked, “how did you, your tribe, survive?” She recalls the Native American participant’s reply as “some of our people died, but most of us survived”. Lisa remembers hearing her say something like “there was an Indian telegraph, if you will, that told them they were coming for us and so when they left, moved on, they came out of the swamps and she said then we heard that they had found out that we were alive and had hidden and that they were coming back for us and she said we went the second time into the swamps with our children and our babies and our elders.” Lisa said “I’m just standing with my mouth hanging open, I mean, it’s like “oh my god””. The Lumbee participant said “then they left us alone, they didn’t come in the swamps and they left, and that’s how there are so many of us that are left.” Lisa said “When they talk about twenty thousand people, I mean, I live in a town of twenty thousand and you go “how many

millions of Indians there were and they're down to this" and when you lay that truth out like that and there's no judgment, you go "oh my god, the capacity of a group of people" to lay that out like that". When they returned to their seats in the pow wow arena Lisa asked her "why do you not hate us? Where does this capacity to love come from?" She replied "if we don't just put the truth out there and move on" she says "we won't survive at all" and I thought "holy crap". I mean, it still moves me to this day. This was the message that was also given throughout the immersion event."

Lisa talked about my grandmother, stating "your grandmother talked about her experiences and I'm going 'there's nothing different between those experiences and what happened in Germany'. It was like you guys are inviting us, as a race, into your homes and telling us this is what happened to us. It's not just culturally that you were respecting us and cooking for us, it was because it was from your hearts.... That was constant, and it was just so amazing to me the way your mom, you, your grandmother, well everyone just embraced us".

Participants discussed a process of being opened to new experiences and understandings because of the pervasive generosity present. Paulette shared a thought regarding the family that lost a daughter to suicide after trying to seek mental health services. "I was so amazed how they were willing to speak to us after the bad experience they had had. They were still open and still giving and then throughout the week....I continued to have that feeling, you know, when we went to the people's house before the sweat and during the sweat, I just felt we were receiving and receiving and receiving from people, a group of people that we had not treated well. That was just very humbling."

Appreciation and Application of Native American Spirituality

Appreciation and application of Native American spirituality emerged from hearing about the impact of the cultural practices and activities had and continues to have on the participants. Two activities most mentioned by the participants included the Sweat Lodge Ceremony and attending the Pow Wow Celebration.

The Sweat Lodge Ceremony led to a spiritual awakening of their own and to that of Native American spirituality. When describing the Sweat Lodge Ceremony, Carla stated “It was a really powerful thing”. Lisa explained “a presence that kind of guided you to let all of that stuff that you tried to use as blockers, all of that resistance that you try to use..... it allowed you to open yourself up and be receptive to whatever comes to your mind, whatever comes to your heart, whatever you’re feeling within the group and to realize that you’re part of a larger group spiritually...it was extremely moving to me.”. Mary stated “I spoke, I found peace. Not just in verbalizing it, but feeling like something brought me peace and a guidance on how to deal with it”.

Elizabeth described it this way:

“it was powerful at a religious and spiritual level and it was powerful for me as a woman, it was powerful and connecting me with other women at a level of pain and community and I felt very connected to everybody in that experience. You and the other people who were gracious enough to walk us through that, but for me personally, it was just being struck by that vulnerability and at the same time the strength, you know I tell people I wrote about the sweat with you as soon as I got home because that was the one I remembered the most and I felt compelled to share it, but when I tell people about it I’m often struck by how, you know, when you sang the song ‘woman song’ and here we were

in there and this is, you know, past the third door and your singing with such strength, you know, I didn't know how you were doing it and yet I felt like we were united in that and so yeah, that was a really powerful way of people sharing common joy and common pain and common love and for it to be all women was just extraordinary. I just feel really honored and privileged to be a part of that.”

Another participant stated “The sweat was impactful in the way of how the care was taken to make sure we were okay.... it was very bonding within our group, I felt. When we went around and shared things, I just felt like it solidified us.”

The participants found the pow wow experience to be impactful as well. Three participants specifically recalled being emotionally moved by the honoring of veterans at the pow wow celebration. Lisa shared that her husband was a vet and that he had a difficult time coming home from war. She felt like not many people thanked him for his service. When she heard the pow wow emcee announce that they were honoring all veterans, something happened inside of her. She stated “the way that it was done, it was like I felt that my husband was there and getting validated for what he had done, that this was a group of people that welcomed him and what he did and it was the truth and it was fine. I thought that was impactful”.

Mary recalls her version of learning about patriotism at the pow wow:

“I was enlightened, so to speak. I had a misunderstanding about the patriotism of Native Americans. I really never understood that, I've seen you know, the military presence and at previous powwows and I never understood that piece of it, you know, why. It's like “why do they do that?” you know? To me it was like “oh my” you know, it seems like that would be the last thing, they would be the last people who would want to serve or be proud of serving..... basically like many African Americans joined the military as an

access to jobs and training and when the job market is low and business is high. So I kind of checked it off as, you know, as that. Having that explained at the pow wow we were able to sit in when they were smoking the pipes....The elderly woman explained to us the pride of the military service has to do with being a warrior, the warrior concept is what is honored and protecting the land, not necessarily the United States of America, but it's the land and being a brave or warrior that's what is honored and respected. I was like "ah" the light bulb went off for me and I could see how that connection again, is spiritual...I was able to then share this with others because I think it's a commonly misunderstood concept."

Elizabeth described the power she felt while at the pow wow:

"I was moved by the freedom and the intensity of the worship that I was experiencing as part of the powwow". She recalled a community prayer at the pow wow, saying "The mother and the family who had a little girl who is getting ready to have surgery....they did the jingle dress dance for her, that was very moving to me. The community participating in that prayer together, asking for the creator's blessing and for healing... I just thought that was just a very beautiful ceremony, it made me want to be part of the community".

Hearing the Silent Scream

Mary's interview was the birth of the theme "Silent Scream":

"as a minority, I am very aware of historical trauma, the effects of it, the social inequities that we experience. However, what I felt emotionally, and I think it was psychologically actually, was that for Native Americans it's a silent scream, nobody is listening. There's very little press coverage and so as an African American our struggles are real, and I'm

not discounting it, but they are highlighted, you it's very visible. There's press coverage, there's movies, there's you know, it's out there. The injustices and inequities are covered in the media, but not for Native Americans and so I just, I felt like its... and heroes are not lifted up, so you know, we have heroes, blacks have heroes, you know, sports or of course Obama, so we have visible heroes, but at least from what I can see in the main stream, Native Americans are not celebrated. So consequently, life on the reservation seems, I just keep coming back to this silent scream, you know. There's no voice and that's how I felt about it. It was a shift in terms of just truly understanding how difficult that must be."

Lisa discussed how the silent scream was demonstrated through love and pain. She stated "it was so beautiful to have Muckwa's family in the beginning and then the powwow at the end because both of them, you guys, were all saying you know, "we're your family, we're suffering, and we need everybody to know about this and everybody to be together with this"

Participants were moved by what was presented during the eight-days. Elizabeth recalls how the silent scream was delivered to the participants with respect. She stated "this is the truth about what happened to us as a people." She continued with "the truth was laid out every day with no judgment, not even a slight inclination of disrespect in the voices, it was just laid out "this is the truth and we need to honor the truth"." Further, she shares "As Europeans we need to honor the truth, the American Indian is honoring the truth by putting it out there... seeing people opening their hearts and exposing the truth without disrespect, without judgement, it was just overwhelming to me".

Desire to Share Leads to Activism

The community and the participants had a desire to share their experiences and teachings from the event in ways that moved the participants toward activism. The community was open to sharing the beauty of the Native American culture and practices, along with the pain and disparities that plague the communities. The participants had a desire to share what they experienced and learned during the culture immersion event. The humility of the presenters and Anishinaabe people and their willingness to share the fullness of themselves and their history became reciprocal. Elizabeth stated “I have deep humility and gratitude for the who were willing to share their names, to share their life, to share so deeply and that to me was a beautiful thing. So I’m deeply grateful for the experience and I’ve encouraged other people “hey, when this comes around you need to go. You need to go learn first-hand”.”

Participants shared how they were able to use what they learned during the culture immersion experience and bring it back home with them with a sense of activism. Paulette said “I have been much more aware in the news and more politically active”. She added “I am trying to be more supportive politically so that I can help and support”. The participants desire to share and give more was evident. Mary said “I feel like we were offered and given much more than we gave....like we came, we got this tremendous experience, and I would have liked to have been able to do more, offer more.”. Elizabeth explained how she is giving back by a new, fuller history of America through her lectures :

“when I lecture about my experience of being on the Reservation, when I talk to other people about it, I tell them ‘you know what it was for me... What I realized is that the Ojibwe history is a part of my history’. I’ve always felt like it was kind of separate. As American, it’s kind of like ‘oh, it’s their history’ but I don’t feel that way anymore, I feel

like you guys did a really good job in helping me to understand this is my history, this is my American history and how my government has broken their word, you know, how my people have suffered because you guys are Americans, you see what I'm saying?....It used to be an 'us/them' feeling and it doesn't feel that way anymore, it feels like you're my family.... So it kind of makes me accountable, yeah.'"

She also added one of her favorite things she has been doing since leaving the reservation was encouraging others to learn about and from Anishinaabe people.

"One of the most rewarding things as a result of the 8-day institute is I go to speak to schools in the district of Columbia in Washington D.C., the public schools, I'm invited back there two times a year to come talk to children in 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th grade about my experience there. I tell them what it was like for me and I try to help make it tangible for these children that they need to learn more about their history, which includes you know, what happened to the Native Americans and what's happening to Natives now in our country. So it's not a hopeless presentation I give, I try to inspire in them what you guys did for me. To me that's really meaningful, to be able to share that, I bring my drum in and I share my terrible version of the 'strong woman' song. I tell them it's the bad version of it, but I let them touch the drum and I share with them what I learned and encourage them to you know, maybe you need to learn more about these people because we still have Anishinaabe people here who have so much to teach us about life and you know, how to be and they love it, I mean they just love it."

Lisa wanted to share more than her experiences of the event, but to the broader population of counselor education and the profession of counseling.

“it’s not only life changing in terms of finding out more. For one thing, it’s a part of the history of the U.S. for nothing else, people need to understand that. Secondly, it’s also very important for counselors to have a multi-cultural immersion experience....I think as counselors in America they need to start by looking at what’s the multi-cultural experience within our own country that would help them actually open their eyes to what it means to be a therapist in America. I think that should just be an absolute requirement across the board for any University as part of their immersion program, you have to participate in one immersion program that’s in the U.S. before you experience European cultures because it is part of our history, it is part of who we are”.

Learner’s Mindset

Prior to and during the immersion, it was apparent that the participants had a learner’s mindset. All participants shared that the reason they applied and wanted to come to the reservation was because they wanted to learn. Lisa shares learning about the generalization of Native Americans. She said “I realized there is a cultural bond among all tribes in terms of respect, their spirituality, their belief in the earth and resources and that kind of thing, but they are all individual. That within and between the different tribes there’s a difference and that individually within tribes they are different can’t just go “oh, this is what Indians believe”.

Mary had wanted to learn more about Native American’s for the past 40 years; however, she did not believe she had access to learn first-hand until she received the NBCC flyer. She wanted to know how things must have shifted since her college experiences, which created a narrative in her head of “Whites weren’t welcome”. She explains “So when I saw this invitation to go and read the description about coming to learn more about the culture and this kind of thing and I read we were going to be going to the home of a medicine woman and I’m going “how

does this happen? Where was this shift?” So I was really curious and quite honestly, when I went I thought I wasn’t expecting to get the kind of welcome that we did, it was just a complete antithesis of everything that I had experienced and I was just overwhelmed with the way the truth was presented and it was just an amazing and moving experience for me.”

Connection

Participants felt connection was woven in throughout the eight days. They spoke about the different ways they felt connected, some through spirituality, some through the community, and some through the ceremonies. The New Oxford American Dictionary (2005) defines spirituality as “the quality of being concerned with the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things”. When describing their experiences, participants spoke of a component of spirituality and the prevalence it showed throughout their time on the reservation. Carla stated, “it wound up being a very deep spiritual experience” and “I loved it”. There wasn’t certain activities or times that were set aside for spirituality, it was deeply embedded into the programming. Paulette talked about connection and how her spirituality was re-ignited during the culture immersion program, she explained “my philosophy very much matched the things that I was hearing and learning about. I don’t follow a prescribed traditional Christian religion, so just the connection with the earth and nature and all of that just fit for me”.

Mary, who is African American, stated “I always felt that there was a lot of similarities and I think that the similarities are universal in terms of connection to nature and connection to descendants, you know there’s this link between the past and the present that is not necessarily talked about or prominent in Western culture.... Our ancestors are always with us, present, a part of our being so to speak.” Elizabeth stated “it opened up to another whole spiritual part of myself”.

Participants felt connected to the reservation community as well. Participants were able to connect with community members each day of the culture immersion program. Some days the participants would travel to see the community and other days the community would come to the conference/lodging facility to see them. Carla shared a take-away moment when she met the researcher's grandmother, who attended Indian boarding schools as a child. She stated "I'd never met anybody who was in one of the schools and that was very impactful for me, to meet your grandmother who was in that school, like to see somebody who actually lived through that, to see and hear the impact that all of that had had on future generations and parenting and relationships and spirituality was something that I took away."

The participants are taking valuable information and experiences from the cultural immersion event and connecting them to their lives. Elizabeth explained how as a mental health counselor she was listening to a couple that had come in for counseling. The man was talking about his values and how they were conflicting with his girlfriend's. She had asked him "are you part Anishinaabe?" and he immediately said "yes, how do you know?" This moment allowed for report building and Elizabeth felt she was able to have a sense of what he was talking about and could understand at a deeper level because of her experience at the culture immersion program. Lisa explained how the culture immersion is helping in her teaching as a counselor educator. She stated:

when I lecture about my experience of being on the Reservation, when I talk to other people about it, I tell them you know what it was for me... What I realized is that the Ojibwe history is a part of my history. I've always felt like it was kind of separate. As American, it's kind of like oh, it's their history but I don't feel that way anymore, I feel like you guys did a really good job in helping me to understand this is my history, this is

my American history and how my government has broken their word, you know, how my people have suffered because you guys are Americans, you see what I'm saying?..... It used to be an us/them feeling and it doesn't feel that way anymore, it feels like you're my family.... So it kind of makes me accountable, yeah.

Mary shared how she is connecting what she learned to the work she does with minorities, she said:

learning about the inverted pyramid in a concept of how Maslow had the individuality at the top of the peak of the pyramid, but the Native American understanding is inverted pyramid where the highest level is community in the broader sense and everything is about working through the experience from individual to community and a commitment and a promise to the community. So a lot of what I learned I have been able to relate that to my work with minorities because in the African American community there is a sense of, or African American culture, there is a sense of community first, of family, connections, and that is stronger than the individual. So many of the concepts that are western psychological concepts really don't work well with African Americans and so I was able to extrapolate a bunch of what I learned to my work with minorities

Paulette shared how she is connecting what she learned both professionally and personally.

I do practice the interventions that were shared with me with my clients and students. I use those interventions for myself....the wiping on and wiping off smudging ceremony with the white diamond willow, you know I found that very helpful at a time when our nation's got so much pain in it, to wipe off negative and wipe on the positive, you know I find that really helpful. I still use my drum, I still wear my medicine bag.... I grow the

four plants now in my yard ... I learned a lot about service and humility and I want to keep that going.

Mary spoke about how she is incorporating what she learned when she said “I have several women’s groups and they’re African American women for the most part. One group was integrated, but for the most part African American and I integrated a lot of the concepts of the circle, explaining you know, having a deeper understanding for why we sit in a circle and connecting it to the spirituality”.

Evaluation of the Experiences. The following statements did not fit into the overall scheme of the analysis; however, they offer insight into the participants’ evaluation of the experience. Some remarks regarding the overall eight-days included “it was a fantastic experience, I loved it”, “was so welcoming for me, both physically and spiritually”, and what I like best was “the way it was organized. The way the history was presented, it was presented as a culture, so that when we were told about the various historical moments, it was seen from a whole culture.... This is the way we look at the world, the way we honor the land, the way we honor our ancestors, the way these are our traditions. We weren’t just shown a culture, we were allowed to participate in it, feel it, gain a better understanding by hands on of making drums, or hands on of with Muckwa Buttons, or hands on with just being able to sit and talk with people at lunch”. Paulette stated, “what I liked best was not like an activity or an event, it was the feeling of community between the participants themselves, with my people that were coming and with your community, just the feeling that we were all in this together.”

Summary

This chapter described the process of descriptive phenomenology which was used in this study to explore the lived experience of Nationally Certified Counselors who attended an

eight-day culture immersion program on a Native American Reservation. Colaizzi's process of phenomenological data analysis showed an active strategy to achieve the description of living experience for the participants. It included understanding the data and identifying significant statements which in turn were converted into formulated meanings. Groups of theme clusters were then developed to establish the final thematic construct. Trustworthiness of the study findings was undertaken using different approaches and strategies to achieve each approach affectively. The application of Colaizzi's process of descriptive phenomenology would provide an exhaustive description to the body of knowledge about human experience and therefore would be an effective strategy to establish the basis for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS

"What you're describing to us is how the participants learned the Seven Grandfather Teachings from our community and how they are continuing to pass them along in their day to day lives. They can't be linear, limited, numbered, or separated Julie...they all work together... they are all connected, like us" (Williams, 2018, Native American elder).

Chapter Five presents a discussion of the findings, as well as implications and recommendations based on this research. As an Indigenous Native American researcher, I am a knowledge seeker who wants to share what I learn. Relationships do not merely shape our reality; they are our reality. Wilson (2008) believes indigenous researchers develop relationships with ideas in order to achieve enlightenment in the ceremony that is Indigenous research. Indigenous research is the ceremony of maintaining accountability to these relationships. "For researchers to be accountable to all our relations, we must make careful choices in our selection of topic, methods of data collection, form of analysis and finally in the way we present information" (Wilson, 2008). I treated this research study and dissertation as a ceremony, as a gift I could learn from, embrace, and then share with the world through my written words.

Discussion

The purpose of this research utilizing phenomenology was to gain an understanding of the experience of nationally certified mental health counselors who experienced an eight-day culture immersion event on a Native American reservation. The research question "How did Nationally Certified Counselors experience a Cultural Immersive experience on a Native American Reservation?" guided this study. Five Nationally Certified Counselors who attended an eight-day culture immersion event on a Native American reservation were interviewed. They had an opportunity to share their stories. Interview data was listened to, coded to determine themes and subthemes. The themes and subthemes that emerged from this research provided a rich picture of how the participants experienced the eight-day cultural immersion experience.

The themes and implications that emerged from the data demonstrated the importance of cultural immersion in the counseling field. The implications discussed below are based on the data, my researcher impressions, and the literature. This literature included the oral and written history of Native Americans, specifically the Seven Grandfather Teachings (see Chapter 2). The themes and subthemes aligned with the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

Cultural Humility

The overarching theme that emerged from the data was *cultural humility*. As the researcher, I was aware of the concept but did not know what to expect beyond my own personal experiences. I best describe culturally humility as walking into a situation as a learner and not a teacher. In my attempt to live *mino-biimadiziwin* (The Good Life) I ask myself “What can I learn and embrace from this experience so that I can share it with the world to make it a more peaceful and loving place for me, those around me, and for the next seven generations to come”. Cultural humility is fluid and is a lifelong process of continual engagement (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998).

The concept of cultural humility is different than cultural competence. The need for cultural competence in the counseling profession came to life more than three decades ago to meet the needs of diverse clients. Sue et al. (1982) developed multicultural counseling guidelines as the baseline for counselor training to provide a universal foundation of awareness, knowledge and skills. The guidelines have continued to be refined throughout the years and Sue & Sue (2013) later identified attributes of cultural competence using a tripartite model which include 1) awareness of one’s own personal beliefs, values, biases, and attitudes, 2) awareness of one’s worldview of culturally diverse individuals and groups, and 3) utilization of culturally

appropriate intervention skills and strategies. These guidelines are used by several divisions within the American Counseling Association.

Cultural humility goes beyond awareness, knowledge, and skills. In the Anishinaabe language, humility (Dabaadendiziwin) is “to know yourself as a sacred part of Creation. You are equal to others, but you are not better” (Benton-Banai, 2004). I believe that through this research study and my own experiences that this concept of cultural humility cannot be gained from the outside in, it’s gained from the inside out, through real life experiences and relationships.

The limited research found regarding cultural immersion events held on Native American reservations for those in the helping professional field aligned with the findings in this research study. Isaccson (2014) revealed that graduate students in the nursing field who attended a 4-day cultural immersion event on a Native American reservation in South Dakota found growth by recognizing their own stereotypes, recognizing their lack of understanding about the culture, and that they became more culturally humble. In addition to the main theme, six subthemes emerged from the data. They included, *difficult conversations*, *appreciation and application of Native American spirituality*, *hearing the silent scream*, *desire to share leads to activism*, *learner’s mindset*, and *connection*.

Difficult Conversations

The first subtheme was *difficult conversations*. Participants described how difficult conversations were embraced during the culture immersion event. Paelette stated “I was so amazed how they were willing to speak to us” and Lisa shared “I was so overwhelmed, it was just not what I was expecting... those are such painful experiences, and for them to sit there in a group of Europeans and tell us what’s on their heart just moved me so much”. Sue et al. (2009) found that White faculty have a desire to facilitate difficult conversations but are hindered by

uncertainty and confusion, inability to recognize when a difficult dialogue was happening, student emotions of anxiety, anger, and defensiveness, professor emotions of anxiety and fear, interactions among students that assailed instructors' sense of classroom control, and lack of knowledge or skills to properly intervene. The finding by Sue et al. suggests aligns with the participants experience of difficult conversations to be such an asset to their growth and learning.

Difficult conversations aligns with the Grandfather teaching of Bravery- Aakode'ewin. In the Anishinaabe language, this word's literal meaning is "state of having a fearless heart." (Benton-Banai, 2004). Having difficult conversations was meaningful to the participants and allowed for authenticity to surface. The community was brave and had difficult conversations with the participants, and participants were brave and had difficult conversations with the community, and the participants were brave to have difficult conversations among themselves. The participants showed bravery through difficult conversations before even stepping foot on the reservation. Applying to the immersion program was brave, not knowing what the eight days would even begin to look like in real life. Bravery was having the difficult conversation with their loved ones, telling them they are going to spend eight-days on an Indian reservation with people you have never met. Bravery was having difficult conversations with Mukwa's family members, asking how they continue to try support mental health programs in their community after having a daughter fall through the broken system. Bravery is asking "how don't you hate us? Bravery is having the difficult conversation of asking "what can we do". Questions and difficult conversations happened daily, leading to the path of cultural humility.

Appreciation and Application of Native American Spirituality

Participants gained appreciation for Native American Spirituality. Participants felt they were able to embrace their own spirituality while simultaneously engaging in Native American Spirituality.

The authenticity of opening up and allowing their hearts to be exposed was a process, with the traditional Native American sweat lodge being the place where the participant felt most impacted. The Sweat Lodge Ceremony spirituality awakened the participants, regardless of their religion or belief system. Elizabeth stated “it was powerful at a religious and spiritual level and it was powerful for me as a woman, it was powerful in connecting me with other women at a level of pain and community and I felt very connected to everybody in that experience” and Lisa explained “a presence that kind of guided you to let all of that stuff that you tried to use as blockers, all of that resistance that you try to use it allowed you to open yourself up and be receptive to whatever comes to your mind, whatever comes to your heart, whatever you’re feeling within the group and to realize that you’re part of a larger group spiritually...it was extremely moving to me.”

Appreciation and Application of Native American Spirituality aligns with the Grandfather teaching of Respect- Minaadendamowin. In the Anishinaabe language, this means “to honor all creation. You must give respect if you wish to be respected” (Benton-Banai, 2004). Participants felt respected the moment they arrived on the reservation and throughout the entire immersion experience. Often times in Western culture it is believed that people need to earn our respect, that the other person must “go first”. In the Anishinaabe culture, respect is given. It is first given to Githi-Manidoo, Creator. It is given to the four directions, to Mother Earth, to Father Sky, to the Spirit guides that help us, to the animals, and to other fellow human beings. Participants felt the

respect for all of creation and were able to carry that back to their own homelands with them. Shortly after returning from the immersion event, Elizabeth contacted the researcher and asked about writing a manuscript about her experience of the Sweat Lodge through the lens of her Christianity beliefs. Elizabeth did not need to ask the researcher, or the community members involved with the Sweat Lodge, but because of her appreciation she respected everyone involved and asked for input and a blessing to bring her experience to written form. This built trust and is bringing healing to all involved. I feel the community embraced the respect they felt from the participants as well. Elizabeth going back home and humbly asking about writing an article about something she was moved about and wanting to share it gave a “I guess we can maybe trust these White people” message to the traditional community. Past abuses in the realm of research have also impacted Native American communities. After completion of a project, researchers often disappear, leaving the community with no information about what the research has accomplished and words such as “property”, “ownership” and “discovery” that are terms often used are red flags in the tribal communities (Wallerstein & Duran, 2010). The participants did not come to learn and then go home to “pimp out our culture”, they wanted to respect and appreciate all they experienced and apply it to their lives and careers in a humble way.

Hearing the Silent Scream

Native Americans are suffering at a higher rate than other races in the United States. Compared to the total U.S. population, more than twice as many Native Americans live in poverty (Austin, 2013). In 2013, Native American men and women were nearly twice as likely as Whites to be unemployed. The American Psychiatric Association (2010) states that Native Americans experience serious psychological distress 1.5 times more than the general population. In addition, they also experience PTSD twice as often as the general population. Suicide among

Native Americans occur 2.5 times more than any other United States racial group and alcoholism death rate in ages 15 to 24 is 18 times as frequent (O’Keefe et al., 2013). Native American youth residing on or near reservations have the highest mortality rate of all groups in the United State (Henly & Moss, 2008). When in a state of constant stress, the fight or flight region of the brain is strengthened and more easily triggered in the future, linking poor physical and mental health, chronic disease, lower education achievement, lower economic success, and impaired social success in adulthood. The loss of land, people, and culture occurring in the traumatic events of the past is strongly associated with the health challenges and inequities among American Indians (Koss & Yuan, 2003).

The literature from *Healthy People 2000* aligns with the silent scream, as it was documented that there were reductions in health disparities among minority races, however the Native American population demonstrated the smallest improvement. Native Americans suffer from among the worst disparities in the nation along with a disproportionate death rates (Espey et al., 2014). Participants in the research study heard the screaming, they felt the screaming. Mary discussed the silent scream from the lens of a minority, “for Native Americans it’s a silent scream, nobody is listening. There’s very little press coverage and so as an African American our struggles are real, and I’m not discounting it, but they are highlighted, it’s very visible.”

Hearing the Silent Scream aligns with the Grandfather teachings of Truth and Honesty-Debwewin and Gwayako-Biimaadiziwin. In this teaching, it is said it is important to always tell the truth, even when it is hard. It also emphasizes the importance to be truthful to yourself first and then it will be easier to be truthful to others (Benton-Banai, 2004). Participants heard the silent scream through the truth from the community. Elizabeth stated “the truth was laid out every day with no judgment, not even a slight inclination of disrespect in the voices, it was just

laid out “this is the truth and we need to honor the truth” and “As Europeans we need to honor the truth, the American Indian is honoring the truth by putting it out there... seeing people opening their hearts and exposing the truth without disrespect, without judgement, it was just overwhelming to me”

Desire to Share Leads to Activism

Participants wanted to share, they wanted to advocate and they wanted to help. Paulette said, “I have been much more aware in the news and more politically active”. Participants reported speaking the truth about the history of the Native Americans in their counseling sessions, in their classrooms, and classrooms of others. They are writing letters to elementary students on the reservation, so the students can put pins of a map of the world and see that people live other places than just the reservation. They are having students become pen-pals with students on the reservation so cross-cultural learning can happen. They are getting involved with finding solutions to pipe-lines to help protect the land in tribal communities, they are having their graduate students do assignment to learn about Native Americans. They have embraced that the Native American history as part of their own history. Elizabeth stated, “As American, it’s kind of like ‘oh, it’s their history’ but I don’t feel that way anymore, I feel like you guys did a really good job in helping me to understand this is my history, this is my American history”. They can speak about the beauty and powerful spirituality of the traditional ceremonies and love that is evident in the reservation community.

Desire to share leads to activism aligns with the Grandfather teaching of Bravery-Aakode’ewin. In the Anishinaabe language, this word’s literal meaning is "state of having a fearless heart. To do what is right even when the consequences are unpleasant." (Benton-Banai, 2004). The researcher was given a teaching by her elders that states “the more you know, the

more you owe”. Both of these teachings align with what the participants are doing, even two years after the cultural immersion event. This speaks to the long-term outcomes of the experience; the participants are being brave by bringing awareness to the country through activism, in hopes to bring change and equity to the Native American population.

Learner’s Mindset

The eight-day Native American culture immersion experience nurtured and enhanced the participant’s *learner’s mindset*. They came to the immersion wanting to learn, they learned, and they continue to learn in their personal and professional lives. The participants were grateful for all the knowledge they gained and continued to learn after they left. They have read books that were recommended during the event, they have went to other Indigenous places to learn, they have a commitment to share what they learned for the great good of Native Americans and all Americans. Lisa shared “I realized there is a cultural bond among all tribes in terms of respect, their spirituality, their belief in the earth and resources and that kind of thing, but they are all individual. That within and between the different tribes there’s a difference and that individually within tribes they are different can’t just go “oh, this is what Indians believe”.

This subtheme aligns with the Grandfather Teaching of *Nibwaakaawin*—Wisdom. Cherishing knowledge is to know Wisdom. Wisdom is given by the Creator to be used for the good of the people (Benton-Banai, 2004). The participants have fully embraced this teaching. I believe they are cherishing what they were given, not necessarily given by the people of the immersion event, but by their Creator, however they define him/her/it. I believe they trust that the Creator they believe in brought them to the reservation. They were led there to learn, to grow, to heal, to help, and to embrace and share their experience for the good of all people.

Connection

Participants felt connected. They felt connected to the community, to the people that were there to share with them, to themselves, to the earth, to the researcher's family, to their own life and spirituality. Each participant felt that the culture immersion experience impacted them, both personally and professionally. Carla shared about meeting my grandmother, she said "I'd never met anybody who was in one of the schools and that was very impactful for me" The participants felt as though the connection they made and felt were authentic and meaningful. The connections were able to open up their worldviews by making things they may have heard, read, or seen prior to the immersion come to life. An outcome of this subtheme is that the participants not only have citations to share, they have experiences to share.

Connection aligns with the Grandfather teaching of Love- Zaagi'idiwin. "To know peace is to know Love. Love must be unconditional. When people are weak they need love the most. In the Anishinaabe language, this word with the reciprocal theme /idi/ indicates that this form of love is mutual." (Benton-Banai, 2004). Love was the birthplace of the cultural immersion event, love was what brought everyone involved together, and love is what keeps the connections going. It is my belief that love and connection will continue to keep this important field of study going.

Implications for Counselor Education and Counseling Practice

There is a plethora of literature describing the health disparities of the Native American population. There also is a plethora of literature regarding historical and intergenerational trauma. There is starting to be more literature on multicultural training to increase cultural competency with health professionals. Weatherford & Spokane (2013) suggest that personal differences could deepen the multicultural training process by moving efforts from a one-size-

fits- all approach to a more individualized training process for trainees of different backgrounds and dispositions. Competence is often thought of in these terms Based on the findings from this study, counselor educator and researchers may wish to incorporate the construct of cultural humility to the understanding of multicultural training and practice.

Counselors who practice one-on-one counseling could incorporate a section in the intake packet that would allow for dialogue that would enhance cultural humility. The counselor could take a cultural walk, through words or visuals, with the client to help gain a sense of where the clients worldview is coming from. This could also promote rapport and allow for difficult conversations in future sessions.

Counselor educators could incorporate an assignment that would allow students to grasp the difference between culture competence and cultural humility. Dr. Michael Brooks, President of the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development, a division of the American Counseling Association explains “some counselor educators and practitioners think, incorrectly, that once they have learned about multiculturalism in a class or by reading a book, that they have “checked the box” and are done” (Shallcross, 2013).

It is importance to know the difference and understand that cultural humility can be practiced and developed throughout a lifetime. In a social and cultural foundation of counseling class, a professor could include a cultural immersion project. Students would be in charge of finding a community different than their own and immersing themselves in it for a period of time. This would not include attending a meeting with cultural diverse representation there, it would mean going into the community. Another assignment could be a photo-voice project in cultural humility. Students could use existing photos from their lives to tell the story of how they may have constructed their worldview as they know it. At the end of class, they could do a

follow-up photo-voice assignment on what they learned about themselves and another culture during their immersion experience. Counseling programs could set up culturally immersive experiences, like they do for site internships. This could be a requirement as part of their dedication to diversity to make a cultural immersive project as part of graduation. The students might make a short video to highlight their cultural immersion experience and it could be uploaded to the program's website to showcase cross-cultural learning. Overall, cultural immersion experiences could benefit individuals, groups, tribal communities, agencies, Universities, and the overall counseling profession.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

The goal of this study was not to be able to generalize the findings, but rather describe and reveal the findings of the lived experiences of the counselor who attended an eight-day cultural immersion event. The study was limited to one immersion event and it was the first one that the National Board for Certified Counselors offered in the United States and on a Native American reservation. The study was conducted on the researchers home Native American reservation and the immersion experience may have been different on another Native American reservation within the United States. The findings from this study can not be generalized to the overall population of counselors or counselor educators considering the sample size of only five participants.

The interview process in this research was a one-time phone interview with the participant two years after the culture immersion experience. A one-year follow-up interview may have revealed further depth of experience as the interviewees may have had the experience fresher in their minds. Additional research should be considered in other Native American communities across the United States to expand the validity and generalizations.

This study consisted of all female participants with various years of experience working in the counseling and counselor education field. Future research might examine similar experiences with counselor trainees at various stages of cognitive and professional development. This study relied solely on the experiences of these participants for data collection. A larger sample, perhaps included in a quantitative study, might allow for comparison among counselors with differing demographics, e.g., age, utilizing tools such as cultural humility questionnaires. Additional research in other tribal communities should be considered because the Native American culture is varied with many tribes and traditions across the country. Creating cultural immersion programming for counselors, counseling students, and counselor educators across reservations throughout the United States could lend credibility to the findings of this study.

Conclusion

Racial and ethnic disparities in health care persist, even though considerable progress in expanding healthcare services and improving the quality of patient care has been made (Rose, 2013). This is especially true for Native Americans living on reservations. Although *Healthy People 2000* (National Center for Health Statistics) documented reductions in health disparities among many races, the Native American population demonstrated the smallest improvement.

The loss of culture, language, land, children, etc., along with the loss of feeling safe and secure has left many Native communities at a loss of what to do to restore balance. Numerous psychosocial influences, including a history of genocide and boarding school experiences, have led to unresolved historical trauma and is associated with poor health outcomes (Warne & Lajimodiere, 2015). Despite all the trauma, the Native Americans race has survived. A qualitative study that interviewed resilient Native American elders found that strong cultural connections, self-defined identities, the ability to successfully bridge cultures, good education and employment, and being proud of who they are as a people were important in developing

resilience (Grandbois & Sanders, 2012). The need for multicultural awareness is widely understood and accepted in the counseling profession, however there is a lack of population-specific cultural immersion trainings offered. Understanding the needs and strengths of Native American communities may help bring cultural competency and cultural humility to the forefront of counselors and counselor educators working with Native American clients or students.

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