



Listening to the student voice : a case study of the Little Big Horn College Mission
by Nathaniel Rick St Pierre

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Montana State University

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Abstract:

Little Big Horn College (LBHC), located in southeastern Montana, plays a significant role in the lives of students and community members. However research with and about student participation in the tribal college experience is scarce. This study acknowledges the history, present condition, and future considerations of the Crow people as well as LBHC's involvement in its own educational and social movement. Although often overlooked, the student role must be recognized as a vital, integral part of educational process. The purpose of this study was to elicit student perceptions of the LBHC mission.

A cross-section of 28 LBHC students were interviewed for this descriptive case study. The investigation of the institutional effectiveness of LBHC involved gathering information from students and then categorizing their responses into five analytical areas. These areas included the experiences of students with the Crow culture and language at the college, the value placed on their own education by the students, the degree to which LBHC's programming meets the needs of each student, the psychological and sociological barriers to education, and the ways in which opportunities are provided through the college mission.

Four conclusions were drawn for each of the five areas of categories regarding the student perception of the LBHC mission. Recommendations were provided for each of these areas. Collectively, the testimony of students clearly reveals that a special relationship exists between LBHC and its students. The college is providing a culturally-relevant learning experience. The college is accessible to its students and community. It is meeting the needs of people on the Crow Reservation better than any other institution of higher education. It is facilitating its students to overcome barriers to learning. It is also creating opportunities to empower people.

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OF THE LITTLE BIG HORN COLLEGE MISSION

by

Nathaniel Rick St. Pierre

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

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This thesis has been read by each member of the graduate committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	vii
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	12
Purpose.....	14
Research Questions.....	15
Significance of the Study.....	15
Definitions.....	19
Assumptions.....	20
Limitations.....	21
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	22
Introduction.....	22
Higher Education Considerations for Indians.....	24
Assessing Impediments.....	24
Tribal College Student Profile.....	27
The Crows.....	29
Crow Education.....	33
Little Big Horn College.....	35
History.....	35
LBHC Mission Statement.....	41
Indian Adult Learners.....	43
Needs of Indian Students.....	45
Learning Styles.....	48
LBHC Student Issues.....	51
3. METHODOLOGY.....	56
Design.....	56
Sample.....	58
Interview Format.....	61
Procedures.....	65
4. FINDINGS.....	70
Introduction.....	70
Acknowledging Crow Tradition.....	71
The College of Choice.....	78
Meeting Student Needs.....	87
Barriers to Learning.....	91

TABLE OF CONTENTS--Continued

	Page
The Measure of Success.....	97
5. CONCLUSIONS.....	104
Summary of Study.....	104
Cultural Continuity.....	107
Conclusions.....	107
Recommendations.....	108
Adequacy of LBHC.....	110
Conclusions.....	110
Recommendations.....	111
Student Needs.....	112
Conclusions.....	112
Recommendations.....	113
Student Barriers.....	116
Conclusions.....	116
Recommendations.....	119
Listening to the Student.....	120
Conclusions.....	120
Recommendations.....	121
REFERENCES.....	126
APPENDIX.....	135

ABSTRACT

Little Big Horn College (LBHC), located in southeastern Montana, plays a significant role in the lives of students and community members. However research with and about student participation in the tribal college experience is scarce. This study acknowledges the history, present condition, and future considerations of the Crow people as well as LBHC's involvement in its own educational and social movement. Although often overlooked, the student role must be recognized as a vital, integral part of educational process. The purpose of this study was to elicit student perceptions of the LBHC mission.

A cross-section of 28 LBHC students were interviewed for this descriptive case study. The investigation of the institutional effectiveness of LBHC involved gathering information from students and then categorizing their responses into five analytical areas. These areas included the experiences of students with the Crow culture and language at the college, the value placed on their own education by the students, the degree to which LBHC's programming meets the needs of each student, the psychological and sociological barriers to education, and the ways in which opportunities are provided through the college mission.

Four conclusions were drawn for each of the five areas of categories regarding the student perception of the LBHC mission. Recommendations were provided for each of these areas. Collectively, the testimony of students clearly reveals that a special relationship exists between LBHC and its students. The college is providing a culturally-relevant learning experience. The college is accessible to its students and community. It is meeting the needs of people on the Crow Reservation better than any other institution of higher education. It is facilitating its students to overcome barriers to learning. It is also creating opportunities to empower people.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Native American students in higher education represent a modern social movement. Many of these students must contend with a multitude of adverse conditions and issues while they take charge of their lives through the educational process. In effect, these students, as a collective group, epitomize the catalysts for change in light of current trends taking place in educational and federal policy for all Native Americans. The background and experiences of today's Native American students serve as a basis to examine their role in the delivery of a tribal college education.

The educational system for Indian people has changed dramatically over the last three decades. In fact, "the late 1960's witnessed the beginning of self-determination in Indian education" (Szasz, 1974, p. 156). Also, "the development of the [tribal college]...is the first real evidence that [Native Americans] have gained some self-determination in the planning and management of their own higher education" (Oppelt, 1990. p.93).

Over the last 28 years, respective Native American

tribes have implemented strategies, programs, and institutions to design, provide, administrate, guide, and govern their own culturally-relevant system of post-secondary education for their own people. "Tribal colleges are coordinating post-secondary education on the reservations which previously had only scattered courses offered by colleges in the area....They are providing for the first time the opportunity for Indians in isolated areas to attend college because they are accessible and their programs and services are tailored to meet the needs of local people" (Oppelt, 1990, p. 90).

Little Big Horn College (LBHC), located in southeastern Montana, and its students clearly exemplify the changing status of education in the Native American community. Here, the college administrators and students continue to learn and promote the Crow language and culture through the tribal college experience. By design, traditional Crow teachings and worldviews seemingly permeate every aspect of the institutional mission. Students who attend LBHC are challenged to pursue their educational aspirations, to retain their culture, and to help carry out the mission of the college. Little Big Horn College offers the potential for its students to become empowered as confidence is promoted in their students' ability to succeed academically and to enact social change. Indeed, LBHC has become a lead educational institution. The situation is similar to other

tribal colleges who support a student empowerment model that allows all students to be actively involved in the learning as an improvement strategy to promote student success (Cummins, 1989). Four aspects assist in building a foundation to better understand individual and group learning that occurs in a tribal college such as LBHC. These include the movement and dynamics of mainstream community colleges, tribal colleges as places for Native American adult learners, Native American post-secondary education, and the Native American student.

Although tribal colleges and their foundation cannot be compared directly to any other institution of higher learning, it is useful to look at the development of another similar institution--the American community college--to better understand what the tribal college movement has come to be. Since the tribal college movement was part of the broader community college movement, it is important to briefly examine the mainstream community college movement and its development in this country. This will serve as a basis for comparison between the two movements and to better understand the historical context of each. Also, the community college and the tribal college are analogous because their beginnings were a result of common people searching for a type of education most suitable for their needs.

The American community college, often referred to as

the junior college in earlier years, had its origin in the early 20th century when various social forces prompted the movement to begin. The primary social forces were

The need for workers trained to operate the nation's expanding industries; the lengthened period of adolescence, which mandated custodial care of the young for a longer time; and the drive for social equality, which was enhanced by opening more schools and encouraging everyone to attend.
(Cohen & Brawer, 1982, p. 1)

The turn of the century was a time when "social institutions of practical value to society were being formed...[and] the public perceived schooling as an avenue of upward mobility and as a contributor to the community's wealth" (p. 2).

Almost initially, it was believed that "the junior college should be a community college meeting community needs" (Hollinshead, 1936, p. 111). These colleges opened doors to ethnic minorities, to lower-income groups, and to people who had marginal academic performance. The "junior colleges allowed students who were not fit to take the higher work to stop naturally and honorably at the end of the sophomore year" (Eells, 1931, p. 91).

The network of mainstream community colleges in America has grown uniquely and has earned a respective place in American higher education. It may be the only sector of higher education that truly can be called a movement because there are common goals among these institutions. "The various curricular functions include academic transfer preparation, vocational-technical education, continuing

education, remedial education, and community service"

(Cohen & Brawer, 1982, p. 15). Today, these colleges enroll approximately 43% of the nations undergraduates and 51% of all first-time entering freshmen. Community colleges have become the largest single sector of higher education in the United States.

It may be best to characterize community colleges merely as untraditional....They change frequently, seeking ever-new programs and clients....[They are] never satisfied with resting on what has been done before, they try new approaches to old problems....They maintain open channels for individuals, enhancing the social mobility that has so characterized America...and they accept the idea that society can be better, just as individuals can better their lot within it. (p. 28)

While the community college movement is well established and a major part of the post-secondary education fabric in this country, the movement in Native American higher education is but a relatively recent development. However, it is important to note that the rapid growth of the community college at the national level in the 1960's and 1970's strongly influenced the form of self-determination in Native American higher education. "The concept of a two-year college designed to meet the needs of a particular community was being promoted throughout the country" (Oppelt, 1990, p. 32). Native American educators also recognized that a community college would better satisfy the needs of Native Americans living on reservations (Kickingbird, 1976; Medicine, 1975; Sando, 1969).

Historically, Native Americans have been burdened by various oppressive and discriminatory forces in the United States. Many effects of oppression and discrimination are visible by particularly examining past systems of higher education and policies implemented by non-Indian educators upon the Indians. Past attempts to provide post-secondary education to Native American adults can be summarized as being a pattern of majority dominance, paternalism, religious evangelism, and neglect (Olivas, 1981). Evidence of failed governmental and missionary efforts can be traced back to the days of colonization when schools of higher learning attempted to "educate" Indian students but failed to retain or impact Indian pupils.

Within a decade of the first permanent European settlement at Jamestown, plans were already underway for an Indian college, and similar designs continued periodically throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. In fact, Indians offered the impetus for establishing and maintaining among the nation's most enduring and prestigious halls of higher learning--such elite institutions as Harvard College, the College of William and Mary, and Dartmouth College. (Wright, 1988, pp. 1-2)

The failure to educate Indians during colonial times was attributed to the "great resistance of Indian culture, the conflicting values of white and Indian cultures, and the prevalent racial prejudice" (Szasz cited in Oppelt, 1990, p. 4). Eventually, however, change in traditional Native American ways of educating their youth came about, and they adapted to the methods of the colonists. The process was designed to remove Native Americans from any aspects of

their original culture (Beck, Walters, & Francisco, 1977).

Since the late 18th century, the federal government has provided funds for Indian higher education; these funds were legitimized either by negotiating treaties with the Indian tribes or passing congressional or legislative enactments. Ironically, there were few Native Americans who received any noticeable benefits from these appropriations. With the increased separation of church and state in the post-Civil War years, the federal government began handling most of the responsibility for Indian education (Berkhofer, 1978). Inherent in both efforts by the federal government and the missionary zeal was the theme of assimilation of the Indian people into the dominant society (Boyer, 1989). For many years, the limited or virtual non-participation of Indian adults in mainstream American post-secondary education was the rule and not the exception.

In the 1960's, several societal conditions created opportunities for major changes in Native American higher education. Most Native Americans were not satisfied with educational institutions provided by the states, federal government, and private agencies. Native Americans were the most underrepresented group in higher education and had the highest attrition rate of all minorities in the United States (Astin, 1982). "The basic premise of white education--all persons were to be assimilated into white middle class values and behaviors--was antithetical to

tribal desires to preserve some of their culture....This long standing conflict of educational objectives was the primary impetus for the significant changes in Indian higher education" (Oppelt, 1990, p. 31).

Native American leaders sought better ways to serve the needs of their tribal people through current educational opportunities--providing adequate "opportunities for meaningful employment on or near the reservations, or tribes would continue to become even more intellectually impoverished" (Oppelt, 1990, p. 31). At the local, or tribal, level there was strong support of the traditional focus on education (i.e., the reinforcement of traditional culture). Prior to any major federal policy developments at the national level, a separate initiative was put into motion. In the early 1960's, Navajo leaders began discussing the possibility of founding their own college on the reservation (p. 34). The Navajo tribe challenged mainstream educational systems and developed their own programs and institutions for their own students. The intertwining of tribal politics, philosophical arguments, and pragmatic need came together to form Navajo Community College in 1968 (Boyer, 1989). This marked the beginning of the tribal college movement. As with any significant social movement, it was a few dedicated leaders who stepped forward and initiated action. Thus, Native American control of the post-secondary educational process in their communities came

into sharp focus in the late 1960's.

The mainstream community college movement and the tribal college movement are similar in that they began when local people sought social change to meet local needs in post-secondary education. In this case, both college movements can be described as social movements. These social movements deal with the concepts of how organizations work and assume that change needed to be implemented through organizations. Further, "people as individuals remain powerless, but if they get together in organizations, they have power, provided they use their organizations instead of being used by them....Institutions must be kept from becoming oppressive or useless or taking the place of the vitality and life of people" (Horton, 1990, p. 49). "It's only in a movement that an idea is often made simple enough and direct enough that it can spread rapidly....It's a revolution that transforms social, political, and economic structures" (p. 115).

Further examination of Native Americans in higher education also aids in identifying the more recent and successful endeavors affecting educational attainment. At the federal level, there has been legislation affecting the progress of Native Americans; theoretically, this reflects a more responsive policy to address the needs of Native Americans. For instance, the movement for tribal self-determination coincided with the opening of the doors of

higher education to Indian people in 1966 with the passage of the federal student aid legislation. The Indian Financing Act of 1974, the Indian Education Acts of 1972 and 1974, and the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Acts of 1975 followed and were favorable pieces of legislation that began to more accurately recognize the needs of Indian people.

Since the founding of Navajo Community College, the tribal college movement has been in a state of development and transition. Native American higher education has been experiencing dramatic change as a result of the tribal college movement. Today, there are 27 tribal colleges throughout the nation; most of these exist on or near Indian reservations. The tribal colleges were joined by six "other" postsecondary schools which serve a predominant Indian student population. This larger group is known as the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC). "Together these colleges stand out as the most significant and successful development in Indian education history. They offer a quality education within the context of Native American culture and values" (Boyer, 1989, p. 24).

Current federal government policy for Native Americans is underpinned by the concept of self-determination. Conceptually, this means that Indian people should have greater control over their own affairs--including the widespread realization of the importance of education.

The United States government and other institutions in both the public and private sectors have begun to recognize the expressed needs set forth by Indian people as a legitimate basis for Indian social, educational, cultural, and economic self-determination in this multidimensional, multicultural nation. (Peregoy, 1981, p. 35)

The movement for self-determination led to the enactment of the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act (P.L. 95-471) in 1978 "to ensure continued and expanded educational opportunities for Indian students" (92 STAT.1325).

"Today's era of Indian self-determination reveals that constructive change in Indian society can occur when it is self-directed" (Boyer, 1989, p. 40). The essential mission of each tribal college includes (a) providing a quality post-secondary education for certification, for two-year programs, or for a degree that is transferable to senior institutions; (b) providing services to the community; (c) providing a vocational education; and (d) offering a means by which the tribe(s) served may preserve their cultural integrity through the learning experience (Oppelt, 1984, p. 32). Encompassed in the mission of each college is the challenge to create and maintain practical services and programs that consider respective languages and cultures, appreciate the students' needs and backgrounds, and recognize individual learning styles, language skills, and the effects of language differences on learning and teaching styles (National Education Association, 1991).

However, each tribal college is challenged to carry out its own mission. There are clearly major issues that tribal colleges face under similar conditions (Boyer, 1989; Olivas, 1982; Oppelt, 1984). For example,

At almost all of the institutions, salaries are far too low, libraries are shockingly underfunded, and administrators struggle to operate with day-to-day budget constraints that other higher learning institutions would totally reject. Although a few of the colleges have accommodating campuses, many are getting by with mismatched trailers or unsuitable buildings converted from other uses. (Boyer, 1989, p. xi)

Particularly, the funding and financial constraints are a difficult obstacle for tribal colleges. Ironically, some board members, administrators, faculty, and staff do not understand the importance of how the colleges mission statement could affect institutional life (Bad Wound, 1990). In respect to the integration of tribal cultures into the institutional setting, "the issue is how tribal beliefs frame the actions of constituents in tribal colleges....The analysis suggests they do not" (p. 265).

Statement of the Problem

Tribal colleges are successfully meeting the unique educational needs of Native Americans; yet only a limited amount of research has been conducted to support this conclusion. Twenty-seven tribal entities have taken the initiative for their communities and have established thriving institutions of higher education. Within the state

of Montana, a number of tribal colleges have yet to emphasize tribal cultures (St. Pierre & Rowland, 1990, p. 217). Concomitantly, research with and about student participation is scarce. The common determinate for evaluating effectiveness of a tribal college education is to examine data after the fact. This includes documenting numbers of students graduating or progressing through curricula and/or tracking those students who transfer to four-year institutions. However, gathering this kind of statistical information does not adequately describe the diversity of "results" or effects on the student obtained through the tribal college experience.

Little Big Horn College has received recognition from such sources as the Carnegie Report for its institutional accomplishments. The college and its students have gained media attention from sources such as The Chronicle of Higher Education, USA Today, Change, and the Philadelphia Inquirer. Clearly, LBHC is succeeding in many ways, yet those successes have not been authenticated through the views of its students. There are but few internal mechanisms available to measure student needs and experiences. In the case of individual students, no studies have been conducted to legitimately reveal their perspectives concerning the manner in which the college is fulfilling its mission. While it is apparent that LBHC students are respected as consumers of education, the link between the college mission

and the intrinsic worth of that education must be better understood.

Purpose

This study acknowledges the history, present condition, and future considerations of the Crow people as well as LBHC's involvement in its own educational and social movement. The student role must also be recognized as a vital, integral part of carrying out the tribal college mission. There is a key relationship between the delivery of a tribal college education (exhibited primarily through its mission) and the reception of that education from the student. The purpose of this study was to investigate LBHC student perceptions, experiences, and testimony related to the five critical areas of (a) the incorporation of the Crow culture and language within the college; (b) students' past educational experience, present value placement on their tribal college education, and projected use of their education based on the experience at the college; (c) how well the college's curriculum matches the needs of the student; (d) the kinds of psychological and sociological constraints affecting the tribal college experience for the student; and (e) the ways in which opportunities are provided through the college mission.

Research Questions

The research questions to address the areas regarding the student perception were divided into five areas. The first question area assessed LBHC's ability to address the cultural needs and awareness of the students through its stated mission. The second question area investigated students reasons for attending LBHC. The third question area examined the curricular/programmatic components that affect students and the relevance of cultural sensitivity. The fourth question area extracted information about the psychological and sociological constructs for students and the relative influence of those factors on student experiences at LBHC. The final area ascertained LBHC's effectiveness with students through the college mission.

Significance of the Study

This study can impact and become useful to several constituent groups in a variety of ways. The study can provide valuable information about LBHC students' perceptions of their tribal college experience and about how this experience affects their ability to exercise true self-determination within the Crow reservation community. Such information can expand the available body of information about the changing dynamics of tribal colleges.

Potential and current tribal college students at Little Big Horn College can utilize information from this study to

better formulate and/or understand their perceptions of what preserving, enhancing, and promoting Crow tribal ways through the college really means. This can be accomplished by analyzing what that experience is or should be. The students can also increase their awareness and interpretation of the college's mission as it affects their personal lives in terms of the Crow culture and language. In essence, there is great potential for students to raise their critical consciousness about what it means to be a college student at LBHC.

The Crow Central Education Commission, as an organization, can utilize information from this study to enact further social change on the Crow reservation. Information about the student profile, student needs, and student perceptions can help identify areas of improvement in the existing policies and procedures of the organization. Further, linkages to other educational institutions like public and parochial schools can be strengthened in addressing the needs of the bilingual/bicultural learner.

The study can assist tribal college faculty and staff to further develop effective teaching methods that focus on the students needs. Faculty and staff in-service training, seminars, and personal and professional development activities that focus on the Crow culture are potential areas of growth in order to be responsive to the needs of Native American adult learners. Also, curricular changes

from within can result from the information generated in this study; the findings reflect what students see as necessary for the tribal college to pursue in its academic and extracurricular offerings.

Administrators from LBHC can use information from this study to develop good data-gathering procedures and create a more complete profile of its students. Administrators might disseminate this profile to the surrounding districts and communities on the Crow reservation. There are opportunities to gain further recognition and endorsement through community involvement. This could also help fulfill and support the community service function. The planning, implementing, and evaluation of programs for students at LBHC as a process can be more carefully examined in terms of their overall effectiveness and inclusion of the students views.

Board members, educators, and parents of students from the local school districts on the Crow Reservation can use information from this study to establish new or maintain existing cooperative agreements in helping high school students matriculate to college. The exchange of information about educational institutions may assist in the formulation of a reservation-wide policy on education. Also recruitment and retention efforts might be fortified by having ongoing dialogue between LBHC and school districts, thereby re-affirming the linkage to the community.

The American Indian Higher Education Consortium can use the study to promote the idea of student and community empowerment. Tribal colleges foster change in individuals and in communities, and they offer a unique setting for people to challenge themselves. Although LBHC is unique (as is each tribal college), this case study may be used as a model to assist tribal college officials interpret the findings in terms of their own context and then decide what applies.

This study may impact the growing body of literature that has qualitatively examined Native American adult learners and Crow students who function for the most part in a bilingual/bicultural world. In order to address future needs of Crow learners at LBHC, various studies and research projects concerning and involving the students will become apparent as the idea of self-determination is more completely realized.

Lobbyists and supporters of the tribal college movement can use information from this study to further direct their effort for legislation and for establishing a more concrete funding base for tribal college students. The voice of the student has the potential to impact much of what is to be done in the future for Native American higher education simply because there will be a significant number of students that experience an education at the tribal college. Information from studies such as this which focus on the

learners can dictate the future of responsiveness and accountability of tribal institutions for the people they serve.

Finally, this study can be compared to other studies that are now becoming a major focus of the Native American higher education and tribal colleges. Other studies have tended to deal with the administrative structure, programming, facilities and resource management, tribal economic development, self-determination, and operation of tribal colleges. Results from this study can be combined with findings of other studies which used different research methodologies to determine consistency of information about tribal colleges.

Definitions

Community College: Any institution accredited to award the associate in arts or science as its highest degree. This includes the comprehensive two-year colleges as well as many of the technical institutes, both public and private (Cohen & Brawer, 1982).

Indian: There are 580 federally-recognized tribes with each having its own definition for tribal membership. Most of these broadly address two criteria including if a person has origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintains cultural

identification through tribal affiliations or community recognition. The terms Native Americans, American Indians, or Alaskan Natives are used interchangeably.

Self-Determination: Decision-making control over one's own affairs and the policies that affect one's life (O'Brien, 1989, p. 319).

Tribally Controlled Community College: An institution of higher education serving Native Americans with educational programs including Native American cultural programming, adult basic education, community interest courses, and vocational and academic programs (Boyer, 1989). Tribal colleges, tribally controlled colleges, and tribally controlled community colleges are used interchangeably.

Assumptions

One of the assumptions under which this study was conducted was the participants were able to reflect upon their experience while attending LBHC. Although some of the students interviewed may have either been attending a short time (i.e., currently enrolled for the first time) or a long time (i.e., graduated), each student was believed to have accounts of or incidences regarding individual experiences.

Another assumption was that the students chosen for

interviews were familiar with the mission statement. Each student is issued a LBHC catalog which includes the stated mission. The college also has the mission statement posted at various locations throughout the college campus.

Limitations

This study was delimited to only those students who attended LBHC between 1980 and the fall of 1992. The findings reflect only those 28 students interviewed and those who attended during those selected years. LBHC is only one of 27 tribal colleges, and those students interviewed for this study may not reflect the same perceptions and views of other tribal college students.

The other limitation is the nature of the questions. Although the research questions were open-ended by design, the responses by individual students during each interview were later categorized for data management purposes. The interviews did not investigate deeper, more personal issues for each student interviewed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The history of Native Americans in higher education has been well documented (e.g., Haymond, 1982; Szasz, 1974; Wicks, 1979; Wright, 1986). The historical legacy has important implications for this study. Particularly, a review of the history illuminates the magnitude of the tribal college movement. Tribal colleges have been receiving a great deal of recognition for their successes (e.g., Bad Wound, 1990; Boyer, 1989; Oppelt, 1990; Stein, 1992).

There are two basic dimensions which impact the effectiveness of the Little Big Horn College (LBHC) college experience for adult learners. The first dimension includes the educational institution itself. Institutional factors such as history, nature, purpose, leadership, and programming are worthy of examination. However, there is scant evidence of any discussion concerning the relationship between the tribal college mission and the students who attend tribal colleges. Additionally, much of the information about tribal colleges is clustered together as

though these "Indian" institutions of higher learning are homogenous in respect to tribal culture.

The other dimension involves people--more precisely, the students who attend LBHC. It is important to acknowledge the existing research concerning the history, anthropology, sociology, language, and education about the Crow tribe of Indians. Yet these constructs only describe pieces of a much more dynamic phenomenon taking place at LBHC. Since tribal colleges serve mostly tribal people, the student voice is the other important element of the institution. To understand this voice at LBHC, an awareness some fundamental, tribal-specific characteristics related to the Crows is needed.

The students at LBHC are part of the broad, national tribal college movement. Therefore a brief description about Native American students in higher education can provide a backdrop to more completely understand the historical and contemporary issues affecting those students attending LBHC. A profile of the educational and demographic features of tribal college students describes the parameters within which students must make decisions. Both dimensions involved in the relationship between the LBHC mission and student perspective are interconnected and do not function separately from one another. Information about Crow history and culture, collective educational endeavors among tribal members, and institutional features

about LBHC are significant because they give life to the people involved in this study. Rather than being mere objects of study, key information about history and culture serve to enunciate a unique tribal identity. Finally, an investigation of contemporary adult learners at LBHC and the interaction between students and the LBHC mission statement serves as a framework for the two dimensions to fit within.

Higher Education Consideration for Indians

Assessing Impediments

Although many of the historical statistics indicate a tremendous increase in the number of Indian college students, the growth rate is often plagued by various problems. For example, high dropout or pushout rates of 10%-30%, lower than average movement through curricula, poverty, and language barriers tend to limit participation of American Indians in post-secondary education. In addition to financial hardships and cultural differences, "the nature and quality of previous education, discrimination, and the lack of role models...[are] problems to post-secondary student dropout" (McDonald, 1978, p. 73).

Today, over 100,000 Native American students are annually attending higher education institutions in this country. Yet, in comparison to the majority white population, Native Americans in higher education still have a lower educational attainment at all levels. Native

Americans:

Have the highest dropout rate of all minorities (36% in 1988 as compared to a national dropout rate of 29%); 3 of 4 [Indian] students who enter college drop out without earning a degree. Despite their high dropout rates, a higher proportion of [Indian] youth are preparing to go to college than of any other ethnic minority group. [Indian] students represent the only ethnic group in which females drop out from school more often than males. (National Education Association, 1991, p. 1)

Mainstream institutions simply do not efficiently address the diverse community needs that have become the special focus of tribal colleges, and the success rate of mainstream colleges is quite poor. The current state of Indian education is evident in the following statistics: (a) only 9% of American Indian adults have completed four years of college compared to 20% for the total U.S. population, (b) 53% of American Indian students enrolled in colleges/universities leave after their first year, (c) 25% complete their college degree program, and (d) American Indians have the longest time lapse from baccalaureate degree to doctorate (14 years) compared to all races (American Indian Research Opportunities, 1993).

Additionally, it is frequently observed that Indian students, like other ethnic minorities, "have developed an insecurity and ambivalence about the value of their own cultural identity as a result of their interactions with the dominant [society]" (Cummins, 1989, p. 112). Students of color who attend senior institutions are typically faced

with the choice of either assimilation, cultural pluralism, or separation (Bressler, 1967). Many Indian students (including potential students and former students) are confronted with a decision about their perceptions of what a post-secondary experience is or should be.

"Education, in general, and post-secondary/higher education, specifically, have been identified by Indian people as a key vehicle to individual and tribal self-sufficiency" (Peregoy, 1981, p. 35). Tribal colleges came about because of:

a) Indian nations were experiencing very high dropouts at the state colleges and universities in the 1960's and early 1970's; b) scholarships available to tribal people were fairly limited; c) many Indian students didn't want to leave their families; d) Indian people didn't want to leave their place in the community; and e) it was very expensive for students to attend campuses away from home so economics was also an important [factor]....[Yet] the major reason tribal colleges started [was] to provide a means for tribal people to strengthen their own tribal nations....So cultural preservation is really the foundation of the tribal colleges. (Bordeaux, 1991, p. 12)

Tribal colleges are one source by which Native Americans exercise true self-determination to address the needs and problems of their communities. "Tribal colleges have a definitive mission and a community responsibility. This must be reflected in the curriculum and in the way the curriculum is formulated" (Conti & Fellenz, 1991, p. 22). One major focus of the current tribal college movement is that the Indian people themselves are taking the responsibility to re-affirm their cultural heritage (Boyer,

1989, p. xiii). One of the key reasons for the success of tribal colleges is the belief that students can remain Indian, practice tribal traditions, retain tribal values, and also be successful students (Amiotte, 1988).

Tribal College Student Profile

The demographic and statistical data for the current Native American population have been analyzed particularly for understanding reasons concerning increasing and/or decreasing trends and for making predictions (e.g., Fleming, 1992; Hillabrant, Romano, Stang, & Charleston, 1992; Hodgkinson, 1992). The population characteristics reveal that there are approximately two million American Indian and Alaska Natives today (U. S. Census, 1990). Ironically, this represents less than 1% of the total U. S. population. However, within that population, there are about 580 federally-recognized tribes--all of which are considered "quasi-sovereign" nations. Among these tribes, there are over 200 surviving languages still spoken. The implication is that a considerable diversity is apparent; it has been the case even long before the arrival of European groups.

Students who attend tribal colleges represent a wide variety of racial, ethnic, social, tribal, and economic backgrounds. It is difficult to make any type of comparison, generalization, or inferences about tribal college students especially because of the diversity that currently exists in that select student population.

However, any description of the "typical" tribal college student would include some of the more frequently found traits and/or circumstances among the 25,000 students. Further, similarities have historically existed to characterize the tribal college student. While there are several studies (e.g., Conti & Fellenz, 1988b; Dauphinais, 1981; Haymond, 1982; LaPointe, 1977; Hill, 1992; LeBeau, 1979; Oppelt, 1990; Wright, 1989) which have examined tribal college students, much of the literature expounds broad generalizations concerning a specific student attribute or is narrow in scope (i.e., case studies).

The profile of tribal college students as a group, however, provide useful descriptions of community and culture. For example, the typical tribal college student is someone who:

Resides on or near the reservation; is older than the traditional age (older than 25) of "other" students at non-tribal institutions; is more often than not female; is usually a first-generation college student; is in need of financial aid; has attended school in other mainstream colleges (without much success); is lacking in adequate preparation academically; and typically does not complete the degree program that he/she enrolls in. (Boyer, 1989, pp. 30-31)

Additionally, the description of the tribal college student throughout most of the 1970's and 1980's pointed out that:

Indian community college students had certain characteristics which enable them to overcome the obstacles of poverty, poor academic preparation, and family responsibilities....The maturity and life experiences of most of these students were important factors in their educational success....Most of them had worked full-time,

experienced the responsibilities of parent-hood, and understood the advantages of postsecondary education....They knew what was needed to get a better job and realized the improved financial status and increased feeling of self-worth that comes with acquisition of skills and/or knowledge not possessed by their peers. (Oppelt, 1990, p. 80)

Trends in enrollment figures also indicate that tribal college students are taking advantage of the many opportunities available to them. For instance, between 1980 and 1988, the average rate of growth in student enrollment amongst the seven Montana tribal colleges grew 22.5%. During that same eight-year period, an assessment of 21 selected tribal colleges nationwide revealed there was a 12.5% average growth rate (St. Pierre, 1989).

The Crows

The Crow Tribe of Indians share similar cultural traits to many Northern Plains tribes. The Crow, or Apsaalooke (literally meaning "children of the large-beaked bird"), broke away from their ancestral group, the Hidatsa, 400 to 500 years ago. Not long after the tribal split, the Crow changed their agriculture-based life to that of nomadic. "They were always on the move after game and in constant warfare with the other tribes of the plains, and mountains" (Ethnic Heritage Studies Program, 1982). Tribal chieftainship was attained traditionally through the warrior system of values. Eventually, the Crow settled along the valleys of the Yellowstone and Big Horn Rivers in northern

Wyoming and southcentral Montana.

The Crow were instructed by divine guidance to separate into four major bands. These bands include the Mountain People (sometimes called the Mountain Crows), the River Crow, the Outer Edge Lodges, and the Beaver Dries Its Fur which essentially disappeared for reasons not completely known (Old Horn cited in Fleming & Watts, 1994).

Traditionally, the Crow people also identified with each other through war societies, religious societies, and a blood kinship system (pp. 50-52).

The Crow tribe uses a matrilineal system in which clanships are identified and perpetuated through female members of the clan. Today, a total of 10 clans exist among the tribe. There are strong ties and relationships with their present location, which is simply called "Crow Country." As a result of this system, tribal members are tradition-oriented and identify with other tribal members through a clan and value system tempered by the land and environment of the Crow Country (Old Coyote, 1982). "Crow traditions, unlike those of many other tribes, have remained a part of the Crow way of life even today" (Bryan, 1985, p. 86).

Most of the traditional Crow culture and system of values have been significant in the lives of the people.

Although members of the tribe [belong] to a Christian denomination, the traditional Sun Dance, sweat lodge and Tobacco Society ceremonials as well as more recent introductions such as the

Native American Church are important functions. The medicine men, both healers and visionaries, are sought for spiritual guidance and for seeking healing while utilizing the Indian Health Service hospital and clinic. Traditional systems of social obligation and responsibility through the clan system and the extended family are still vital factors for most Crows in their daily lifestyle. (Little Big Horn College Self Study, 1990, p. 110-111)

Traditional Crow culture reflects a strong spiritual ideology. This includes the seven sources by which:

The Creator has allowed us to know his power. We pray to the spirit above; we pray to the spirit of the earth; we pray to the spirits of the heavens; we pray to the spirit of the air from which we find power to run our lives; we pray to the spirit of the water; we pray to the spirit of the fire and of the plants. We pray to all of these because they are a part of God. (Old Horn cited in Fleming & Watts, 1994)

The Crow language is of the larger Siouan linguistic family. "There is not a written language in general used by the Crow, but an extensive oral history has been kept intact by the tribe" (Old Coyote, 1982). "The Crow language is still spoken by 82% of the tribal members" (Bryan, 1985, p. 86).

The Laramie Treaty of 1851 established a reservation for the Crow tribe totaling more than 38 million acres in Montana and Wyoming. In 1868, a second Laramie Treaty was signed and the size of the reservation was decreased by 30 million acres (Ethnic Heritage Studies Program, 1982). Added pressure to give Indian land to white ranchers and farmers intensified, and between 1882 and 1958, further land cessions eventually reduced the Crow holdings in trust

ownership to 2.3 million acres at present.

Today, the Crow Reservation, located mainly in Big Horn County in southcentral Montana, has three mountain ranges-- Big Horn, Pryor, and Wolf. The reservation itself is divided into six districts. The districts include Reno, Lodge Grass, Pryor, St. Xavier, Wyola, and Black Lodge. There are 8,175 enrolled tribal members (Tiller, 1996, p. 400). About two-thirds of the enrolled members live on or near the reservation. The tribal headquarters is located in Crow Agency, Montana.

The Crow tribe has substantial revenue sources from coal development and sales, oil, gas, and agricultural land leases. Through tribally-operated programs, about two-thirds of the tribal land base is effectively managed to monitor natural resources such as water, timber, and grazing lands. There are a number of recreation and tourism attractions located on the reservation such as the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area, Yellowtail Dam, the Little Bighorn National Monument, Chief Plenty Coups State Park, and the Little Bighorn Casino. All of these resources play a significant role in economic self-sufficiency.

Employment opportunities, especially during the winter months, are extremely limited on the reservation. The major employer for the Crow people is the United States government through the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Indian Health Service, and the National Park Service. There are some

small businesses located in Lodge Grass, Pryor, and Crow Agency. The unemployment rate for the Crow Reservation is at 44% (Tiller, 1996). Many tribal members must rely on tribal support for economic development, housing, services, and general programs.

Crow Education

The traditional mechanism of education for the Crow people was out of necessity a shared responsibility.

In the oral history of the Crow people, lessons in practical living skills, the natural sciences, in literature, music and history as well was taught through demonstration, practice and with vivid literature delivered through oratory in age and family groupings. The teachers, both men and women, were the elders and the very skilled. (Little Big Horn College Self Study, 1990, p. 2)

"Education and familiarity with the dominant society have always been of concern to the tribe, beginning with the 1825 Friendship Treaty to the present" (Old Coyote, 1982, p. 2). As an increasing number of non-Indian ranchers, farmers, and military came to the reservation in search of land and opportunity, the Crow became exposed to western civilization and education delivered through missionaries, government boarding schools, and government agents. In the late 1800's, a powerful statement concerning education was made by one of the most noted Crow chiefs, Plenty Coups, when he said, "Education is your most powerful weapon. With education you are the white man's equal; without education you are his victim" (cited in Bryan, 1985, p. 90).

In 1920, the Crow Act divided reservation lands among members, and the tribe exchanged parcels of land with the State of Montana for public schools on the reservation. Government schools for Crow Indians on the reservation were discontinued at that time (Old Coyote, 1982). Profoundly, amongst all of these institutions of learning, the Crow people have experienced high dropout rates, deficient academic performance, and a curriculum which is alien to Crow lifeways, language, and history (Little Big Horn College Self Study, 1990).

Historically, one major obstacle for some Crow students attending school has been limited English proficiency. With over 80% of the adult Crow population speaking Crow as their first language, many have had problems with competence in basic skills (e.g., standardized tests or standard English instruction) and the dropout rate among the Crow adults was 48% in 1984 (Little Big Horn College Self-Study, 1984, p. 109. Additionally, instructional methods that reflect English as a second language or bilingualism saw usage in the schools only after 1970. "Through federally-funded bilingual programs (Title VII), an orthography (alphabet) has been developed for the Crow language. Its usage has only begun with Crow-speaking teachers recently trained to read and write the Crow language, using the Crow alphabet which features English and other sounds to perpetuate the language" (Old Coyote, 1982, p. 3).

Education has always been a high priority among the people on the Crow Reservation. Still evident today is the importance of becoming educated without giving up tribal identity. The Crow Culture Committee stated, "In view of the major characteristics of the present Plains cultures, the Crows are in an excellent position to relate the past with the present" (Ethnic Heritage Studies Program, 1982).

The Crows have been participating in higher education primarily since the federal financial aid programs of the 1970's. In 1970, only 32 Crow people had graduated from college; by 1980 there were nearly 200 total college graduates. By 1990, the total number of graduates from colleges has gone well beyond 200 (Little Big Horn College Self Study, 1990). Approximately 70% of the adult population have completed high school, and many have continued to pursue vocational training and two-year colleges (Tiller, 1996). Additionally, 6.6% of the Crows have completed bachelor's degrees and beyond (e.g., graduate and professional school).

Little Big Horn College

History

Tribal colleges emerged because tribal councils and tribal communities have supported them (Stein, 1992). In the case of each tribal college, their beginnings and respective success is dependent on the roles of founders,

boards of trustees, administrators, faculty, and students (p. 144). In effect, the process of institutionalizing a tribal entity must involve key people helping one another along with being responsive to community needs. This central idea is apparent in the development of each tribal college where traditional tribal wisdom as a knowledge-base can be integrated into a formalized setting. It is also significant because it helps sustain a unique tribal and cultural identity. In other words,

Tribal college founders and current participants believe that to succeed on the reservation, each college must be true to its tribal values and traditions and must carefully blend them with a comprehensive community college program of education. (Stein, 1992, p. 145)

From its humble beginning, LBHC is replete with a tribally-specific orientation. The annotated story about the beginning exemplifies the strong connection to Crow history, culture, lore, and spirituality.

The name, Little Big Horn, is rooted in the spirituality of the Crow people. A young man who had survived an attempt on his life was rescued by Seven Spirit Powers who were Big Horn rams. One of the rams gave his name, Big Metal, to the young man. Of the many powers bestowed upon this young man, Big Metal, two were that of visionary and prophet. He possessed great physical and mental abilities which he used for the protection of the Crow people and their lifeways. The teachings and gifts from the Big Horns were many but one stands out. They said if the name of this river, which is Big Horn River, is never changed there will always be a Crow Nation. The Little Big Horn is a tributary to the Big Big Horn which either flows from or flow through the Big Horn Mountains. It is in keeping with this knowledge that this institution of higher education which serves the Crow people should be named Little Big Horn

College. As in the philosophy shown to Big Metal, we strive to strengthen and perpetuate the Crow Nation through Little Big Horn College. (Old Horn cited in Little Big Horn College Self Study, 1984)

Although a charter for organizing LBHC was proposed to the Crow Tribal Council in 1978, it was not passed until 1980. The Crow Tribe chartered the LBHC in the Crow Tribal Council of January 1980 as a result of a tribal resolution. The college charter grants authority for governance to the Crow Central Education Commission, a standing Commission of the Crow Tribal Council. The LBHC Board of Trustees was formed under the Crow Central Education Commission.

The impetus for creating LBHC originated from several factors which included inaccessibility of higher education, lack of skills needed to fill jobs on the reservation, early marriage and child bearing of many Crows, decreased funding for student financial aid, and the fact that only a few exceptional Crow Indians were successful in white institutions of higher education (Pease-Windy Boy cited in Oppelt, 1990, p.63). "It was designed and created over a period of about 20 years with the good wishes of elders who had an idea about our own scholarship, our own interest, and our destiny" (Pease-Windy Boy, 1990, p. 37).

In a relatively short amount of time, LBHC has become a premier institution for providing a tribal college education because of its many outstanding characteristics. "The curriculum at LBHC is rooted in the knowledge that the Creator, who is amongst everyone, vested knowledge in the

people of the community (Pease-Windy Boy, 1990, p. 37).

This whole concept of "rooted knowledge" at LBHC displays those elements of history, culture, language, social and economic issues, and identity which are most significant to the overall mission.

Furthermore, LBHC serves as an excellent vehicle for community development.

We have learned from our experiences. One thing we learned about our cultural commitments is that there are things that really are our expression, our scholarship, and our learning. We are discovering more about that everyday. (p. 40)

This essential premise serves to involve community people in teaching and mentoring at the college, maintaining Crow Studies as the largest department in the college, limiting certain classes offered at the appropriate time of year, conducting classes throughout the community and not limited to the college campus, and endorsing a grading system which eliminates the burden of failure for students (Conti & Fellenz, 1991, p. 22). The concept of community and culture have always been central to LBHC's success. The infusion of culture, both in theory and in practice, into the entire operation of LBHC has been a principle part of the overall mission.

Operating from such an awareness and knowledge of the integration of the community, the past, and the curriculum, Little Big Horn College's administration and faculty have merged traditional Crow ceremonies such as the return of the warrior ceremony into college functions. Such a commitment to, and understanding of, the college's mission has redefined its curriculum and the

process for implementing it. (p. 22)

However "the task of blending theory and practice in Indian higher education is indeed difficult" (Rowland, 1994, p. 5). Incorporating "praxis" or critically thinking about the past involves crucial thought prior to taking actions so that intelligent choices are made in society (Friere, 1970).

Just as an objective social reality exists not by chance, but as the product of human action, so it is not transformed by chance. If men produce social reality (the "inversion of praxis" turns back upon them and conditions them), then transforming that reality is an historical task, a task for men. (p. 36)

In the early 1980's, the main goals of LBHC were to provide a vocational education to potential students and to serve the needs of the tribe. "Somewhat less important, but still considered of value, were transfer education and cultural reinforcement" (Pease-Windy Boy cited in Oppelt, 1990, p. 64). The college progressed from teaching in a few scattered buildings and locations to having a central office 6 years after its inception. "In 1980, Associate of Applied Science degrees were available in community health technology, recreational science, vocational agriculture, and vocational business; certificates were awarded to those persons completing the printing/media program" (Oppelt, 1990, p. 64-65).

The college president, Janine Pease-Pretty On Top (formerly known as Janine Pease-Windy Boy), has demonstrated

dynamic leadership and provided the administrative direction for the college. She is nationally and internationally known for her accomplishments at the college. LBHC has a "personable, energetic leader" in Janine Pease-Pretty On Top who has continually strived to "move the school over the obstacles and enable the Crow People to gain the postsecondary education needed for the advancement of members and tribe" (Oppelt, 1990, p. 65).

The college was fully accredited in June of 1991 through the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges. Additionally, the community has recognized that the college is a powerful intermediary between the Crow way of life (e.g., traditions, culture, language) and the modern world. LBHC has made remarkable contributions to the perpetuation of the Crow people and the betterment of lives. This is evidenced by the degree of input and participation of the tribal elders and cultural representation within the school. Similarly, questions of Crow cultural identity are given consideration by LBHC programs, student services, the tribal archives, and the library (Little Big Horn College Self Study, 1995, p. I-6).

The students at LBHC reflect the profound changes that have taken place for all Native American people over the last quarter century during the federal Indian policy period known as the Self-Determination Era. The characteristics of the students depict an important picture of reality which

typify tribal college students nationwide. Evident within the first few years, "students at LBHC followed the pattern of most tribal colleges: they were older, predominantly female, tribal members, and interested in improving their economic position in life" (Stein, 1992, p. 136).

LBHC Mission Statement

Tribal colleges, like many other institutions of higher learning, must establish and state the respective institutional mission and objectives. The standard for these is clearly stated through publications and agencies which serve in the accreditation review process.

Accordingly,

An institution accredited by the Commission on Colleges must have defined its mission and have a clear, concise, and realistic statement of objectives. The Commission recognizes that there is a great variation in the purposes of institutions of higher learning. Mission and objectives are acceptable as a basis for accreditation by the Commission, however, only if they are within the scope of postsecondary education as described in the eligibility requirements, are implemented in a manner which complies with the standards established by the Commission, and are consistent with the institution's charter or other operating authority....The institutions statement of mission should result from the institutional efforts of both faculty and administration and must be approved by the governing board. The statement of mission and objectives should be widely understood in the institution and should appear in appropriate institutional publications including the catalog. (Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, Accreditation Handbook, 1994, p. 29)

In respect to tribal colleges, the mission statement should encompass a tribally-, culturally-appropriate

philosophy to promote its responsiveness to community needs. This statement is significant in that it clarifies the role of the institution and serves to differentiate one tribal college from another. There are few situational factors which are more important than the philosophy of the tribal college (Conti & Fellenz, 1991, p. 22). Moreover,

It is philosophy and curricula which make tribally controlled colleges unique in United States higher education. Tribal community colleges have many aspects within their make-ups which are not different from other community colleges, but each has a statement adhering to its Native American (tribal) roots. These statements and academic programs which are Native American in nature have been deliberately inserted into the curriculum and philosophy to address the needs of tribal members. (Stein, 1992, p. 145)

"Tribal cultures and philosophies provide the moral and intellectual rationale for the practice of Indian higher education" (Rowland, 1994, p. 5). Additionally, tribal colleges are community based, respect cultural traditions and values, and participate in the overall development of the community and reservation (Amiotte, 1988).

Little Big Horn College is an established tribal college which is widely recognized as an exemplary member of the tribal college movement. Since its inception in 1980, the official statement of mission and goals have undergone several changes. However, the essence of Crow higher education philosophy is embodied in the central idea for "the preservation and enhancement of the Crow Language and Culture while providing an up-to-date higher education

opportunity to its students" (Pease-Windy Boy cited in Stein, 1992, p. 136). Through much deliberation and discussion amongst LBHC students, faculty, staff, and administration, the official mission of LBHC is currently presented in a paragraph form expressed in four parts.

Little Big Horn College is the Crow education and cultural center that provides Associate of Arts degrees and certificates in areas that reflect the developing economic opportunities of the Crow Indian Reservation community. The college is dedicated to the professional, vocational and personal development of individual students for their advancement in the workplace or in higher education. The college is committed to the preservation, perpetuation and protection of the Crow culture and language. Little Big Horn College respects the distinct bilingual and bicultural aspects of the Crow Indian family through understanding and knowledge of pertinent issues and participation in community building. Little Big Horn College vitalizes Crow and American Indian scholarship, thus strengthening the unique, self-governing Crow Tribe of Indians. (Little Big Horn College Self Study, 1995, p. I-1)

Indian Adult Learners

"Learning is contextual" (Conti & Fellenz, 1991, p. 22). "Explorations of new ideas, skills, or bodies of knowledge do not take place in a vacuum but are set within the context of the learner's past, current and future experiences" (Brookfield, 1986, p. 15). "Adults have a vast reservoir of rich, emotional, and meaningful experiences that can be tied into the learning activities....These experiences are resources that can be used in the classroom to enliven learning and serve as a mechanism for the teacher

to actively involve the learner in the educational process" (Conti & Fellenz, 1991, p. 18). The "real-life" learning for adults distinguishes the daily life learning from formal learning (Hill, Fellenz, & Conti, 1992). "Such learning is often described as problem solving, planning, or experiencing while academic life is spoken of as studying or education (p. 108).

In effect, tribal college students are in the position of realizing their potential to make a difference in the community in which they live. In this context, "individual insights are cherished and are potentially enlightening, and education must constantly be practiced as a system that exists to benefit the community" (Rowland, 1994, p. 186). For them, the essential value of a tribal college education has an intrinsic worth; that is, the individual can align his/her educational goals and aspirations within a larger cultural value set. This alignment process is characterized through the challenge of one tribe, the Northern Cheyenne, to create a balance between culture identity and education.

By providing this element in the model, educational practices will not only reflect the Cheyenne Way but will also provide an opportunity for tribal constructs of morality to frame the necessary economic strategies needed for continued life and prosperity. This will provide a tangible connection between Cheyenne beliefs and their application in the daily affairs of the reservation community which in turn can provide motivation for students to learn. (p. 182-183)

Essentially, the conditions that must exist to address the socioeconomic problems for the individual on the reservation

are already in place--in the culture and in the worldview of the people.

"Tribal colleges are unparalleled...at the same time, the challenges these institutions confront cannot be overstated" (Boyer, 1989, pp. 2-3). These unique colleges offer the only post-secondary opportunity for education on the reservation. Tribal colleges are institutions for the education of adults (Conti & Fellenz, 1991). "While the colleges' role in transfer, vocational training, community education, and cultural awareness suggest various content areas for the curriculum, the adult education function dictates the process that should be used in structuring and defining the curriculum" (p. 18).

The 27 tribal colleges serve the diverse needs of approximately 25,000 students in 12 states. Through individual and concerted efforts, these schools have begun to impact Indian and non-Indian students in virtually every aspect of life. "Each institution is unique in how it attempts to organize and deliver services to Indian people" (Slater & O'Donnell, 1995, p. 38). Tribal colleges nationwide provide degrees in 350 programs and 179 vocation certificate programs of study to the students they serve (p. 38).

Needs of Indian Students

Tribal colleges "provide an [educational] opportunity to those who frequently are unable or unwilling to leave

their community" (Boyer, 1989, p. 31). "Adults learn things because they want to apply them immediately to real-life situation" (Conti & Fellenz, 1991, p. 22).

Reflecting the unique needs of their communities, tribal colleges educate students who may be returning to school after repeated failures elsewhere, who are single mothers looking to gain job skills, or are adults who simply did not consider higher education before a tribal college was founded on their reservation. (p. 18)

"The organization of tribal colleges reflect the special needs of these students. Their combination of both formal and informal educational formats make them ideal for adult learning" (p. 18). Tribal colleges are "one of the most effective ways to serve Native American educational needs" (Hill, 1992, p. 55). In fact, "they are meeting the unique educational needs of reservation American Indians better than existing institutions of higher education" (Oppelt, 1984, p. 41).

The high degree of success of tribal colleges can be attributed to the educational mission of the colleges which is directly responsive to the needs and interests of Native American students (Hill, 1992). Therefore, within these flexible and dynamic institutions, each student can enact such an approach to learning that will elicit the tribal college to be thoroughly accountable and responsive to student needs.

A profile of the typical Native American college student attending Montana's mainstream colleges indicated

that about 95% needed financial assistance to attend college, approximately 46% are older than 25 years of age (i.e., nontraditional), more than 51% are parents who are either married or single, 21% reside on campus, 22% travel 30 or more miles to campus, 57% live in the same town where the college is located, and a significant number of Indian freshman need remedial coursework in math and English (Wetsit-LaCounte, 1987, pp. 67-68). Many Montana tribal college students "are anxious to be considered 'real' college students" (Conti & Fellenz, 1991, p. 21). Many students are concerned with addressing needs outside of the college setting such as relationships (i.e., marital, family), home management, occupation, civic responsibility, developing leisure-time responsibilities, and parenthood (Havighurst, 1972). Many Indian college students must also relearn basic skills in situations where they have not performed any academic study since high school (Boyer, 1989). Similarly, a substantial number of tribal college students are married or single with children, and many plan to live and work on their home reservation (Tucker, 1979).

Clearly, the academic and non-academic needs are as diverse as the students themselves. The issues faced by Indian college students today are also found in the general American Indian and Alaska Native population. Some of the more pressing concerns are self-esteem, self-image, abuse and neglect, suicide, substance abuse, assessment, and,

community/school relations (Wetsit, 1994, p. 36).

In the future, tribal colleges will meet the needs of Indian reservations and students in terms of learning, research, and service at their own chosen level (Slater & O'Donnell, 1995, p. 41). Each tribal college must chart its own course. Each will face its own challenges given local circumstances and national policy decisions. Moreover, "three factors drive curricular, research, and service activities: tribal needs, instructional costs, and Indian student enrollment" (p. 41).

Learning Styles

Native Americans are members of tribes with extensive political and kinship systems. Therefore, as individuals they are accustomed to interaction within a group of persons where there is an established relationship (Deloria, Jr., 1991; Tafoya, 1989). This context is altered when students enter "schools that are either off-reservation, predominantly non-Native, or follow a Western pedagogy. In short, most public schools or universities in the United States rupture this cultural context" (Woods, 1995, p. 29).

Learning style describes "people's characteristic ways of information processing, feeling, and behaving in and toward learning situations" (Smith, 1982, p. 18). This concept of learning style suggests that there are differences among individual learners (Hill, 1992). Additionally, learning style deals with the effects of

immediate environment, emotional states and needs, societal needs, physiology, and psychological inclinations in the attempt to master new information or skills (Carbo, Dunn & Dunn, 1986). There is a linkage between learning styles and how and what is learned. "In reference to the Native American population, this subject is of particular relevance" (Woods, 1995, p. 26).

Regarding learning style, the process of thought involves affective, cognitive, and physiological factors (Smith & Renzulli, 1986). One common belief is that there are cognitive differences between Native Americans and non-Native Americans (Woods, 1995). These cognitive differences may relate to the process of perception and interpretation of the world for some Native Americans (Tafoya, 1989). The perceptual differences can be overcome when information is contextualized or presented in a way that students can relate to their own individual experience (Senneville, 1982).

For many Native Americans who attend mainstream institutions of higher learning, there is some evidence to suggest a general orientation towards a unique learning style. Western education is predominantly passive while indigenous education is active (Tierney, 1992). Conversely, there is no distinct learning style for Native American adults who attend tribal colleges (Conti & Fellenz, 1988b). In fact, the differences between individual learners, not

race, are more apt to determine learning style (p. 67).

"Native Americans are far from a homogenous group when it comes to learning styles" (Conti & Fellenz, 1991, p. 20).

Whether the focus is on learning style, context, or situational, there is some indication that Native American students like other adult learners fair better when their needs are acknowledged. These include the presentation of information that is related to student experiences outside of the classroom, a high level of peer learning in which cooperation is emphasized, and the degree to which information is context-related, and allowing sufficient time to respond to questions in the classroom (Woods, 1995, p. 29).

The interaction between teacher and learner is of peculiar interest. Tribal college students can easily identify characteristics of good and bad teachers (Conti & Fellenz, 1988a). Most notably is the respect given to students during the learning process.

The most commonly noted characteristic of good teachers is the respect which they show for the students as human beings. Regardless of the situation, good teachers always allow the students to maintain their dignity. The teachers are genuinely interested in the students and convey to them a sense that they are the important thing. "They ask your opinion" and find out about student's needs and questions. Understanding teachers create an atmosphere in which students are not afraid to talk about their concerns, problems, and deficiencies. (p. 96)

LBHC Student Issues

According to the prescribed standard for all higher education institutions eligible for accreditation, the general rule for measuring effectiveness is that "the mission and goals for the student services program are consistent with student needs and with the philosophy and mission of the institution" (Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, Accreditation Handbook, 1994, p. 77). More appropriately at LBHC, the accreditation standard is interpreted to mean that:

Student services are essential to the achievement of the educational goals of the institution and contribute to the cultural, social, ethical, intellectual, aesthetic, emotional and physical development of the students--the education of the whole student. An institution should have and express a continuing concern for the total welfare of each student, including his/her physical and mental health, development of capacities and talents, establishment of relationships with other persons, and motivation for progress in intellectual understanding. The institution should seek to know as much as possible about the background of its students and should keep this information current and appropriately confidential. (Little Big Horn College Self Study, 1995, p. IX-1)

In response to the accreditation standard, LBHC describes the goals of the student services area in a concise statement.

The Little Big Horn College is a higher education center of learning, a center that is more than courses taken, books read and degrees received. The campus is an environment where an educational experience takes place that includes interpersonal relationships with faculty members and fellow students and with student services personnel who understand their background, maintain information

and records confidential, and express a continuing concern for the well being and health of the whole student. (Little Big Horn College Self Study, 1995, p. IX-1)

To further develop their stated goals, the 1992 objectives were modified in 1994. Currently student services at LBHC organize and support efforts to:

Provide career and personal counseling and academic advising to meet the unique needs of the LBHC student body; recruit Crow Indian students through publications, school and community meetings and community contacts; assist the LBHC students in retention, promoting longer term and successful enrollment through improved attendance and participation in the LBHC learning environment; develop a learning environment that welcomes family situated and older students as well as younger students, through a broad based campus program of student initiated clubs and extracurricular events that emphasis student success, and; develop a learning environment that is safe and drug free to encourage student health and well being and in respect of the Crow Indian and American Indian student body. (Little Big Horn College Self Study, 1995, p. IX-1)

Almost naturally, these particular goals support the LBHC mission statement. Accordingly, this is the expectation of the accreditation review process. It is an internal device. On one hand, it demonstrates the commitment to serve students through programming. On the other, it reflects the ongoing development of the college. Unfortunately, as with many similar statements made for and by institutions, it is somewhat rhetorical--perhaps even sterile. It does not reflect the livelihood of the thriving campus. It does not address the specific nature of student achievement. It does not account for the subjective changes

that take place in the lives of the students.

Only recently has there been any substantive assessment of these goals from the perspective of the student at LBHC. For example, in 1995 an LBHC Survey of Students was completed to summarize profile information about students. The purpose of administering the survey was to inform the local reservation community about the student population currently attending LBHC. It effectively quantified statistical and demographic information about the student body. For example, the survey indicated that (a) 46% of the students were single, (b) 37% were married, (c) 15% were divorced, (d); 65% were unemployed, (e) 21% were employed full-time, (f) 14% were employed part-time, (g) approximately 45% were enrolled one-year or less at LBHC, (h) 25% were enrolled for one to two years, (i) less than 10% were enrolled for three to four years, and (j) a majority of students lived within 11 to 50 miles from the LBHC campus (p. IX-5, IX-6, IX-7).

More interestingly, there were a few items on the Survey of Students which pointed to data which could be considered naturalistic. However, an examination of this data reveals that the information is rated on a nominal scale and, therefore, not open-ended. Not surprisingly, when the 1995 study was conducted among the student population, a striking resemblance to the general tribal college profile was discovered. For example, at LBHC 68% of

the students are parents. Few have reliable, licensed, and insured vehicles for their own use; therefore, many are literally afoot (Little Big Horn College Self Study, 1995, p. IX-4).

Another set of data suggested the best indicators for attending LBHC. Ironically, the choices were limited to only three possibilities. These following reasons for students attending LBHC indicated that: (a) 56% of were interested in learning about Crow culture and language, (b) 45% for academic coursework, and (c) 43% indicated the affordable costs of tuition and attendance were appealing (p. IX-6). The results from these portions of the survey have prompted the need for more in-depth analysis of information about the students who attend LBHC in a contemporary setting.

Another set of information about LBHC students exists to promote the understanding of their learning and application of the tribal college experience. In respect to the orientation to the student service-related function, a survey questionnaire based on a survey instrument developed by the Carnegie Institute and the Tribal College Journal for all tribal colleges was administered in 1995. It was a comprehensive attempt to assess the level of student satisfaction with the tribal college. Once again, the results were limited by the design whereby a Likert-type scale was used to "rate" student satisfaction among a given

set of variables. For example, responses on items related to programmatic, academic self-improvement, general cultural and community factors, and the overall quality of the respective college were investigated (Little Big Horn College Self Study, 1995, p. IX-8, IX-9).

The office of student services at LBHC also conducts annual graduate follow-up surveys. The information generated from these surveys allow the institution to assess LBHC graduates and their subsequent activity in respect to transfer to a senior college and/or employment status (Little Big Horn College Self Study, 1995, p. IX-19). This type of research is limited to the assumptions that students will either continue their education, will immediately seek employment, or are unavailable for inquiry. "The college assesses outcomes to determine whether the LBHC mission is being attained" (p. I-4). Much of this evaluation process involves student performance on a quantifiable scale.

The types of information gathered at LBHC is not only necessary for determining needs and resources of students but also provides rich data that can enhance the ability of LBHC to be accountable to its learning community. It may serve as a protocol eventual decision making. It is also a valuable process to understanding the uniqueness of the student body.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Design

This descriptive study utilized a naturalistic case study design. "A descriptive study determines and reports the way things are. One common type of descriptive research involves assessing attitudes or opinions towards individuals, organizations, events, or procedures" (Gay, 1981, p. 12). The data from a descriptive study are typically "collected through a questionnaire survey, interviews, or observation" (p. 153). "Case study is one such research design that can be used to study a phenomenon systematically" (Merriam, 1988, p. 6). This form of research, often referred to as nonexperimental or descriptive, aims to examine events or phenomena (p. 7). "The case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis....The decision to focus on qualitative case studies stems from the fact that this design is chosen precisely because researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing" (p. 10).

"Certain trends of thought during the recent past have

shaped the policies and methods of research" (Guyette, 1983, p.xiii). Unfortunately, one of the trends has treated Indian people as mere subjects, and they rarely participated in the formulation of research inquiry. The approach often resulted in the members of a culture being regarded as "objects" of study (pp. xiii-xiv).

The Crow reservation is largely an Indian community. Naturally, Little Big Horn College (LBHC) serves Indian students from throughout the Crow community. These distinctive features along with the geography, location, culture, and history of the people associated with LBHC provide for a unique case study for research. "The concept of community-based research has its roots in the idea of self-determination. It is research, largely descriptive, that comes from within the community" (p. xvi).

This study employed semi-structured interviews of LBHC students. In respect to each student's own education, individual perceptions of the LBHC stated mission were sought. The nature of the questions asked of LBHC students were open-ended. This technique allowed flexibility in pursuing the research questions which were asked of each student.

A brief questionnaire was also used to identify basic demographic characteristics of LBHC students (see Appendix). The categories on the questionnaire included: Tribal affiliation, educational background, ability to use the Crow

language, age, current level of education, veteran status, and place of residence. Details from these questionnaires were converted into data to be analyzed by the researcher (Tuckman, 1972, p. 173). These questionnaires helped ascertain more about people's attitudes, beliefs, values, demographic facts, opinions, and ideas (McMillan & Shumacher, 1984, p. 160).

Sample

Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants for this study. With purposeful sampling, particular participants are chosen "because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p.67). "Purposeful sampling is used as a strategy when one wants to learn something and come to understand something about certain select cases without needing to generalize to all such cases" (Patton, 1980, p. 100). While several strategies are available for making decisions on whom to include in a purposeful sample, this study sought to include "typical" cases in the sample (pp. 101-102). Thus, 28 students were interviewed for this study. The 28 students sufficiently represented the wide range of characteristics among students at LBHC in that patterns in the responses to interview questions began to emerge. There was consistency in the responses to all five question areas. Those students represented the diverse elements in the LBHC student profile. This included

diversity in characteristics such as gender, bilingual vs. English-speaking, cultural familiarity, Crow vs. other Indian or non-Indian heritage, age, curricular area, geographical distance from LBHC, and educational background.

The sample includes three subgroups. The subgroups were composed of (a) students who attended during the spring quarter and the summer quarter, (b) students who had graduated from LBHC and who were working in the Crow and surrounding communities, (c) students who had graduated from LBHC and transferred to a four-year institution and/or had completed a four-year degree program. The use of these three subgroups represented the full strata of previous and current students from the Crow reservation. Also these three types of students all had academic and non-academic experiences associated directly with LBHC. There were significant numbers of people identified within each subgroup through a review of records and discussions with LBHC student services personnel.

Enrollment figures for LBHC during 1980 indicated that there were 102 students (Oppelt, 1990). Throughout the early 1980's, nearly all of the students at the college were Indian people, and about 98% of these were Crow (p. 65). The data for student enrollment from the Fall term of 1990 through 1994 showed an increase in total student counts of both Indian and non-Indian students. In the Fall of 1990, 276 students were registered at LBHC, and by the Fall of

1994, the number had risen to 362. "Over a five year period, this enrollment data indicated a 29% average [Indian Student Count] enrollment increase and a 31% Fall term enrollment increase" (Little Big Horn College Self Study, 1995, p. IX-18).

During the same five year span, between 93% and 97% of LBHC students were members from 11-15 different Indian tribal groups (Little Big Horn College Self Study, 1995, p. IX-19). Also, there have been more females than males attending LBHC with percentages ranging from 62% to 72% among full-time students and 64% to 78% among part-time students (p. IX-19). In 1990, 11% of LBHC students were 21 years-old or younger whereas 21% of the students were 21 years-old or younger in 1995 (p. IX-4). In addition, there have been approximately 194 students in the community who have graduated between 1980 and 1994 (Little Big Horn College Self Study, 1984, p. 124; 1990, p. IX-15; 1994, p. IX-21). These figures indicate the nature and diversity of students who attend LBHC.

From the larger set of previous and current students, 28 people were interviewed for this study. Of these, 16 students attended LBHC either during the spring, summer, or fall quarter of 1992; 7 graduated from LBHC and were working in the community; 4 were graduates who went on to four-year programs; and 1 was a former LBHC student who did not complete the two-year degree. The profile of the students

interviewed included: (a) 89% identified themselves as Crow tribal members, 7% were non-Indian, and 4% were from other Indian tribes; (b) ages ranged from 22 to 45 years old; (c) 75% had graduated from high school, and 25% received a high school equivalency diploma; (d) 85% had attended other post-secondary schools prior to attending LBHC, and 15% had begun LBHC without prior attendance at other schools; (e) major areas of study included: 36%--business, 25%--general studies, 14%--data processing, 7%--mathematics, 7%--science, 3%--art education, 3%--Crow Studies, 3%--psychology, 3%--printing vocational program, and 3%--bilingual education program (this includes those who were enrolled in more than one program of study); (f) 96% did not serve in the military services, and 4% were a veteran of military service; (g) 71% either spoke and/or understood Crow language while 29% did not speak or understand the Crow language; (h) 75% resided on the Crow reservation, and 25% lived in communities near the reservation; (i) 82% were female, and 18% were male; and (j) 57% were currently attending LBHC, 39% had graduated from LBHC, and 3% had been a former student of LBHC.

Interview Format

"Keeping the participants comfortable with the data collection is a most important consideration. Researchers working within their own cultures sometimes learn new aspects of cultural appropriateness in collecting data"

(Guyette, 1983, pp. 123-124). The interview format used in this case study was objective in that the researcher did not disturb the activities at LBHC or in the interview setting as they would naturally occur. Also, careful consideration was given to each student as an individual since "the role of the participants and the extent to which the participants desire to share the information are important aspects of maintaining a respect relationship during research" (p. 124).

Using a naturalistic approach, unstructured interviews were used. With this type of qualitative approach, the interviewer may discuss key issues in a conversational fashion and allows the participants a large degree of freedom in bringing up anything they may think relevant (Cohen & Manion, 1992, p. 307). The technique allows for the collection of data in greater depth. Additionally, these interviews create extensive opportunities for asking and the possibility of probing the participant for information (Tuckman, 1972, p. 188). With such an approach, the format is nonstandardized, and the interviewer does not seek normative responses (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, pp. 155-156). The "unstructured or 'elite' interview is concerned with the unique, the idiosyncratic, and the wholly individual viewpoint" (p. 156). The dialogue created by this process is somewhat conversational and non-threatening. This is an important point to consider when completing

research with Native American people since there is sometimes a reluctance to participate in research studies among some Native American who have been researched numerous times. This process gives students the opportunity for their voice to be heard while remaining anonymous.

The questions asked during the interviews were posed in such a manner that students could respond in any way or length they desired. "This search for meaning is a search for multiple realities, truths, and perceptions" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 157). The issue of generalizability of interview responses is more appropriately addressed through the applicability of responses. Since all the general conclusions are subject to change over time, working hypotheses cannot lead to conclusions (p. 103). The question is one of "fittingness" since the use of generalizations are assumed to be "context-free" (p. 103). The way in which a working hypothesis fits into a context other than the one from which it was derived depends on the reader (p. 103). The interview questions sought to uncover (a) how well LBHC addressed the cultural needs of the students through its stated mission, (b) why students attended LBHC, (c) what elements in the curricular/programmatic components addressed the educational needs in respect to the Crow heritage of students, (d) what were the psychological and sociological aspects of Crow students that affected their ability to pursue an education

at LBHC, and (e) how well did LBHC meet its stated objectives through the student empowerment model.

The interview questions were organized into five question areas. The questions were set up by providing each student a brief explanation about the nature of the question areas. The question format was designed to probe for student responses. The five question areas included:

(1) What level of understanding do you have of the Crow language and culture? Give examples of your participation in the cultural ways. With your current understanding of the Crow language and culture, describe how well the college is addressing your needs in respect to your understanding of the traditional Crow teachings, and how do you "measure" this aspect of the tribal college experience? What things are important from the stated mission?

(2) Briefly describe your past educational experience. What influenced you to attend LBHC and why? How do your previous experiences compare to the one at LBHC? While attending LBHC, how have you benefitted or suffered? By attending LBHC, how are you prepared to function in your world? How do you use the tribal college experience?

(3) Based on your needs and educational interests, how well has LBHC met those needs in terms of course offerings, sequence of course (as an appropriate time of year for tribal teachings), instructors, programs, resources, library, and facilities? How well has LBHC provided material and information that is relevant to the Crow culture and language as you understand it? What kinds of courses have you taken? Other activities? Any courses or materials not offered that you want(ed)?

(4) What "barriers" do you face (a) on the Crow reservation and (b) the world outside of the Crow reservation? Assume barriers as a challenge, are there ways in the Crow culture that can help face these challenges? Describe things that LBHC has done to help you deal with the challenges.

(5) Describe ways in which LBHC responds to the educational needs of the local community and local culture. Is the student heard in the planning, implementing, and evaluation process? If so, how have you witnessed this happen? What one thing would you like to tell to the college administrators, staff, board, or other personnel? What would you tell them about your experiences? What would you tell other students attending or thinking of attending LBHC?

Procedures

There are advantages as well as disadvantages in working with one's own culture. The knowledge that you already have can form a basis for defining a more in-depth problem or topic to document; where as, an outsider may need to take years to become familiar enough with the culture to define a meaningful topic. (Guyette, 1983, p. 126)

"Many tribes require approval of a research plan before the researcher is allowed within a community. Those who assist in a research project are often called 'participants' or 'consultants,' and may help formulate the research design" (p. xiv). The design of this case study included a protocol to create a balance of community interest in the research process. Therefore, a deliberate attempt was made to incorporate key people from the LBHC student services program, LBHC staff and faculty, and members of the Crow reservation community. Prior to selecting students for interviews, telephone conversations and preliminary meetings were held with LBHC personnel. These included Student Services Director, Henry Real Bird; Crow Studies Department Head, Dale Old Horn; LBHC staff members, Willie Stewart and

Fredrick Left Hand; and LBHC President Janine Pease-Pretty On Top. These conversations were important to enlighten the researcher about local customs, cultural nuances of students, and the social, religious, and political climate of LBHC. These people were also instrumental in identifying students who were representative of the three subgroups. Since the LBHC student services program maintains a follow-up and tracking system for all students, it was important to access the information since it allowed for a purposeful sampling process. The assistance of the LBHC registrar was sought in requesting lists of names of students in each category of current students and graduates. This resource also helped locate students in the community and on campus.

The open-ended interviews were the most appropriate research technique for this study. This approach required the researcher to "assess the participants' definition of social situations and recognize the images of selves contained in these definitions" (Braroe, 1988, p. 20). In order to be successful in assessing the interaction between the participants and the researcher, the researcher necessarily has to become accepted as part of the community rather than being an "outsider" (Lecompte & Goetz, 1982). The development of a trust relationship was important to this "acceptance cycle" (Braroe, 1988, p. 22). The cycle for acceptance by the community began when office visitations took place with LBHC faculty and staff. They

introduced me to students and gave information about their involvement with LBHC operations. I had also previously known several students at LBHC, and I visited with them. I went to lunch with the head of the Crow Studies, and much information about the reservation was given. I was given a tour of the Crow Agency by Willie Stewart. He told of the history of LBHC and pointed out all of the buildings from which LBHC had previously operated. I was taken aside by the adult education coordinator, Fredrick Left Hand, and he told of his background and involvement with Crow education. He offered to teach me the basics of speaking the Crow language.

Almost immediately, the curiosity about my being on the LBHC campus was noticeable. Many questions were asked of me, and I shared about myself and the reason I was on the campus. One of the graduates of LBHC who was working at LBHC introduced me to her husband, Jack Old Horn. Mr. Old Horn knew my family and indicated that we were distantly related. He invited me to his home for dinner. Part of the Crow tradition is to show hospitality, respect, and generosity to visitors. During the evening meal, I was told about local customs and the family and most significantly was adopted by Mr. Old Horn's family. He said, "When you visit us here, know that you have a home here and you will be a part of our family from now on" (J. Old Horn, personal communication, June, 1992). Information about the

traditional arrow throwing of the Crows was shared by Old Horn, an arrow-maker and competitor. I was taught how to throw the arrows in Mr. Old Horn's backyard. Later the same day, I was given a tour of the Little Big Horn Battlefield and told of the stories from the Crow perspective about the defeat of General George A. Custer by Jack Old Horn who was formerly a guide and staff at the battlefield. Thus, my involvement with students, faculty, staff, and community members enhanced my acceptance as a person who could be entrusted to discuss personal and social factors of students.

On-site interviews were scheduled and conducted at specific locations (both on and off campus). Approximately four or five interviews per day were completed. Interviews were conducted either in a private area without outside distractions on the LBHC campus or at locations desirable to the respondents. These included work sites in Hardin, Billings, and Crow Agency; the LBHC student lounge area; and in vacant LBHC classrooms and office spaces. Interviews were taped on a microcassette recorder. All interviews were kept confidential and anonymous, and taping was made with the permission of the respondent. Once the interviews were taped and fieldnotes completed, they were transcribed into a wordprocessing file under particular field names. The files were analyzed by sorting the categories under key terms. Patterns were searched for and were later used in the

narrative analysis of the study. This research technique was chosen to describe or explain events or phenomena; there was no manipulation of the participants, and efforts were made to characterize the students as they were (Merriam, 1988, p. 7).

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

Interviews were conducted with 28 students of Little Big Horn College (LBHC) regarding their individual experiences while attending LBHC and how those experiences were impacted by the tribal college mission. From these interviews, categorical information was established to delineate their perceptions of the overall institutional effectiveness. Those students who chose to attend LBHC represent a critical facet of the educational and social movement taking place on the Crow Reservation. Prior to the founding of LBHC, many adult learners from the reservation community did not fair well at other postsecondary schools. High attrition rates, institutional racism, the inability to meet learner needs and expectations, and cultural insensitivity were often observed at mainstream schools outside of the reservation. In response to those alarming conditions, LBHC launched a major enterprise to reverse the cycle of educational despair and began helping make a difference in people's lives. After 1978, those students who entered LBHC encountered people, resources, and a campus

climate that were not previously available to them. The interview data suggests that the responsiveness of LBHC has been and continues to be a major influence on the adult population on the Crow Reservation. In the process of gaining control of their own destiny, students are empowered in this special place where cultural heritage is acknowledged, self-esteem is boosted, and learner needs are being met.

Acknowledging the Crow Tradition

The essential mission of LBHC is to offer a general or transfer education, provide community service, afford vocational education opportunities, and offer a culturally-relevant learning experience. Each of these four parts are necessary for attaining institutional credibility. The combination of the four part mission is also important to keeping a sense of balance for the operations that take place at LBHC.

The number four is significant to the spiritual, cultural, tribal, and traditional aspect of many Indian people (Bopp, et al., 1984). For example, prayers are offered to the four cardinal directions; the four seasons are like expressions of change for the sacred Mother Earth; and there are four sacred colors of red, white, yellow, and black which symbolize the four races of human beings. The Crow maintain a belief in four basic gifts from the Great

Spirit which include the land, the water, fire, and air (Medicine Crow, 1996). The four parts of the individual include the spiritual, emotional, physical, and psychological self. The sense of balance is often sought in order to be healthy.

The respect for Crow culture and tradition is important to many people from the reservation community. A great deal of individual pride accompanies that respect. Several of the students interviewed commented on their cultural identity and shared why it is helpful to reaffirm that aspect of who they are. A majority of students felt that adhering to cultural practices and tradition was a necessary part of their individual identity. The maintenance of language, customs, and family ties was an integral part of their own understanding of cultural continuity. Further, many students felt that the mere preservation of culture was not enough. Instead the perpetuation of the culture through language usage and honoring traditions were cited as part of their tribal identity. For example, Francis, a 28-year-old Crow student lamented:

I speak Crow and feel it is important to speak and teach Crow. The clan system is important because they're there for various reasons mostly to teach discipline. A lot of parents are not passing along the Crow ways. The white man's religion is breaking up the tradition of the Crow. Students need to take classes on Crow culture since about one-third of LBHC students don't know the values of Crow culture and why it exists. Respect is important. I feel rich for having the Crow culture in my life because I know who I am and where I came from and what I'm going to do. I'm

not materialistic. I got good health and a good home. I am happy.

Another 22-year-old student, Wendy, remembers a statement made by Crow Chief Medicine Crow that "the blood of our ancestors are mixed with this land" and "that is why it's important to keep alive the old ways, the culture; it shows respect of elders and of the way of Crow life." Clarice, 22, was "trying to learn about culture and language for a long time" even though she was a Crow and knew "about Crow politics and religion." She felt that "through study there is a great emphasis on building up Crow pride and Indian pride." Regarding the whole issue of tribal identity, a 24-year-old male Crow felt that "there's more to being Crow than just saying you're Crow. My father said to go out and ask questions and utilize resources wherever you could find them."

The issue of existing in a bilingual and bicultural world was also important for students. Many students have an understanding of dual identity. The issue of living in two worlds was expressed quite succinctly by a 35-year-old female Crow student when she stated, "Crow language and culture was encouraged all my life, but you have to live in a bicultural world." Another young female said that "keeping traditions, colors, and language alive was important, as was remembering traditional stories, because I was taught old ways can serve as a bridge between pre-reservation days to today's world." A third female summed

up the issue quite well when she said, "In order to survive you need to be educated like the white man."

Being able to speak the Crow Language is another aspect of cultural identity worth considering. The presence of the spoken language is of particular interest for some. Even though she was a 40-year-old Crow, Norma had "taken a Crow language class and wanted to learn more." For Arnold, a 40-year-old Crow, "learning the language was something that would help me and something I was encouraged to do."

Another student, Carrie who is a 28-year-old Crow, felt that even though her first language was Crow, she "wanted to help Crow and others by setting an example" simply by conversing in Crow. For others like Sarah, a 32-year-old non-Indian, she was just beginning "to learn Crow ways" although she knew a few things about the Crow language. A 40-year-old Crow student, Irma, was also working in the community and noticed the culture everywhere. She was "not brought up with traditional ways but could speak some Crow. I've learned some, and though it's slow involvement, I'm making the effort." For Ginny, a 27-year-old Crow, "learning the Crow language is helpful and really good since I have forgotten some words, and learning about the language is good for Crow people."

Through deeper questioning, students were asked to assess elements of the Crow culture and the connection, if any, to the mission of LBHC. The cultural integrity as

stated in the LBHC mission is measured through the learning experience of students. Many of the students attend LBHC specifically because their cultural identity is acknowledged. The courses offered through Crow studies proved to be a major factor for infusing culture into the curriculum. Linda, a 28-year-old Crow, said, "All students are required to take Crow language courses. Many lectures are in Crow, unless there is a significant number of non-speakers." Similarly, Mary, a 37-year-old Crow, mused that "language class advanced the Crow way of life; language class showed how words changed." For Darlene, a 37-year-old Crow, "Crow studies enhanced my understanding even though some information was taken for granted." As a 35-year-old Crow, Stephanie indicated that "classes in Crow studies are important to me since I don't speak the language." To Karen, a 24-year-old non-Indian, "language diversity helps you make the cognitive transition and understanding." A 24-year-old male Crow liked the fact that LBHC "offers language classes and Crow dance class." Another 33-year-old male Crow reflected that it is "important to hold on to culture and to learn about Crow ways through classes." For a 28-year-old female, "Crow studies taught about old ways and created assignments so I learned about old style Crow language."

While many students liked the idea of including culturally-relevant coursework, some even made suggestions

for improving the classes. For example, Jamie, a 36-year-old Crow, felt that "classes do include information about culture to meet needs, but classes such as English and math inhibit understanding culture [while] history and government promote the understanding of two worlds." Shirley, a 40-year-old Crow, thought that "classes offer a variety of language and culture but could do a little more. Elders need to be brought in more to be involved in classes." Erin, a 28-year-old Crow, believes that "there's a lot more that could be done like involve more clan functions and activities; there needs to be more integration of culture into school such as guest presentations."

Some of the people who help deliver the Crow element of the mission statement included instructors, tutors, and staff of LBHC. This was evident in a variety of ways. For instance, Kathy, a 28-year-old Yakima, believed that LBHC "advanced interest in language mostly because instructors help understanding like knowing about gender language." Crow studies faculty are crucial to helping students develop a positive feeling toward cultural studies.

Dale Old Horn, was very helpful, especially in helping me understand social systems and clan systems. (Stephanie, 35, Crow)

The Crow language instructor and class were really great. (George, 27, Crow)

Crow language and culture was encouraged by some teachers, and the tutors helped Crow speakers. I had one non-Crow speaker, but he was Crow. Only one instructor was not Crow. (Sherry, 35, Crow)

The extracurricular component of the LBHC experience for students also included culture. "At graduation they played a warriors entry song instead of pomp and circumstance. There were also prayers, ceremonies, and singing all in the Crow way" (Linda, 28, Crow). LBHC has honored the Crow tradition through events such as "the end of the year pow wow and the Native American fashion show. There were opportunities for the Indian Club to be very active. Even the staff was willing to help with cultural activities. Prayers are said at student gatherings" (Tom, 24, Crow). "Noon-hour get togethers included Crow singing" (George, 27, Crow). Yet some think that "there needs to be more Indian music and dancing during the noon hour" (Erin, 28, Crow). "LBHC is promoting the Crow way. People are willing to share information about upcoming cultural activities like at assemblies and classrooms. They get whites and others to understand and respect the strength of tradition more" (Sarah, 32, non-Indian). Others liked that "LBHC participates in hand game tournaments" (Ginny, 27, Crow).

Finally, some students had a very broad interpretation of the mission statement. At the heart of this is "Plenty Coups' statement about education [which] is something to live and strive for" (Jeff, 24, Crow). To some, it is clear that the "Crow language and culture is encouraged, and it is important to maintain" (Clarence, 22 Crow). On a

similar note, "tribal colleges serve as a conduit for preserving culture" (Wendy, 22, Crow) because "culture is very relevant among LBHC students. The college is an extension or reflection of community" (Lori, 28, Crow).

Naturally, some of the students were influenced by ideas that are more philosophical in nature. For example, the belief exists that "some old one's don't want the young ones to practice white education because they want to keep old ways" (Darlene, 37, Crow). Yet, in this educational process LBHC "helped understanding of two worlds like breaking down superstitions" (Marjie, 45, Crow). Overall, "LBHC has reinforced self-esteem and identity as an Indian" (Erin, 28, Crow).

The College of Choice

The general population of American Indians and Alaska Natives is the fastest growing ethnic minority group in the nation. The population on the Crow reservation is also increasing. The diversity of students who attended LBHC was apparent through the demographic profile. The college enrollment among full-time students is steadily rising each academic year. Relative to these conditions, students are consciously choosing to attend LBHC for their own personal and academic reasons.

Most of the students interviewed did not have pleasant educational experiences before attending LBHC. Low self-

esteem, uncertainty about college, lack of a support system, and other demands on life attributed to their relatively negative experience. A common pattern among many of the students was that of returning to the Crow community and starting at LBHC after attending another school. Just as with so many students before the beginning of the tribal college movement, they experienced failure at these schools. Students shared their previous attempts in schools other than LBHC in ways such as:

I graduated from St. Labre high school and attended MSU but didn't like it. (Irma, 40, Crow)

I worked at the University of Montana School of Journalism. I tried going to school there but experienced culture shock while attending such a large school. (Wendy, 22, Crow)

I attended EMC [Eastern Montana College] but had some problems like being shunned aside and got no help....There was too much prejudice, so I quit. (Francis, 28, Crow)

My family supported education. My grandmother said, "The best years are when you're in school." I attended St. Labre boarding school and MSU but failed. (George, 27, Crow)

These examples illustrate some of the painful reflections among students as they attempted to attend mainstream institutions. The examples also exemplify the fact that students saw themselves as a failure before coming to LBHC.

Several students also shared their uncertainties for attending college. They expressed the lack of educational goals or of general disinterest. Similarly, the sense of commitment to their own education before attending LBHC was

not clear for some.

I graduated from Lodge Grass and attended EMC because it was there. I didn't get through it though. (Jamie, 36, Crow)

I attended MSU but wasn't serious. (Mary, 37, Crow)

I had an erratic educational experience [especially in high school]. I attended Catholic boarding school and graduated from high school. After that I went to several schools for 7 years straight. (Erin, 28, Crow)

I graduated from Hardin high but was not committed to learning. I guess I had different values. I thought about going on to college but really had no intention mostly because other people expected it. I attended Sheridan College but didn't finish. (Natalie, 23, Crow)

I attended Miles Community College for awhile and then went to the armed services. I came back and attended LBHC, and then attended EMC. (Shirley, 40, Crow)

Some of the students had responsibilities and changes in their personal and family situation which eventually hindered their ability to finish their education at schools away from the Crow Reservation. Financial reasons and the need to increase job-related skills for employment were cited as reasons for stopping out. For example,

I graduated from Hardin and went right to the University of Montana. My older siblings and parents helped with school and encouraged me, but I had to quit because of financial reasons and values conflict. (Karen, 24, non-Indian)

I graduated from high school from Hardin and dealt with prejudice there. I attended one year at UM [University of Montana] right from high school and got married while there and had a child so I stopped out then tried UM again. I still didn't complete anything so I went to MSU. (Linda, 28, Crow)

I attended EMC and then worked at tribal programs. I needed a better job but needed a better education to get a better job. (Darlene, 37, Crow)

There was evidence to suggest that students specifically chose to attend LBHC because it was appealing to them as individuals. The indication was that LBHC was reaching potential students through various means. For instance, one student recalled that "immediately after high school I went to college at MSU but came back because of hearing about LBHC" (Michael, 33, Crow). Another student shared that "the majority of education was in white schools. I graduated from Billings Senior High then tried EMC but slacked off until coming to LBHC" (Sarah, 32, non-Indian). Both of these examples represent the personal alignment of educational goals with the available opportunities found at LBHC. Instead of being driven out of higher education, LBHC provided a safety net for their return to school.

The educational backgrounds of students often played a role in helping them decide to attend LBHC. There was evidence of a strong orientation and interest for learning for several individuals. The foundation for this orientation and interest involved family encouragement, attitude towards learning, and success with previous experiences such as high school. In one case:

After graduating from Lodge Grass, I wanted to learn about printing as a vocation so I went to Haskell. My mother pushed kids to graduate and supported education since she wanted her children to receive benefits they were entitled to [from

programs]. In fact my mother fought many battles with whites and others to support education. I observed my mother and realized the kind of involvement needed. As an adult I worked through the Parent Advisory Committee [of Head Start] and believe in the use of local resources and experts. In 1981 I served as a school board member and later taught ABE/GED along with some vocational areas [printing]. I saw a need to save language and culture because a person can lose identity if those are lost. I had a concern for youth and their future. I even attended Eastern Montana College for awhile. (Jeff, 24, Crow)

Another student who had already earned a bachelors degree was curiously interested in learning about Indian people. She "attended a college in Wisconsin to study Indians but did not find the specific coursework I wanted to be available" (Clarice, 22, Crow). Another was eager to learn but wanted to be "close to home and family;" after talking to friends and people from a local college, she was "told that the transfer process would be good if credits would work out" and if she could find a two-year college that would be appropriate for her needs (Stephanie, 35, Crow).

Others had experiences that helped them realize the importance of an education. For example, Ginny, a 27-year-old Crow, "got a GED with some struggle" and wanted to continue her education after working for awhile. Similarly, Kathy, a 27-year-old Yakima, "got a GED and was interested in trying to succeed at college." Norma, a 40-year-old Crow, "graduated from Hardin in 1989 and then attended May Technical College in Billings" for awhile before moving to

Iowa for employment. She eventually came back home to pursue a higher education to increase her "chances of getting a better job."

With a more direct question concerning why students chose LBHC as the school to attend, student responses varied among personal reasons, adult responsibilities, the influence of other people, the opportunity to transfer to another school after finishing at LBHC, and the location. The responses in these categories revealed a wide range of needs and aspirations. Once again, the diversity of students was reflected in the responses given to the directness of the question.

Almost overwhelmingly, students were motivated to attend LBHC because of personal reasons. The responses capture the essence of the tribal college experience. For example:

I liked the fact that we are not graded at LBHC and just wanted to look at my own self. The college helped me prepare psychologically and get my foot in the door. I wanted to make a transition to another school, and besides I wasn't doing anything else. My parents helped me realize that. (Natalie, 23, Crow)

It boosts self-esteem, and it's like a big family here. (Tina, 25, Crow)

Moving to the reservation influenced me, and I wanted to take full advantage of LBHC offerings. You see at EMC you're a stranger and can't build any relationships. You're among strangers. At LBHC you can have a relationship with everyone; you get that personal feeling. (Sarah, 32, non-Indian)

I chose LBHC because it was closer to family and

got a second chance. The size wasn't too big, and there was more help. There was a realization about the importance of school which was a kind of intrinsic motivation to get boosted. (Karen, 24, non-Indian)

There were job-related factors which influenced adults to attend LBHC. In several cases, students were either previously or currently working, and the issue of improved skills became apparent. The impact of LBHC in helping students become more competent in the workforce was demonstrated by the following statements:

I needed the credits to get a better job.
(Sherry, 35, Crow)

I got married and started here. I was tired of my job and knew there were many benefits here.
(Michael, 33, Crow)

I worked for the tribe and attended LBHC at the same time since they gave release time for education. (George, 27, Crow)

Some of the changes in people's lives also impacted their needs. Taking on the responsibilities of an adult played a large role for some in making the decision to attend LBHC. Shirley, a 40-year-old Crow, "had financial problems elsewhere." It helped when she "received a scholarship at LBHC." Also Erin, a 28-year-old Crow, "had changes in life [like getting married and having children] which helped me realize myself and my responsibilities." A combination of life changes and personal changes impacted some students. For example:

I had parent responsibilities and other difficulties at other schools so I came to LBHC. The university in Missoula was too far away from

home. I did well there academically but was not comfortable because there were no other Indians. At LBHC I did well, and I know most students and could help other students. I never knew I could do math until I came here. This boosted my morale and was encouraging. I was a role model, and other students looked up to me. The entire experience was a high. Janine was very influential, and I followed her [she was my role model]. When I left, I was prepared. The experience gave me the confidence to do the things I did. (Linda, 28, Crow)

My personal life changed. My husband left, and I had dependent children. I had to do something, and LBHC was the place to help. (Darlene, 37, Crow)

My personal situation influenced me to attend. I had a family, and my cousin encouraged me because life here was better compared to outside the reservation. (Wendy, 22, Crow)

The influence of other people was a powerful force in the lives of students who chose to attend LBHC. People such as family, faculty, staff, and friends were helpful for students deciding to select LBHC as the place to be. The staff and faculty at LBHC made a considerable impression on the students. Their visibility made the selection process much more possible. For example:

I started here because of my cousins. They wanted me to go on to a four year school, but I needed preparation. Also a death in the family influenced me....I attended LBHC because I wasn't doing anything else, and my mother-in-law is an instructor and inspired me to attend. She always said that it was totally different from high school and other systems where there are no Indians. LBHC gives you a place to fit in. (Lori, 28, Crow)

I heard there were dedicated teachers and local experts there. Education is a long-term process. The college made a web into the community, especially after candidacy and accreditation.

(Jeff, 24, Crow)

I needed a different career so I went to see if I could continue on with my education. One LBHC staff influenced me when he said, "They can't take education away from you." (Marjie, 45, Crow)

LBHC was more suitable for my needs, and I was interested in some of the classes. There are Indians here, and at other schools there's no Indian teachers at other schools. (Irma, 40, Crow)

I chose LBHC school because I was tired of being categorized. So one staff influenced me to attend, and he helped me grow from shyness to seeking help. (Francis, 28, Crow)

The family and friends of students also influenced student decisions to attend. This was typically in an informal manner. In some cases, friends and family served as a good support mechanism. To illustrate:

My family encouraged me to attend because they knew I wanted education to better myself. (Jamie, 36, Crow)

My wife encouraged me to attend, and she thought it would be a good experience. I also needed more skills to get a better job. (Michael, 33, Crow)

My mother encouraged me to attend, and once I did I made the honor roll. (Mary, 37, Crow)

My children encouraged me, and I recognized my own ability that I can do it. (Ginny, 27, Crow)

There was an interest by some students to go on to other four year colleges and universities. The potential to transfer was an attractive feature about the LBHC experience. Norma, a 40-year-old Crow, wanted "to eventually transfer to MSU in Bozeman, and the LBHC mathematics courses were a major influence for to

attending." For Kathy, a 28-year-old Yakima, "this is the first school I wanted to attend so that there could be a transfer of credits. I was able to set goals to transfer, and two instructors from another campus encouraged me to pursue an education." Others, like Clarence, a 22-year-old Crow, needed the courses at LBHC for "college preparation to a four-year school."

The location of LBHC was yet another consideration for students. The proximity to their homes and communities were cited as being important. For instance, I "began in the spring of 1987 at LBHC because it was right there close to home. It was different because Crow was spoken, and that was kind of neat" (Arnold, 40, Crow).

Meeting Student Needs

Students at LBHC have a diverse set of learning needs. The academic challenge is purposely part of the mission of virtually every tribal college. There are several attributes found at LBHC which are instrumental in helping meet the academic needs of students. The list of attributes include people, courses, facilities, program resources, incentives, and atmosphere.

The most prevalent helpful resource to students is other people. The teaching faculty serve as the bedrock for assisting students with their academic work. Student responses included statements like:

Instructors were helpful and provided hands on experiences even though they lacked teaching materials. This can serve as an example. (Wendy, 22, Crow)

The teacher encouraged students and gave individual attention. Their personal contact and attention prepared students for further education. (Arnold, 40, Crow)

LBHC teachers are good. (Marjie, 45, Crow)

It is a close-knit place. The instructors made time for me and gave little pressure. They gave alternatives. (Natalie, 23, Crow)

Instructors offered one-on-one discussion. I got to know instructors. (Mary, 37, Crow)

My advisor is encouraging. They try to help you in any way they can. (Ginny, 27, Crow)

The staff and administrators also helped meet the needs of the students. These LBHC personnel proved to be a key resource and a support network for students. The Director of Student Services even commented, "If it weren't for students, we would have no purpose and probably no job here at LBHC" (H. Real Bird, personal communication, June, 1992). A similar sentiment was shared by some students: Office helpers assisted and even helped as tutors. (Darlene, 37, Crow)

LBHC is willing to help anyone who wants to learn. Even the president is being visible and helps with class projects. A family wants you if you want them. Good fellow students. (Tina, 25, Crow)

So many people have helped especially with financial aid; they look out for students. (Erin, 28, Crow)

Counseling is available. Personnel is the key; they take care of students. Everybody knows each other. (Clarice, 22, Crow)

They support students, and there were good people

who cared. (Michael, 33, Crow)

LBHC recognizes students, cares about and appreciates students. Many are willing to do something for students. (Jamie, 36, Crow)

Everyone had a concern for students and our future. They want to make a better life for the family and are willing to share knowledge and encourage other people. (Kathy, 28, Yakima)

The impact that students have on one another also was an important component of the communication process. They made themselves available to help each other. It was evident that students had an awareness of their role in carrying out the college mission. For example, one student noticed that "the student network is very strong" (Lori, 28, Crow). Similarly, another student commented on the responsibilities of the student. She said, "LBHC gives you chances, yet some students abuse chances. Students need to learn. LBHC is tutoring some students, and 98% are there to learn" (Carrie, 28, Crow).

Another significant part of LBHC's ability to meet students academic needs is the courses offered and the nature of the courses. This is reflected in various ways. For example, Norma, a 40-year-old Crow, thought "study habits at four-year schools are too fast; LBHC is tailored to students pace." Tina, a 25-year-old Crow, indicated, "I like the assignments because it makes me feel different about learning. It's not just exams and stuff." Also, Shirley, a 40-year-old Crow, shared that "courses were adequate and available."

However, several comments were more critical. Tom, a 24-year-old Crow said, "The sequence of courses were not always good, but I suppose they do what they can and at least they've met my needs." Ginny, a 27-year-old Crow, felt the "classes offered are adequate, but summer school needs to be continued. It helps students." Finally, Marjie, a 45-year-old Crow said, "LBHC is real; it has a place in my life, and I take it seriously. But they need to offer aerobics and more variety like bowling, volleyball, or sports activities or something fun."

The facilities and campus resources were also helpful in addressing the needs of students. Francis, a 28-year-old Crow student, indicated, "LBHC helped me deal with financial problems, parenting skills, and child care. I understood that there is hope at the end of the road after sacrifices are made. I became a better person. I learned self-discipline, got more self-esteem, and self-direction." Linda, a 28-year-old Crow, agreed when she expressed that "they did well in meeting my educational needs. I was prepared. The archives and library had many books used by other larger libraries." One student, Stephanie, a 35-year-old Crow, noted the progress of LBHC over time. "The physical facilities made it difficult and things were different when I was going to school here, but they've come a long way."

The students often made more general statements about

the college and its academic surrounding. Some of the examples include:

They meet my needs. I got to build up the friendships. I did set goals and reached them and reached higher than I thought. (Sarah, 32, non-Indian)

They try to recruit and help through remediation and developmental studies. The size is small enough. It was based on learning and not on grades. I think it is a very caring place. (Clarice, 22, Crow)

They help more than giving grades and are willing to do something for students. I received a scholarship for tutoring and helping GED students. (Jamie, 36, Crow)

I was able to continue working towards a degree in a timely schedule. This college exposes students to expectations in a college situation. It would have helped by attending here first. I also like some extracurricular activities. (Irma, 40, Crow)

Whatever takes place at LBHC now will filter down into the younger generation. The financial problems exist for students who go away from the reservation, but here everybody wants to help [compared to MSU]. (Jeff, 24, Crow)

Barriers to Learning

The findings of this study also include the perspective of the student in respect to their individual obstacles and societal challenges. Most importantly the analysis of this category suggests that students at LBHC are faced with various constraints that are experienced in the learning process and in adulthood. The psychological barriers are separated from the sociological barriers in the educational context of each individual.

Some of the more typical responses concerning the psychological or personal obstacles were openly voiced by students. One of the common themes frequently espoused had to do with fear. That is, fear of the unknown, fear of failure, fear of consequences, and emotional concerns caused by the perception of insecure, personal situations. The collective issues are characterized by the following statements:

I have a great fear of failure. There are lots of challenges because of unfamiliarity with college.
(Lori, 28, Crow)

I'm just glad that I came here early. I did go through some culture clash because I'm not Indian, but I feel very welcome here. (Clarice, 22, non-Indian)

I made many sacrifices to attend college. Being a half breed makes it harder here, and other Indian students look at me differently. I keep having to break down the stereotypes. It seems like I'm having to constantly prove that minority students can break the mold. We're not as bad as we're looked at, but this also takes place at other four-year schools and in the job force. (Norma, 40, Crow)

I have this great fear of failure. I think I procrastinate too much. Maybe I need to be more aggressive and assertive, especially as a new student. (Karen, 24, Non-Indian)

I took a public-speaking class. It helped promote ideas of facing obstacles, and it dealt with my own insecurities. I was challenged to better myself. (Arnold, 40, Crow)

There are fears about being around people like in speaking, maybe its cultural things. I also get lonesome from being around strange people. It gets me confused with classes. (Jamie, 36, Crow)

I really get frustrated because I feel helpless.
(Tina, 25, Crow)

It's something personal, but I am not out to prove anything. It makes it hard sometimes. (Natalie, 23, Crow)

I have a fear of failure. It has to do with career choice concerns and obligations and uncertainty. (Irma, 40, Crow)

There's this one instructor who I don't like. Plus my son's health problems make me worry. (Darlene, 37, Crow)

Some of the students had problems balancing the challenges of school work and the patience to finish everything on time. One student shared the concern by saying, "I get stressed out for taking too many credits. Sometimes there's no balance, and there are some personal challenges" (Erin, 28, Crow). Another student had a "fear [of] not getting all of my credits. I keep wanting to get things over and finish school" (Ginny, 27, Crow). Another student expressed that the amount of work could be a hindrance. She said, "I get overloaded and fear not being able to balance things" (Sarah, 32, non-Indian).

The issue of being bilingual also posed a problem for some students. More specifically, there were some difficulties with instruction in one language and the interpretation into another language. The student had to work a little harder to address these language barriers. For example, one student shared that "being raised with Crow and English language is difficult. I made personal sacrifices so the stress of having to achieve can be a challenge" (Marjie, 45, Crow). Similarly, another student

recalled that "I kept wanting to quit the first year. I got worried about fast-paced teaching and had problems with some teachers [translating Crow to English]" (Carrie, 28, Crow). In another case, the student was concerned about her ability to do the work in school. She said, "I have language barriers and self-doubts along with some more personal obstacles" (Shirley, 40, Crow).

The findings concerning sociological constraints are similar in that they are evident among not only the students but also among many of those in the community. The economic and employment situation, not having adequate transportation, and having family and adult responsibilities characterize the case for some students. While these types of constraints affected students, a small number found the conditions to be more of a burden. Many also realized these constraints were faced by a majority of the reservation community and not just among students who attend LBHC. For several, having adequate child care was a problem.

I have funding problems, need child care, and have some transportation problems. (Wendy, 22, Crow)

I'm a single parent and have to live month to month. I have to decide if I want child care with family versus daycare at the agency. There's no child care for evenings. (Marjie, 45, Crow)

I can't seem to get good child care. (Stephanie, 35, Crow)

The parental responsibilities and other aspects of living everyday life can be a barrier. (Clarence, 22, Crow)

The family responsibilities beyond child care alone

also posed a burden on some students. The extended family structure proved to be a source of strength as well as an obligation to students. These issues varied depending on the level of family involvement in the educational process for the student. For example:

There are family and domestic responsibilities, and some families play a role in that and some don't. (Erin, 28, Crow)

I have a big family. I have a lot of responsibilities. (Lori, 28, Crow)

Indian time, family responsibilities, some financial problems. I got friends who are party friends. (Karen, 24, Non-Indian)

There are social barriers to being a single parent. I have a supportive family. I also have financial problems. Luckily, I know there is a support system I can use. (Linda, 28, Crow)

My husband likes me to be home and with the family and not in school, but I get a lot of encouragement from friends and instructors. (Sarah, 32, Non-Indian)

I was cut off welfare for attending school because of the way the system worked. I've been raising three kids; they suffered; they sacrificed. Sometimes the needs of the kids were more important than mine. Many college students face similar obstacles. (Francis, 28, Crow)

My kids need attention, and I have parental responsibilities and obligations. Also there are money problems and financial obligations. (Irma, 40, Crow)

The problems associated with having proper transportation to and from school limited the ability of some to attend LBHC. Many students had to make sacrifices and improvise. Remarkably, their needs to attend college outweighed the lack of transportation. For example:

Transportation can be a problem, and only sometimes financial arrangements can be made. I try to find some people willing to help. (Tom, 24, Crow)

The physical distance from home is a problem. (Michael, 33, Crow)

It's the transportation problems for some. They deal with weather and distance from school, financial problems, child care problems, lack of individuality, and family responsibilities. (Shirley, 40, Crow)

I had transportation problems until my parents helped out. My family encourages me, but I still have financial problems. (Tina, 25, Crow)

Another concern voiced by students had to do with financial obligations and living on a fixed income. The ability to manage a given budget is a factor that influences a student's ability to attend LBHC. Since many of the LBHC receive financial aid, there is a funding formula for students which is based on an assumed student and/or family contribution (i. e., a financial resource) to cover any unmet financial need to attend college. Also, the formula only takes into account the minimum financial needs of the student while attending college. Many students were able to set their own parameters to deal with the financial situation, but some had greater difficulty. For example, one student said that "I have too many financial burdens. I need employment, and it gets harder to find an administrative job if you don't have the job requirements" (Mary, 37, Crow). Another student stated that "it's mostly financial problems for me" (Norma, 40, Crow).

Other societal constraints impacted students as they viewed themselves within the larger reservation context. There was an added pressure to succeed through education and overcome some of the sociological obstacles. The socio-economic conditions of the reservation and the lifestyle associated with those conditions influenced the students decisions to pursue their education. For example:

It's knowing I can't live my own life on the reservation because there's a lack of work. But I know it's like that outside the reservation, and I've seen street people, ghettos, and poor Indian people. (Sherry, 35, Crow)

Seeing conditions on the reservation are tough. (Kathy, 28, Yakima)

Partying and peer pressure from friends became a challenge, not a barrier. (Natalie, 23, Crow)

The Measure of Success

The final area of student perception concerned the overall effectiveness of LBHC for its students. The role of LBHC through its stated mission is significant in the relationship between institution and student. It is through this mission that the college, theoretically, has tried to supply a quality educational opportunity in response to the demands of its students. The student voices clearly indicate there is an attempt by LBHC to include the students in planning and delivery of services, programming, and resource management.

Through direct questioning, students responded to the

fundamental idea of being heard by the faculty, staff, and administration of LBHC. Their individual experiences with the college have been positive for the most part. Many students were aware of the most efficient channels of communication. The students who accessed these channels had positive experiences which reinforced their ability to be heard. They also felt their feelings, concerns, interests, and self-concepts were respected by people associated with the college. Examples of their overall perceptions follow.

Students are listened to. An example is students using groups. They can be heard individually or in groups. But I think some new professors should take classes to be informed so they could work with others. (Sarah, 32, non-Indian)

Yes they've heard me through student council and at other meetings I attended. (Ginny, 27, Crow)

I knew with the degree I would be able to get higher paying jobs and learned not to take things for granted. Everyone can benefit from LBHC, and they're helpful to all students. There are question and answer sessions held by some teachers. The student is heard. I was given a second chance at LBHC, and it was a good atmosphere to learn and receive help and resources. I had a good opportunity to go for goals and accomplishments. There are friendly relations, a relaxed environment, and it is helpful. (Francis, 28, Crow)

Students were heard. I didn't get involved too much. I think students were allowed just about anywhere, and people were friendly to them. (Mary, 37, Crow)

In the traditional ways of the Crow, it is respectful to allow people to fully speak about what is on their mind without interruption. There is a great deal of trust in the spoken word. In situations where there are several people

involved, cooperation is stressed and each person is given an equal chance to be heard (e.g., through talking circles and round table discussions). There were some students who witnessed this respect as a reaffirmation of their Crow value orientation.

Yes, LBHC integrates Crow ways. Even white instructors understand Crow ways and appreciate them. The student voice is heard. You can go to the president directly. We also use quality circles and feedback is given from meetings to students. (Darlene, 37, Crow)

Yes, my opinion was considered. They tried to include Crow ways. Anybody could probably take it to the top [all the way to tribal council] if they had to. There was good interaction among instructors. (Jamie, 36, Crow)

Yes, I was heard. Even though there were so few students in the early days, more and more were being encouraged to speak up at Indian Club meetings. The college is gradually doing what it set out to do. Students are able to talk to students and teachers. There was information passed word along to others through one to one contact. (Arnold, 40, Crow)

Through early childhood education everybody here tries to use Crow ways. The student is recognized and student involvement is always needed. (Michael, 33, Crow)

I believe the college is trying to integrate Crow culture into everything. Crow language is spoken everywhere; you can't disregard it. There are a lot of positive aspects. Yes, student voice is heard. An example is student government is active. The college is responsive and is supported 100% by students. We involve them in what we're doing instead of the other way around. (Tom, 24, Crow)

There was a general, satisfactory agreement among students about being heard at LBHC. This was experienced in a variety of ways. In cases where students were encouraged

or inspired to speak about their needs, some felt there were limitations on the degree to which they were being heard. They were not only able to offer constructive criticisms about the opportunities to communicate their needs, but they were also willing to suggest improvements to the communication system which would foster a resounding, longer-term voice. The evidence also clearly indicates that students wanted to be heard even more. Some had noticed certain attempts to integrate the student in planning and implementing activities. There were some mixed feelings as well.

LBHC is trying its best to meet the needs of students, but that needs to be backed up or measured. The available opportunities need to be shared more. (George, 27, Crow)

To a certain extent students are heard. I think the student body hasn't yet challenged faculty and administration. I guess we're not big enough to make bad waves [partly because of values]. Some assertiveness needs to be demonstrated on both sides. I know the college is not always responsive to student needs because they're too short-handed and they give too many jobs for one person to handle. (Lori, 28, Crow)

Students can be heard, but it might be superficial. I think they appreciate hard work, which is good. I know they want to give something back to the student or community. (Kathy, 28, Yakima)

The college still has a long way to go in meeting its mission. The student could be incorporated a lot more. Everybody is too busy to focus on cultural activities, but maybe this needs to be student-initiated to get culture into the college. I think it's important to keep other aspects of mission also a priority. The involvement depends on the individual student and student groups who want to be heard. Year to year things are

different. Students are generally involved in the entire process because the structure is set up to serve the student. However, there's no advisor to student congress. They need to have clearly defined tasks to help students directly. An example would be to have an advisor on student rights, placement, or transfer [liaison between other schools]--perhaps have another person to do this or a new position. Academically, this is a good school, but it needs improvement on culture and other things. (Linda, 28, Crow)

Students need to be heard more. Students should have to initiate their input. Sometimes it's only a certain, select group that is heard. Something needs to be developed like to have people be their own selves. The college needs to communicate with others yet be patient. Student council needs to be more responsive rather than just attend meetings and make announcements. The students need to work with the administration and need to challenge the administration and approach the college board. Maybe they could get the whole student body together to talk on issues. We need to communicate among students. (Jeff, 24, Crow)

The college needs to create more options. Students are listened to but not acted upon. Students could join together since there is strength in numbers. I've talked to LBHC personnel about one incident, but more collaboration needs to take place and resolved. LBHC is paying more attention to students. They look at us as fellow human beings trying to accomplish goals in life and not just students. My experiences have been productive. (Norma, 40, Crow)

They've somewhat followed their mission. I don't know if they've integrated it as much as they've made people think though. (Erin, 28, Crow)

Yes, they've done pretty good, but they need to keep working on it. They need to make priorities. The college listened, but not enough action was taken. (Natalie, 23, Crow)

There were some students who felt their voice was not heard at LBHC. Depending on the time of attendance at LBHC, there was evidence to suggest that some students were not

being effectively listened to, that they were not vocal and active enough, or that some communication barrier existed. Nonetheless, students adamantly responded to this area of questioning because their experiences included instances of communication deficits at LBHC.

The college did do a lot of good things in following its mission, but the student voice wasn't heard when I attended. Many students were on welfare back then, and students were not heard when getting into school or keeping welfare which is really unfair. This eventually changed. (Stephanie, 35, Crow)

The college faculty and board made decisions; students were not heard. This was primarily because of the development of the school. Students have to have a say. Back then, students were given some opportunities but would have had to voice the need. The needs and student population were small enough to do it one to one. Communication is important, and students need to understand their role. (Wendy, 22, Crow)

I'd like to see more teachers familiar with Crow way of life because the student voice is not heard. Maybe it has to do with money. There needs to be more student participation. It may have to do some with culture, like being passivity. Too many students don't talk and hold back. Students can be involved. (Karen, 24, Non-Indian)

The student voice is not heard through the student groups. Although a student council was formed, no meetings were held. We need more student organizations. (Marjie, 45, Crow)

The college should invite elders in more. They should try to follow the culture as much as possible. The students were not heard at the time I was there, but it's a little better now. They need to open more doors and need work with other agencies and other community groups. (Shirley, 40, Crow)

The evidence from students suggest there are varying

levels of participation in their own education. There is a wide range of experiences for students, both positive and negative, at LBHC. Those experiences also reflect the changes that have taken place over time at LBHC.

Some students realized that the initiative to be heard had to come from themselves. Viewed as a responsibility, it is part of the communication process important to students. Not surprisingly, the process of being involved in this communication exchange is a choice that students can make, as indicated by the following remarks:

It's up to the individual, but mostly the student voice is heard. (Tina, 25, Crow)

LBHC listens to the student, but you have to ask. You can just blend in also. Its up to you. (Clarence, 22, Crow)

The mission statement is followed. The student voice is being heard. We can put our opinion slip in a comment box at the end of each quarter. (Carrie, 28, Crow)

Students are heard when they want to speak up; it's up to them. Most know how to get help and who to go to. I learned a lot. (Irma, 40, Crow)

The growth in the student population and the institutional growth have clearly worked together in a complementary fashion to bring about change and responsiveness to needs as expressed by students.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Study

This case study involved tribal college students and the institutional mission of Little Big Horn College (LBHC). This critical investigation examined the level of institutional effectiveness of LBHC in meeting its students' needs through the tribal college educational experience. Previous attempts to examine the manifestations of a successful tribal college student have typically been conducted through an ex post facto analysis of quantifiable data. The past research paradigms have seldom considered the student viewpoint.

The purpose of this study was to elicit student perceptions of the LBHC mission by examining the experiences of students with the Crow culture and language at the college, the value placed on their own education by the students, the degree to which LBHC's programming meets the needs of each student, the psychological and sociological barriers to education, and the ways in which opportunities are provided through the college mission. The purpose was accomplished through the testimony of LBHC adult learners.

This testimony was collected with a great deal of respect towards students' individual needs, opinions, and educational and social experiences. In this light, the proper method for collecting critical information about each student was the semi-structured interview. This process was an effective means to examine the student perceptions of the LBHC stated mission. These perspectives revealed a comprehensive example of the interaction between student and institution among the people of the Crow Reservation. The overall effectiveness of LBHC is promulgated by its students in their desire to take charge of their own lives.

This study investigated five categories regarding the student perception of the LBHC mission. The first area examined the ability of LBHC to address the cultural needs and awareness of the students. The testimony of students clearly indicated that LBHC is acknowledging the cultural and tribal identity of its students.

The second area of investigation in this study assessed the reasons why students attend LBHC. Students know that LBHC is a place where resources are available through services, programming, courses, and people.

The third question area examined the curricular and programmatic components that affect students and the relevance of cultural sensitivity at LBHC. The college has been successful in offering coursework and student services that challenge the students academically.

The fourth question area addressed the psychological and sociological issues for students and the ways in which those factors affect student experiences at LBHC. The results showed that LBHC students were facing challenges similar to those of other adult learners with the same type of socio-economic background.

The final area of investigation ascertained LBHC's effectiveness with students through the college mission. The findings from this study clearly reveal that a special relationship exists between LBHC and its students. The college is providing a culturally-relevant learning experience. The college is accessible to its students and community. It is meeting the needs of people on the Crow Reservation better than any other institution of higher education. It is empowering its students to overcome barriers to learning. It is also creating opportunities to empower people.

In recognition of traditional Native American culture, cosmology, philosophy, and worldview, the concept of four is not only symbolic of respect but is also representative of a holistic way of learning. The number four is used throughout this study to impart the knowledge gained from such in-depth research. Additionally, the number four serves as a reference point in the organization and explanation of the conclusions and recommendations of this study.

Cultural ContinuityConclusions

1. The Crow Culture and language are acknowledged at LBHC.
2. The cultural identity of LBHC students is recognized.
3. LBHC provides a culturally-relevant learning experience for its students.
4. People at LBHC are helping one another to perpetuate and promote the traditional Crow teachings as well as the understanding of the non-Indian worldview.

It is clear that LBHC has made significant progress toward achieving the purposes and objectives for which it was established. It has addressed the problem of access for many people on the Crow Reservation by providing a genuine community-based, post-secondary educational opportunity, thus strengthening the quality of individual and community life. This thriving educational institution is uniquely Crow. The Crow culture is prevalent nearly everywhere in the college. LBHC is a place where bilingual and bicultural people can pursue their education and not have to renounce their heritage. The traditions, history, language, and culture of the Crow people are intact at LBHC. There is a mutual exchange between student and school whereby cultural continuity and integrity are maintained.

Without the students, there would be no mechanism to evaluate the overall mission. The value and relationship of students to this mission must be understood. Any assessment

of the college mission would not be complete unless it considers the voice of the student. The history, growth, and development of LBHC have contributed to a better understanding of the function, status, and image of other tribal colleges in Montana and perhaps the nation.

Recommendations

It is recommended that LBHC continue to reaffirm the cultural and tribal identity of the Crow people. In the Crow tradition, it is vital to recognize, honor, and respect each other. The process of reaffirming heritage and identity must be ongoing. The college must also be able to honor students without exploiting them. It should be remembered that students are human beings and should be trusted and treated as such. The college should always offer students a place to feel proud and dignified while being able to promote tolerance of individual differences. Students should be encouraged to learn about Indian and non-Indian cultural values. This can be accomplished by promoting the idea that students can be a part of two worlds while they attend LBHC. Such an approach can strengthen the opportunities for creating and maintaining a sense of balance. The application of this dual idea is a responsibility of the individual student. It is possible for Indian students to use skills acquired from the majority culture to support basic elements of traditional tribal culture.

It is also recommended that LBHC continue to acknowledge the concept of family, community, and tribal ways of life. This cannot be overstated. Communities need to acknowledge their own identities and reaffirm their traditions. Members of the community are responsible for perpetuating and promoting Crow lifeways. The social, economic, and educational realities on the Crow reservation need to be matched against LBHC's attempt to be responsive to the people living there. This may lead to criticisms which the college should be willing to accept since it is essentially a community institution. The college is a catalyst for change, but the people of the community are the real agents of change. The tendency of many small, young tribal colleges is to be responsive to every community whim. This may eventually lead to institutional failure. Therefore, LBHC should be cautioned not to function on a defensive mode. If the goal is to help people solve their own problems, then the college simply has to provide them resources, knowledge, and incentives to do so.

For cultural continuity, LBHC needs to continue building its community image. Even though the tribal resolution and charter are sanctioned by the Crow Central Education Commission, LBHC should continue strengthening a public relations program to raise the awareness among grassroots citizens of the mission, services, resources, and accomplishments of the college. This could strengthen the

local support and serve as a goodwill gesture.

LBHC should also continue building bridges between the students and the world outside of the Crow Reservation. The involvement of key people from within the college and from institutions outside the college is crucial. Students must create and maintain the communication networks with the referral and assistance of LBHC personnel. Opportunities should be publicized and promoted from within the college sources.

Adequacy of LBHC

Conclusions

1. Students attend LBHC for many different reasons.
2. LBHC is accessible to students and community.
3. Students feel welcome for the first time in an educational institution while attending LBHC.
4. LBHC provides students with a variety of positive experiences which enhance their self-esteem and pride.

LBHC has an important role in maintaining institutional stability in the community. The students found LBHC to be a place for building basic skills and confidence and for enhancing self-esteem. It is an accessible institution and one that accommodates the needs of students. The college helps prepare students for transferring to senior, four-year colleges and universities.

Recommendations

It is recommended that LBHC utilize the information from students' reasons for choosing to attend to continually enhance recruitment and retention efforts. Also, the information already being gathered from Student Satisfaction Surveys and Graduate Follow-up Surveys can be combined to provide a quality experience for those people wishing to attend the college.

Another recommendation in this area is to blend information from student choice to completely understand the demographic profile of the student body. Current enrollment figures indicate that over 60% of the Indian students in higher education in Montana are attending tribal colleges at the seven reservations. As one of the leaders in the growth pattern, LBHC needs to prepare for the growing number of students entering its own system. There is evidence to support the concept that there is a second generation of students entering the tribal college. This will become even more apparent in the near future. The tribal college movement will continue.

The recommendation for LBHC to sustain its image as a place that welcomes students is crucial. The open door policy of the college and its faculty and staff will be the determining factor in maintaining this image. It is further recommended that LBHC find ways to include family members of students and members of the community. For example, holding

meetings which include elders and children will help students develop a stronger sense of ownership in the institution. LBHC must continue to advertise its open meetings and extracurricular activities so that people are aware of the involvement of their college in their community.

It is evident that LBHC is enhancing the self-esteem of its students. However, this should not be taken for granted. Periodic assessment of the ways in which self-image and self-esteem are acknowledged can provide valuable information about the students as individuals. The college should challenge its students to meet their own educational goals and expectations. Also, clear expectations of students should be promoted by LBHC.

Student Needs

Conclusions

1. There are diverse learning needs among LBHC students.
2. There are diverse adult learners at LBHC.
3. LBHC is successful in meeting the needs of its students through course work and student services.
4. LBHC offers a challenging and competent educational experience for its students.

The experiences of the students in this study provide testimony to the high degree of satisfaction with LBHC meeting the academic needs of students. There are numerous

opportunities to learn and meaningful applications to real life abound for this component of the LBHC mission. In respect to the general or transfer education, the vocational education interests, and the service to the community, LBHC has been successful in meeting the needs of its adult population.

Recommendations

Many of the LBHC faculty have noticed that there are exceptionally intelligent students coming to LBHC who demonstrate aptitudes and abilities beyond the level of coursework and offerings at LBHC. It is recommended that LBHC develop ways to challenge those types of students. This might include offering advanced courses and community service projects that would encourage them. The college could also create opportunities for these students to engage in major research endeavors and laboratory work.

For those students who are attending LBHC for reasons other than obtaining a degree, a support network could be established through accessing technology such as telecommunications and computers. This can be done within a cultural context such as learning about language and tribal histories via the Internet.

It is reasonable to provide services and programs that will assist students in improving their self-image and in helping prepare them for employment. Most importantly, LBHC must be aware of its own abilities and resources to provide

programming and services. The knowledge base that already exists at LBHC from its previous experiences can serve as a guide in its offerings. This can be accomplished by maximizing resources and acknowledging limitations.

The recommendation for curricular and programmatic planning is for LBHC to emulate the ideas of excellence and opportunity for its students and members of the community. It is not enough to maintain an open door policy. Instead the college has to make large-scale attempts to be visible in the community. The college needs to continuously develop trust and offer programming at learning centers throughout the reservation as an extension of the mission. This might include making more home visits and improving coordination with Adult Basic Education services and campus-based programs. Existing community resources are available to provide more public transportation, child care, housing, and employment (e.g., college work study, on-the-job-training, and summer employment) to offset the costs of education. A practical approach to meet the needs of students in the area of programming might involve students. Students could negotiate with LBHC programs and representatives to provide work in return for child care, tuition, or transportation. Student groups could be formed to share responsibilities such as car pooling and rotating child care in each others homes. This could be done through study groups.

It is essential to continue building partnerships with

other community and tribal programs. This will help foster responsiveness and develop the concept of a campus without walls. An important point to consider has been offered by Verna Fowler, tribal college president of the College of Menominee Nation in Wisconsin. She said, "Tribal colleges are different from other institutions of higher learning because we don't find ways to keep people out of our schools (e.g., entrance exams, minimum test scores, grade point averages). We try to find ways to get people in" (V. Fowler, personal communication, March, 1995).

It is also recommended that LBHC continue to build articulation agreements with other institutions of higher learning. Since many of the students attend LBHC in preparation for transfer, it is important to examine ways which will enhance the transition process. It is also in the best interest for LBHC to encourage students to continue their education after finishing at LBHC. The college might offer incentives such as relocation scholarships or summer employment. Similarly, providing career fairs and inviting representatives from other schools should be a part of the open door policy.

Conversely, LBHC must pay close attention to its competing schools (e.g., four-year colleges and universities). There has long been a history of college recruiters coming to the reservation and drawing aspiring students away from their homes, families, and culture. In

many cases, those students return home without completing their college degree as shown by the testimony of several students in this study. Institutions outside of the reservation have long taken advantage of Indian people and communities. It is time to reverse that. It is time to stop the brain drain from the reservation. LBHC needs to do more of its own recruiting through high school visits and encouraging current students to recruit for them. The college also needs to accommodate the non-Indian market share of students. Many students in this group may be eager to go to a school which offers the type of educational environment which LBHC offers. Just as many Indian students have benefitted from this educational environment which reflects the values of the Crow culture, many non-Indian students could benefit from the experience.

Student Barriers

Conclusions

1. Students at LBHC face the same constraints as other adult learners at other tribal colleges and some mainstream institutions of higher education.
2. Tribal and/or culture specific conditions do not impede learning at LBHC.
3. There are opportunities for students to integrate traditional Crow practices and teachings to overcome barriers to learning.
4. Students identify and access the LBHC campus resources to help address their perceived barriers to learning.

Some of the psychological issues LBHC students have confronted include the fear of failing, the fear of succeeding, frustration, stress, uncertainty, being bilingual, peer pressure, emotional stability, anxiety, "balance" of life, and self-doubt. The sociological issues for LBHC include transportation problems, financial burdens, concern for adequate child care, the influence of other people, family and domestic obligations, and socio-economic conditions. Although the students expressed concern for these personal circumstances, they were able to negotiate between these issues and their learning needs. Many of the students believed these issues were either temporary or situational. Factors associated with academic performance and personal adjustment of Indian students in postsecondary education have implications for further research. Thus far, the most pertinent factors related to student background include cultural factors, socio-economic status, and academic preparation (Brown, 1981). Perhaps most importantly, students realized there were options and resources available to them while attending LBHC.

It is noteworthy to mention that through the analysis of information in this category, there was no evidence to suggest tribal and/or cultural specific variables which would impede learning at LBHC. In other words, there was nothing unique to the Crow lifeway that would hinder the psychological or sociological construct of the individual in

respect to the educational process in effect at LBHC. To the contrary, there was some indication of traditional Crow teachings that might serve to enhance the ability to manage most constraints faced by the individual, group, or community. The worldview and philosophy of the Crow people include ways to seek "balance" through the spiritual ideology and the "seven sources" of power. In addition, tribal traditions have been maintained through devices such as storytelling, the oral tradition, a matrilineal clan system, a patrilocal clan orientation and patriarchal warrior society (an extended family support structure), religious societies and practices (e.g., Sun Dance, sweat lodge ceremonies, and Tobacco Society), and a high retention of the Crow language among tribal members. It is imperative for educators to realize the many factors related to culture which affect the achievement and performance of adult learners. This is especially true of many Indian people who embrace traditional values and a strong orientation towards family and community responsibilities, cooperative rather than competitive societies, respect for the sacred circle of life, humility, and a sense of humor.

Similarly, the students at LBHC are in many cases like other adult learners who attend tribal and mainstream colleges. More accurately, the kinds of issues and constraints faced by students at LBHC are commonly found among students of similar social, cultural, and economic

background. One of the most salient features about adult learners at tribal colleges is that there is no Native American learning style, but students value a learning environment where they are treated like human beings (Conti & Fellenz, 1988a). This study focused on student perceptions at LBHC. Therefore, it is that context which is most applicable to this analysis.

Recommendations

The primary recommendation for LBHC students is to communicate their issues. Education can be a liberating force or it can be an oppressing one (Friere, 1970). Students need to continually reaffirm a proactive approach to learning. The true essence of self-determination can only be realized through human empowerment and the willingness to take charge over individual affairs. Students at LBHC should be encouraged to use critical inquiry in all phases of their learning experience.

The perpetuation of the Crow language and culture must also be promoted by students. No doubt, there is a strong relationship between language and culture. "In learning native languages we begin to view our world differently; we learn respect for all forms of life and we learn and understand that culture and language are intimately linked" (Cornelius, 1994, p. 149). Also, minority groups that maintain a strong sense of pride in their own language and culture or who have not internalized mixed feelings about

their culture and the dominant group tend not to experience school failure (Ogbu, 1978). Therefore, students should strive to keep the oral tradition alive through the educational process at LBHC.

Listening to the Student

Conclusions

1. The student voice is heard at LBHC.
2. Student must assert themselves both as individuals and in groups to be heard.
3. A special relationship exists between LBHC and its students in carrying out the mission of LBHC.
4. LBHC is helping people to help themselves.

The intent of including this category was to derive a more substantive understanding of the role LBHC has in impacting student and community change. The analysis of student responses uncovered a distinctive relationship between the college as a whole and the commitment level of students to realize the overall goal of self-determination. While there is a diverse representation of students involved in this study, it is obvious that the college is making a difference in the lives of people on the Crow Reservation. The programming, services, and people associated with LBHC are guided by the mission of the college and make a culturally appropriate institution available to students and community members. Beyond any previous attempts to measure the student perception of the tribal college mission, the

results from this aspect of the case study support the notion of the student voice being heard. However, the data also suggests that the student perspective must not be taken for granted. During the first 12 years of official recognition as a tribal college, LBHC experienced growing pains through the process of accreditation. Likewise, there were mixed feelings from students about the operations of LBHC.

In the broader context of American Indian higher education, LBHC has established itself as a vanguard institution in the broader tribal college movement to enact social and educational change. The college has received accolades for its political lobbying at the national, regional, and state level. The college has also been acclaimed for its assistance to organizations such as the American Indian College Fund, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, the Montana Committee for American Indian Higher Education, and the Montana Indian Education Association. In short, LBHC has received institutional attention from sources outside its own reservation community. The college has demonstrated its institutional commitment to serve a unique student population.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this category unanimously prompt LBHC to focus on its students as leaders and forbearers of the future. This first recommendation

involves the ongoing process of confronting a historical legacy of ignorance about Indian adult learners. The college must continue dismantling the Indian student deficit model and build the self-actualization model. This task can be accomplished by working with students, community members, and individuals who are part of the larger society. Institutions are only as effective as the people associated with them. Therefore, care should be taken to avoid superimposing any degree of control over the affairs of LBHC from external sources. In addition, the college should consider the student perspective which can serve to amplify what is being perceived from their individual and collective point of view.

The other recommendation that follows the initiative to focus on the student coincides with the previous recommendation for students to communicate. That is, LBHC needs to continue to listen to its students, to encourage involvement of its students, and to foster the growth of a place which imbues opportunity. These efforts can be coordinated through student organizations like the Indian Club, the LBHC chapter of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society, and LBHC Student Senate. Students should be encouraged to attend AIHEC conferences and competitions. It may also be feasible to conduct periodic student recognition and appraisal occasions where community and family are invited. The college may also want to

consider appropriating funds from its discretionary budget to assist students in organizing an annual student working retreat which is similar to a staff and faculty retreat commonly endorsed by tribal colleges. If funds are not immediately available, the college might help students secure financial resources through grant writing, fundraising, and seeking community sponsorships.

The recommendation for LBHC to meet individual needs includes the effort for all college personnel to constantly build a sense responsibility and self-esteem among students. This can be accomplished through classroom activities, promoting communication and support networks, and role modeling. An example of this type of attention might necessitate communication through writing and submitting articles for publication in sources such as the Tribal College Student and local newspapers. By virtue of attending LBHC, Indian students are role models to the entire community. It would be to the advantage of LBHC and the students themselves to serve as ambassadors and recruiters for LBHC. With some training provided by LBHC student services, this type of collaboration could have far-reaching, positive effects.

Another example of sponsoring student efforts to be heard is through the spoken media. It is not beyond reason to provide resources and expertise for establishing a student radio station. The technology is available to LBHC

for pursuing such a project. LBHC may want to consider appropriating the necessary facilities for this enterprise. The college might also offer vocational programs and courses (e.g., journalism and mass media communication). Internal support might come through the Chickadee Lodge Institute for microbusiness leadership project. Additionally, students could solicit local support and community partnerships.

The final recommendation for LBHC is to continue delivering a quality educational experience to its students. Education for Indian students should empower them to become full participants in their community. The contents of their education should provide them the full array of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for participation as politically active, culturally viable, and economically prosperous citizens (Garcia & Ahler cited in Reyhner, 1992). Indian people have traditionally learned through a process of observation, from one another, and by being participatory. It is important for LBHC to always remember that aspect of its community. LBHC has already demonstrated this commitment through its mission. Therefore, LBHC should build on the warrior tradition of its people and help them survive in a modern world. Ultimately, students will be afforded the opportunity to lead their individual lives in directions they desire.

In the 1960's the national movement for civil rights profoundly changed the racial and moral fiber of this

country. The statement from disenfranchised communities emulated the mindset of "we shall overcome." In a similar view, many American Indian communities instilled "we shall endure." Both of these ideologies reflected a struggle for social justice during turbulent times. The past two decades have been an era of emerging self-determination. There have been new beginnings of Indian solutions to the socio-economic problems at hand. Indians are now experiencing changes in their educational opportunities and institutions. The Indian population is the fastest growing ethnic minority population the country. There will be Indians here in the future. However, it is uncertain how much of their culture will remain. Little Big Horn College has been realizing new solutions and innovations to meeting the needs of its people while retaining tribal tradition. The Crow culture is well intact, for now and LBHC is playing a vital role in perpetuating and promoting it. Because of institutions like LBHC, the future holds a vision of hope for Indian people.

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APPENDIX

Student Data Sheet

Tribal Affiliation(s): _____

Age: _____

High School graduate or G.E.D. certificate? (circle one)

Did you attend a boarding school? _____

If so, did you complete high school at that school? _____

Have you attended any other school or training beyond high school (other than Little Big Horn College)? _____

If so, where? _____

What is/was your main area of study at Little Big Horn College?

Are you a veteran? _____

Are you a Crow speaker? _____

Do you reside on the Crow Reservation? _____

What community do you live in? _____

