

AN APSÁALOOKE VIEW FOR  
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

by

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my grandmother, *Ama*, Gloria Goes Ahead-Cummins and to all the *Apsáalooke* people before me, who through sacrifice and prayer ensured our survival and wellbeing. It is also dedicated and to all the *Apsáalooke* who will continue to love and care about our people and do the same for future generations.

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## ABSTRACT

There have been many calls for Native American communities to be given more self-determination in the education of their children. Yet despite these calls for allowing Native American parents to be included in the education of their children this is not happening (Bird, Lee and Lopez, 2013). In this study the researcher utilizes an Indigenous research methodology adhering the cultural protocols of the Apsáalooke nation and building upon the 4 R's, which are respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). This research allowed *Apsáalooke* tribal members, identified through the protocols of the *Ashammaliixiia* to voice their perspective and expectations for school leaders who serve students in their communities. There were formal interviews, informal visits and personal communications. The research questions that guided this study are:

1. What kind of behavior and actions do *Apsáalooke* tribal members expect from school leaders such as principals and superintendents serving their students?
2. How can school leaders work well with parents and leaders in the *Apsáalooke* community?
3. What do *Apsáalooke* tribal members want school leaders to know and be aware of in the education of the children of the tribe?

From the research four salient themes emerged which are:

1. A leaders first job is to learn;
2. Lead through relationships;
3. Crows take education seriously;
4. The preservation of *Apsáalooke* identity and culture.

Seventeen tribal members participated in the study. From the study the researcher found that leaders need to respect the community and build authentic relationships within it by being present and connected to the community. Lead the school with those relationships within the informal leadership model in the community in a more flattened model based on the respect of and the character possessed by influential leaders, rather than a hierarchical one, as well as defend those relationships. Understand the *Apsáalooke* want their student to achieve academically and help parents to support their students in this and hire and retain quality teachers. Support the preservation and perpetuation of the *Apsáalooke* way of life.

## CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

Background and Definitions

There have been many calls for Native American communities to be given more self-determination in the education of their children. The 1929 Meriam report brought national attention to the horrible treatment and forced assimilation of American Indian Children. The 1969 Kennedy Report found that Native Americans were participating minimally in the planning and development of educational programs and in 1990 the Native American Languages Act protected the right of American Indian students to speak their language in public schools. Similarly, the report, Indian Nations at Risk (1991) recommended schools show parents how to become involved in their children's education. The Board of Education in Montana stated that they support the concept of self-determination for Native Americans and it encourages the involvement of tribes in education programs (2001). In a study by the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (2008), a recommendation for more studies was given concerning Native Americans and parental involvement. And most recently the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 calls for the recruitment and retention of Native American teachers, the revitalization of Indigenous languages and cultures in schools, for greater tribal sovereignty and self-determination for American Indians Education in education and authentic community and family engagement. Yet rather than give the oversight responsibility to tribes, ESSA shifts this responsibility to the states (Mackey (2017)).

Karen Cockrell (1992) found that there are perceived communication barriers between Native American communities and schools and wrote that, “Native American people must be actively engaged in the identification of educational problems and the search for solutions. Their voices and their stories must be heard, recorded and analyzed,” (p. 65). Despite all of these calls to involve Native Americans in their students education, Bird, Lee and Lopez (2013) found that although school leaders are legally bound to have stronger parental involvement in schools, parents are formally included but limited in what they can actually do; and that sometimes American Indian staff members are hired to fill token positions in order to keep the status quo rather than allow the parental voices of Native American students to be heard thus maintaining the marginalization of their views and voices while simultaneously adhering to the letter of the law by seeming to allow for parental committees. Hearings required by law may be held throughout the year but follow on Native American parental concerns is rare. I have seen this personally where school systems will hold hearings to fulfil legal obligations of the law or form a parent committee, but never act upon or take parental concerns seriously or giving the committee any authentic authority, often times dismissing legitimate concerns as mere grumblings and murmurings, all the while receiving federal funds for educating Native American students.

American society is dominated by cultural and philosophical perspectives that are European in origin. As a result, other perspectives, such as Indigenous perspectives are rarely or never considered in administering societal institutions such as education and in the practice of educational leadership. Many holding the dominant societal perspective

seem to assume that they know what is best for Native Americans and their children. In the history of Indian Education, Grande (2004) wrote that education has continually been used to, “reinvent Native American people in the likeness of white people.” (p. vii). Deloria and Wildcat (2001) pointed out that, “the thing that has always been missing from Indian education, and is still missing today, is Indians” (p.152). How can we learn what a community expects from school leaders if we assume we already know and continue to operate out of dominant societies unchecked assumptions of superiority that it knows what is best for Native Americans students and children? Tuhuwai-Smith (2012) wrote that people misunderstood her work as a work of anger. Like Tuhuwai-Smith, I want to state that although there are some uncomfortable historical facts within this work, this is a work of passion and not one of anger.

### Problem Statement

Research demonstrates that there is a positive correlation between effective school leadership and a school’s success (Marzano, 2009). Within Indigenous communities Indigenous models of leadership are found to exist and are utilized for leadership practice (Henderson, Ruff & Carjuzaa, 2016). Yet, although these Indigenous leadership models exist, dominant Western models of education and education leadership have been forced upon American Indian communities for decades with no success (Barnhardt, 2015).

Most school leaders in American Indian communities are what could be called socio-cultural imports (Foster & Goddard, 2002) that serve in communities vastly different from areas of their own upbringing. In these situations many times principals

can be caught between hegemonic legislation of the dominant class and the hopes and aspirations of marginalized and oppressed peoples (Goddard & Foster, 2002). Although there is literature that discusses the influence of school leadership upon a school and its importance, there is a lack of documentation on Native American concepts of leadership (Munson, 2007). Furthermore, there is a lack of studies specifically examining school leadership and American Indian schools.

Bird, Lee & Lopez (2013) wrote that it is important for understanding the traditional Indigenous views of leadership in Native American communities and schools, or to understand the expectations that Native American students and parents have of teachers and administrative leaders. It is important to understand leadership from dominant leadership perspectives as well as the Native American perspective (Munson, 2007). Hallinger and Leithwood (1996) wrote that, “Most published theory and empirical research in [educational] administration assumes that leadership is being exercised in a Western cultural context” (p.100). Grint and Warner (2006) pointed out that leadership practiced in Native American communities is often overlooked.

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to explore the expectations that the *Apsáalooke* community in Montana has for the school leaders who work within their communities and who lead the schools that educate their children. Outcomes from this study can be used to guide and inform both current and future school leadership, such as school

boards, superintendents, principals, and community leaders in the vicinity of the Crow Indian Reservation and other similar Native American schools and leaders.

### Research Questions

Information was sought from *Apsáalooke* community members regarding their expectations for school leaders such as school principals and superintendents who serve their students. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What kind of behavior and actions do *Apsáalooke* tribal members expect from school leaders such as principals and superintendents serving their students?
2. How can school leaders work well with parents and leaders in the *Apsáalooke* community?
3. What do *Apsáalooke* tribal members want school leaders to know and be aware of in the education of the children of the tribe?

### Methodology Overview

The methodology that this study will utilize is an Indigenous Research Methodology building upon the 4 R's written about by Kirkness and Barnhardt's (1991) which are respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility. The Indigenous methodology will also practice these 4 R's for research by accessing and working within the cultural protocols of the *Apsáalooke* Nations *Ashammaliaxxiia*, or Crow Clan System.

### Conceptual Lens

Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) and an Indigenous Worldview: 4 R's make up the theoretical framework of this study. TribalCrit provides a theoretical lens

for addressing issues Native American communities are currently facing such as language loss, language revitalization efforts, low graduation rates, relevant teacher training and other educational inequities such as overrepresentation of Native American students in special education programs (Brayboy, 2005; Dei, 1997). As a theoretical lens it has explanatory power to describe the life experiences of indigenous tribal peoples (Brayboy, 2005). Battiste (2000) explained how within hegemonic social structures, or schools, “Indigenous students have been subjected to multiple forms of cognitive imperialism within colonial educational systems that have destroyed and distorted their Indigenous ways of life, histories, identities, cultures, and languages” (p. 193).

The other lens that is of particular and crucial relevance to this research, and that is congruous to TribCrit theory and to the research topic, is an Indigenous worldview that is described by various Indigenous researchers. The concepts, practices and values that make up the core of an Indigenous worldview are intertwined, interdependent and often overlapping. Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) wrote about four concepts, or core values, of an Indigenous worldview which they called the four R’s in their breakthrough higher education article concerning Indigenous students. The four R’s are respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility.

### Limitations

This study was limited to enrolled members of the *Apsáalooke* nation who are closely related by clan and kinship, individuals who are members through adoption and are respected in the community as well as individuals recommended as potential people

of interest due to the subject matter of the study as identified and recommended by interviewees. Another limitation is the accuracy of the translations of *Apsáalooke* language into English.

### Delimitations

The following delimitations should be considered before generalizing the results of the study. The researcher is an *Apsáalooke* tribal member, who is aware of the misunderstanding that can arise from bias. Every effort was made to eliminate bias. The history of research within Native American communities has created bias against outside investigators but the researcher is a member of the unique socio-political and cultural group and was raised in the *Apsáalooke* community. The study is also intentionally limited to *Apsáalooke* tribal members, through enrollment or through adoption, whose traditional homelands and reservation are located in Southwestern Montana.

### Definitions of Terms

The following terms are defined to ensure the intended meaning is clear:

*American Indian*: Any person who is a member of a federally recognized tribe, also referred to as an Indian, Native American, Indigenous person or First Nations person.

*Apsáalooke*: The name Crow Indians use to identify themselves, which translates as, “the children of the large beaked bird.” In this study the term Crow or Crow Indian is used interchangeably with *Apsáalooke*. In different English attempts at writing the name it is also misspelled or mispronounced as Absaroka, Absarokee or Absaroka. Being the Absaroka mountain range which is a traditional mountain range of the tribe, Absarokee which is a town’s name that was the second agency or capital of the *Apsáalooke* Nation and Absaroka which was a proposed state containing parts of now present Montana, South Dakota and Wyoming that

contemplated secession and statehood in 1939; which land was traditional and historical *Apsáalooke* territory.

*Ashammaliaxxiia*: The Crow clan system, which translate as, “driftwood lodges.”

*Baashchshiile*: The literal definition is yellow eyes, and has come to be known as a term to identify a white man or person, as the first white person the tribe came into contact with is thought to have had jaundice or had yellow eyebrows or eyelashes.

*Biiluuke*: A term *Apsáalooke* use when referring to themselves which, translates to “on our side or one of us.”

*Clan*: A group of people that descend from a common ancestor, with the *Apsáalooke* clan membership is matrilineal and clan membership is inherited via one’s mother.

*Crow*: The name used to identify the *Apsáalooke* tribe, which translates as, “the children of the large beaked bird.” The misnomer Crow comes from French traders in 1743 who called the tribe, *gens du corbeaux*, “people of the crows.” In this study the term Crow Indian is also used interchangeably with *Apsáalooke*.

*Culture*: The life-ways of a particular group of people that may include shared identity, ways of knowing, worldviews, cosmology, spiritual beliefs, and more noticeable social practices such as music arts and social expectations and behaviors.

*Dominant Society*: The current Western Euro-American society that makes up the majority of the American population and culture that is non-Indigenous.

*Elder*: An older individual respected for their life experience and wisdom who is sought out for their knowledge and teachings concerning traditional lifeways, the term is not designated to age alone but to experience and knowledge.

*Fasting*: A ritual of prayer and abstinence from food and water for up to four days and four nights. Spiritual seekers separate themselves by going out alone into an isolated area, most often at a sacred site or a mountaintop in order to seek spiritual guidance and intervention.

*Identity*: Refers to who a person is individually tribally, culturally and the identity they have specifically received as a member of the *Apsáalooke* Nation.

*Indigenous*: Refers to peoples from a particular place such as Native Americans, American Indians, Aborigines or and other first and original inhabitants of an area as well as peoples displaced or harmed through the effects of colonialism.

*Reservation:* A tract of land set apart for Indian people by the United States through governmental treaties, act and orders, or in the *Apsáalooke* nations history land the tribe themselves set aside for themselves in their government to government relationship with the United States.

*Sweatlodge:* A small lodge built with willow trees and coverings where prayers, rituals, healing and ceremony takes place. This is one of the Crow Indian life ways that is currently practiced today.

*Vision:* A spiritual experience encountered by a spiritual seeker who may be fasting wherein a person may receive spiritual guidance or information.

### Significance of Study

This research will add to the body of educational leadership literature and Indigenous education literature. It will also inform the practice of those who may affect the *Apsáalooke* or similar Indigenous communities by serving in an educational leadership role and those who may write educational policy that affects them. It will also serve as a framework for other Native American scholars seeking the same answers for their own communities.

### Summary

There have been many calls throughout America's educational history regarding American Indians to involve the community and parents. Historically schools were used in attempted eradication and extermination of Indigenous languages, cultures and worldviews. There has been a clear lack of allowing Native American people to be involved in their children's education (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001).

Bird, Lee & Lopez (2013) assert that it is important for understanding the views of leadership and to understand the expectations that Native American students and parents have of teachers and administrative leaders. For education to become meaningful American Indian communities must be allowed to become involved in their education process in a meaningful way, rather than a superficial way. Most school leaders who serve in Native American schools or in schools with a high Native American student population are different culturally from the student body and parent body (Foster & Goddard, 2002).

This study utilized qualitative indigenous research methodology with a uniquely *Apsáalooke* protocol in order to identify expectations the *Apsáalooke* community has for school leadership. The information could provide guidance and information to school leadership in order to lead more effectively in the *Apsáalooke* community, or other similar communities, and to add to the body of educational leadership literature and indigenous education.

## CHAPTER TWO

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The 1969 Kennedy Report found that Native Americans were participating minimally in the planning and development of educational programs. Karen Cockrell (1992) found that there are perceived communication barriers between Native American communities and schools and wrote that, “Native American people must be actively engaged in the identification of educational problems and the search for solutions. Their voices and their stories must be heard, recorded and analyzed” (p. 65). Similarly, the report, *Indian Nations at Risk* (1991) recommended schools show parents how to become involved in their children’s education. Faircloth & Tippeconnic (2013) wrote:

If leadership is to be used as a tool for transforming schools into sites of empowerment and promise for indigenous students and their communities, it is important for academics and practitioners to reflect upon the ways in which leadership is conceptualized and practiced in schools and communities across the nation (p. 480).

School leaders have a great opportunity to empower Native American communities by practicing leadership that does indeed empower the students with knowledge that will enable the student to be able to operate effectively in society today. Practicing leadership in a culturally responsive manner will also help leaders to solicit followership and buy in from stakeholders in Native American schools and help them avoid the mistakes of administrators before them. One problem is that the school systems often unknowingly ignore the situation of American Indian students and teach them a history, culture, and ethical system different than their own. Brayboy and Castagno (2008) pointed out that

for the last 40 years culturally responsive schooling has been advocated but this has not translated into the school systems that serve Native American students.

This rings true in my own educational experience, as a student I could not find any of my own history in any of our curriculum. The only time Native Americans were mentioned was briefly during Thanksgiving, and this historical fact was not accurately taught to us. Most of history taught in public schools today is “whitewashed” and written in favor of the myths perpetuated by Western European immigrants, while ignoring the atrocities committed against the Indigenous peoples of this continent (Loewn, 2007). I, like most American students, grew up being taught misinformation and hearing the myths of the early settlers taming a wild barren wasteland when in fact the lands were already tamed and inhabited by Indigenous peoples with roads, buildings and civilizations more sophisticated than their own whom they then deceived, slaughtered and proceeded to steal their homes and lands from (Dunbbar-Ortiz, 2014). This is especially alienating for American Indian students who are attending public schools.

It was not until my higher educational experience that I was exposed to Native American authors and authentic Native American history outside of the history taught to me traditionally by family. For example, I distinctly remember when learning about such things like the Revolutionary War or the Declaration of Independence different teachers would often say, “When we fought the British.” This always puzzled me because I knew that my tribe and my people were never involved in this war with the British.

### Tribal Critical Race Theory

Tribal critical race theory (TribalCrit) has its origins in the scholarship of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which started in response to positivism in the Frankfurt School of Sociology in Germany in order to look at the consequences of inequity emanating from positivist philosophies contained in most research in the 1920's (Giroux, 2009). Positivism contains an epistemology introduced by Auguste Comte (1865) that knowledge can only be inferred from an accumulation of observable and documentable facts gathered the five senses along with systematic and standardized methods. This epistemology also dominates much educational research, conversely this research piece will contain an Indigenous research methodology. There was resistance to Comte and positivism – they lost of course; however, even Comte had a “second career” as he called it, in which focused on “the dominance of the heart” and the critical need for ethics and values in political life – this part of his life and work was dismissed as the “bad Comte” – perhaps this was the Indigenous Comte. It is interesting to think that Comte may have been more balanced than he is given credit for.

Critical theorist scholars argued against the notion that researchers could operate from a base of ideological neutrality and complete objectivity, and they asserted that historical and socio-cultural contexts influence and shape the construction of knowledge. Giroux (2009) wrote that because positivist researchers did not contextualize their work they did not employ the spirit of self-critique. Horkheimer (1972), in rejecting positivist epistemology, argued for an environment that contained and was conducive to free and critical thinking, where true reason and rationality could abound. He also questioned the

positivist claims of being objective and claiming ideological neutrality. Critical scholars during this time challenged the then unquestioned faith that was held in human reason and rationality that saturated positivist academic research (Giroux, 2009). Critical theorists warned that there could be seriously negative consequences resulting in the unquestioned faith in human reason (Adorno and Horkheimer 1974, p. 29). Deloria and Wildcat (2011) stressed, “remember the sins of the Western mind: misplaced concreteness—the desire to absolutize what are but tenuous conclusions” (p. 6) when someone absolutely insists that a certain conclusion is true which creates a propensity for right/wrong and either/or thinking binary thinking.

Critical theorists believed that positivist epistemologies had stripped both knowledge and science of their critical possibilities (Horkheimer, 1972). So rather than rewarding critical thought, questioning and inquisitive curiosity it rewarded the gathering of facts and data. Positivist epistemologies emphasized fact gathering by not considering qualitative and normative questions or question, “the genesis, development and normative nature of ideas” (Giroux, 2009, p.32). And because of this emphasis on data and facts positivist academia missed the forest for the trees and did not look into the, “interaction of power, knowledge, and values, reflected in the genesis and nature of ideological presuppositions” (Giroux, 2009, p. 33)

The work of Antonio Gramsci described how cultural domination’s mechanisms in society controls the flow of knowledge and ideas and this work was used by Critical theorists to describe these mechanisms. Hegemony as defined by Gramsci (1971) is a system of values, beliefs, attitudes, ideas or morals that so permeate a society that they

are considered common knowledge or common sense. These hegemonic ideologies establish or create organizing principles and govern daily life and even daily social interactions without the use of physical force.

Educational researchers and academics use Critical Theory to explore how schools spread and reinforce hegemony. McLaren (2009) suggested that schools act as agencies of transmission of a dominant culture through curriculum and pedagogies by maintaining dominance, “through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites such as the church, the state, the school, the mass media, the political system and the family” (p. 67). As a result, generations of teachers and students have embraced and perpetuated a hegemony that disadvantage large groups of students, who are usually poor minority students. These educational discourses have served to hide or camouflage the relationships of power and privilege in schools (McLaren, 2009).

Critical theorists fought against anti-Semitism in the 1920’s and 1930’s and the early focus of Critical theoretical scholarship was to eliminate prejudice and systematic oppression by using Marxist analysis, looking at class, yet this changed after German fascism’s rise as the Frankfurt Institute then left Germany and relocated to the United States (Outlaw, 1990) and in their studies of the matrices of systematic oppression they centralized the analysis of race using Marxist theory to analyze the prejudice and oppression they sought to eliminate. The scholarship produced by Critical theorists during this period have a foundation for Critical Race Theory.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) came from the critical legal studies community as Critical Theory fit their analysis of the Civil Rights Era's mixed legacies. Bell (1980) suggested that race and racism must be centralized within any academic research because it is so deeply rooted within society. Scholars have noted that race is an endemic part of society and life (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002). Race was centralized (Crenshaw, 1993) by CRT scholars in an interdisciplinary analysis of other forms of subordination including class and gender. The desire to eliminate prejudice and systematic oppression centralized a focus to eliminate racism, sexism and poverty in their work (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002), and thus they integrated research from ethnic studies, woman's studies, sociology, history, the humanities and law and worked to undercut all layers of hegemonic oppression and discrimination. CRT was created to, "disrupt, expose, challenge, and change racist policies that have worked to subordinate and disenfranchise certain groups of people" (Milner, 2008, p. 333).

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1998) utilized CRT in her education research with African American students. Ladson-Billings and Grant (2006) found in multiple studies that equality of education opportunities for all students were not provided in the schools studied, even with education reforms and desegregation (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 2006,). Race has been and continues to be a significant factor in explaining educational inequity. Jewett (2006) wrote that race continues to influence schools and Ladson-Billings & Tate (2006) wrote, "Students of color are more segregated than ever before" (p. 19). While, Dixson and Rousseau (2006) doubt that educational equality ever existed.

CRT researchers challenge the myth that education researchers operate out of an ideologically neutral and objective position, and these claims of objectivity are often stained with hubris (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002). The myths of educational neutrality and education meritocracy have, “camouflaged the self-interest, power, and privilege of the dominant groups in American [Society and Schools]” (p. 25). Even though there are legal guarantees for educational equality race still plays a major role in whether or not this will happen for students (Giroux, 2008).

One manifestation of the myth of ideological neutrality is the belief of color blindness. Omi and Winant (2005) wrote that race continues to be a part of our everyday experience and an impermeable part of our identities. The misinformed view, colorblindness, propagates the idea that achievement is not due in any part to race or ethnicity but is solely the result of hard work. This has caused educators to become blinded or distanced from racism in the schools they serve in (Giroux, 2008). Brayboy (2005) pointed out that CRT in education postulates that racism is regularly found, or endemic, in society and in the education system so much that it is unnoticeable or normalized. Sparks (1994) recommended that teachers need to understand the deep effects that racism and discrimination have upon minority students and says teachers have a moral responsibility to be culturally sensitive.

Education researchers have documented a direct correlation between race, economic advantages and academic achievement (Abercrombie-Donahue, 2011). Schools that serve minority students of low socio-economic status are likely to lack resources and because of that their students do not have an equal opportunity to learn

(Kozol, 1991). “CRT confronts and challenges traditional views of education in regard to issues of meritocracy, claims of color-blind objectivity, and equal opportunity” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 428).

Within education, CRT is in essence activist and committed to working towards social justice and is a “liberatory or transformative response to racial, gender, and class oppression” (Solorzano & Tosso, 2001a, p. 8). Researchers and scholars who employ CRT within education are straightforward in that their work must undermine and remove forms of oppression from the lives of their students and staff (Brayboy, 2005).

In an attempt to disrupt and fight against ideological hegemony CRT theorists have utilized various epistemologies in academia. Oral tradition, stories and diverse epistemologies from minority communities have been integrated into academic research. According to Delgado (1989) storytelling is an important tool of resistance to hegemonic epistemologies perpetuated and propagated by the dominant culture’s institutions of education.

Researchers using CRT have embraced storytelling as a form of resistance and the key to cultural preservation of many minority communities (Abercrombie-Donahue, 2011). CRT finds value in sources of data such as experiential knowledge, narrative accounts and testimonies (Brayboy, 2005). CRT theorists combine their experiential knowledge of working to challenge the hegemony of racism and their personal experience of being the “other,” under this same burden (Barnes, 1990). CRT’s goal is to serve as an agent of change, providing a platform, to help people of color express their voice by utilizing storytelling to construct a reality through contesting, deconstructing

and reshaping dominant societies reality utilizing other points of view and overlooked truths and historical facts (Writer, 2012).

Although CRT is a useful framework for Native Americans it does not serve their specific needs, as it does not address their “liminality as both legal/political and racialized beings or the experience of colonization” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 428-9). “Academics from CRT have adapted it to address the needs and situation of Indigenous populations in the form of Tribal Critical Theory or TribalCrit” (Brayboy, 2005). Although there are theories of AsianCrit and LatCrit, TribCrit differs in that the basic tenet is that colonization is endemic to society (Brayboy, 2005). Abercrombie-Donahue (2011) explained:

Tribal critical race theory (TribCrit) researchers have contextualized their educational studies within an exploration of the role of colonialism and imperial ideology in shaping each aspect of Indigenous peoples’ lives, including: Indigenous families, Indigenous lands, Indigenous identities, and Tribal sovereignty and self-determination (p.28)

Brayboy (2006) explained that Tribal Critical Race Theory emerged from CRT and finds its roots in epistemological and ontological commonalities in many, distinct place-based, and Indigenous, epistemologies and ontologies and although they are varied, TribCrit recognizes the range and variation that exists among Indigenous peoples. TribCrit is based upon, “traditions, ideas, thoughts, and epistemologies that are grounded in tribal histories thousands of years old” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 441). “Like CRT, TribCrit values narrative and stories as important sources of data” (Brayboy, 2005, 428). TribCrit (Abercrombie-Donahue, 2011) research is contextualized in the study of ongoing colonialist and imperialistic legacies as it has shaped the lived experiences of Native

Americans, colonialism has been centralized in TribCrit research while researching education in relation to Native American students.

Colonization, like positivist epistemology, came out of the Enlightenment period along with the ideals of rationalism, capitalism, and economic expansion (Tuhuwai-Smith, 2012). Although Colonialism started as an economic enterprise it quickly grew to include cultural, economic and intellectual facets of colonization and it provided intellectual justifications for colonizing Indigenous populations, which devastated Indigenous lives (Abercrombie-Donahue, 2011). Many researchers and scholars are now working to de-colonize research through the use of Indigenous research methodologies in academia.

TribCrit has nine tenets:

1. Colonization is endemic to society;
2. U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain;
3. Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized nature of our identities;
4. Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification;
5. The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens;
6. Governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation;
7. Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups;

8. Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being;
9. Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429-430).

TribCrit provides a theoretical lens for addressing issues Native American communities are currently facing such as language loss, language revitalization efforts, low graduation rates, relevant teacher training and other educational inequities such as overrepresentation of Native American students in special education programs (Brayboy, 2005; Dei, 1997). As a theoretical lens it has explanatory power to describe the life experiences of Indigenous tribal peoples (Brayboy, 2005). Battiste (2000) explains how within hegemonic social structures, or schools, “Indigenous students have been subjected to multiple forms of cognitive imperialism within colonial educational systems that have destroyed and distorted their Indigenous ways of life, histories, identities, cultures, and languages” (p. 193). School curricula has deliberately privileged one language, culture, and frame of reference (Brayboy, 2006), and asked Indigenous students to disconnect themselves from their intimate and life-giving relationships with their ancestors, their ancestral homelands, and Indigenous ways of knowing and understanding the world (p. 198). Writer (2012) pointed out that present within the educational systems that serve Native American students, there are educationally imposed oppressions with the school system such as the value of whiteness and the practices of colonialism and a history of psychological conditioning to erase student identity and origins with attempts to create a distaste for their Indigenous origins.

Freire (1970) wrote that oppressed peoples often manifest a distrust of self after internalizing their oppressors' negative views of them not realizing that they have knowledge in their own communities and that they "know things" too and start to put their oppressor's knowledge on a pedestal. This can often be true in Native American schools as communities will hold in higher esteem the opinions and desires of non-Native educators rather than Native American educators. Often times Native American teachers and school leaders have to learn how to navigate through the realities of these oppressive mindsets and can experience lateral violence commonly referred to as crabs in a bucket, where the oppressor's stereotypes and negative views have been internalized from parents or board members. In one experience a Native American school leader was told by a small group of parents that the school district needed to get rid of the Indians and hire white people who know how to do their job. Freire also argued that education must have a meaningful relevance that is connected to the life experience of the students and too often education indoctrinates oppressed peoples to adapt to their oppression and accept their lot, rather than empower them. This lack of context for students also creates an educational experience that lacks relevance to the daily life of students, and they miss the meaning and value of the educational opportunities presented to them. Deloria & Wildcat (2001) noted,

For many centuries whites scorned the knowledge of American Indians, regarding whatever the people said was as gross, save superstition and insisting that their own view of the world, a complex mixture of folklore, achievement of our species" (p. 1).

But Native American Communities do not just want empowerment individually but want it for their tribes, nations' communities and want it as a people and Native

American communities, with their inherent rights to determine the nature of the education provided to their students, have a strong connection between education, self-determination and sovereignty, yet this is rarely recognized within mainstream education (Brayboy & Castagno, 2008). For decades, a relevant and empowering educational experience has been advocated for Native Students but largely ignored. School systems should be focusing on issues of sovereignty, self-determination, racism and Indigenous epistemologies (Goddard & Goddard, 2008). This issue of sovereignty is of particular importance because:

Individual tribes are politically sovereign nations. They are independent nations located within the United States as established by the many treaties created between the governments of the various Indigenous nations and the government of the United States. Thus Native Peoples and nations have the right to self-determination—this includes determining educational destinies (Writer, 2010, p. 66).

In fact, 1972's Indian Education Act and the Indian Self-Determination and Education Act of 1975 were passed because of this (St. Germaine, 2000). Deloria and Wildcat wrote,

If we want to truly exercise self-determination, there is no better place to start than with an effort to give our children an inheritance too many generations of American Indians were outright denied or have struggled mightily to maintain: identity within tribal cultures we were actively engaged in, as opposed to existence within a culture of indoctrination facilitated most effectively through U.S. government education programs (2001, p. 8-9).

Cajete (1994) pointed out that Native American students have been asked to abandon generations of ancestral wisdom and connections within schools and thus students have a severely negative educational experience. Organizations, such as schools, can have racist orientations, as individual people can (Carjuzaa, Henderson, &

Ruff, 2015). Racism is not limited to individual discriminating acts but can be present in institutions or school systems that serve to protect white privilege (Delgado 1989; Harris 1993). Wildcat and Deloria (2001) pointed out that the historical racism present within the American education system cannot and should not be minimized.

This theory applies to the topic of this research as it points out dominant society's assumption that it knows what is best for Native Americans and Native American students. The Congress passed the Civilization Fund Act in 1819 to fund Christian denominations to use education as a means to supposedly civilize Native American children who were forcefully taken from their families and homes and springing from these historical roots many schools today still hold this null curriculum as they attempt to supposedly civilize Native American students (Writer, 2012). Often times educators still hold this misguided motivation to education Native American students. In one example, a second-grade student told his teacher that his parents spoke their language, but he didn't, to which his teacher replied, "That's because your people are progressing." Rather than seeing it as a possible loss of a language, the teacher viewed as something good. Education was utilized as a tool for white aggression (Prucha, 2000) to wage a cultural war against Native American ways of life and became the weapon of choice as families, communities and children were managed ideologically (Spring, 1996).

The U.S. government and Native American tribes have a strong history of conflicts between the views on the best way to educate Native American children (Klug, 2012). Assaults against family and social structures happened in attempt to mirror white family structures, along with attempt to stamp out Indigenous epistemologies and

spirituality as well as life maintenance and sustenance practices with capitalism, farming and trades forced upon communities (Writer, 2012). Pewardy (2005) wrote that,

The curriculum” taught in the school purposefully emphasized all that was valued in white society. Tribal epistemologies and languages were degraded, silenced, and replaced with what was admired and privileged in the dominating white society as a means of “miseducation” (p. 61).

While family and social structures were attacked and some eliminated this left a void in in the family structures of many Native Americans families thus resulting in many social harms and ills. Whereas a large extended family held everyone in place, many families were forced to adopt a Eurocentric family structures against their wills.

In the history of Indian Education, Grande (2004) wrote that education has continually been used to, “reinvent Native American people in the likeness of white people.” (p. vii). Reyhner, Lee & Goddard have written, “a problem with Native education is that non-Native teachers and Native students do not share a common culture within which to work and find mutual understanding” (1993, p. 26). This is often seen in the assumptions of the terms us and we. For example, when a teacher covers the topic of the revolutionary war or civil war, the terms us and we are incorrectly used with many Native American students. I have often overheard and have been told by teachers as a student, “when we fought the British,” or, “when we were in the Civil war, etc. Yet, as an *Apsáalooke* person, my ancestors did not participate in those battles; these events may be the history of the United States and a historical event that took place on this continent but it is not the history of many of the sovereign nations on this continent. Native American parents and tribes need to be given equal rights and be allowed to be equal

partners in the education of their students (Brayboy & Castagno, 2008). Deloria and Wildcat (2001) pointed out that, “the thing that has always been missing from Indian education, and is still missing today, is Indians” (p.152). Writer (2012) wrote that Native American communities and students should not be worked on but worked with; and unless tribes are not directly involved, tribal sovereignty and identity can become undermined. Using this theory I hope to include The *Apsáalooke* tribe of American Indians in the education of their children by finding out what they want school leaders to know as their children go through the educational process in the school systems.

#### R's: An Indigenous Worldview

The other lens that is of particular and crucial relevance to this research, and that is congruous to TribCrit theory and to the research topic, is an Indigenous worldview that is described by various Indigenous researchers. The concepts, practices and values that make up the core of an Indigenous worldview are intertwined, interdependent and often overlapping. Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) wrote about four concepts, or core values, of an Indigenous worldview which they called the four R's in their breakthrough higher education article concerning Indigenous students. The four R's are respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility. The authors bring to light the great importance of these concepts and practices in the lives and worldviews of Native American peoples; and how the education system can utilize these four R's to help students navigate and stay motivated within the educational system. In this work respecting Indigenous peoples for who they are, allowing the educational experience to be relevant to their view of the

world, practicing reciprocity in relationships, and assisting them in exercising responsibility for their lives is key and is in essence the 4 R's of Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991). The writing and understanding of the four R's created was important because it opened the doorway to other Indigenous studies.

Through a decades long structured dialogue and a collaboration between the American Indian Opportunity organization and systems scientists in New Mexico, an alternative worldview that was uniquely Indigenous was found that they labeled Indigeneity. Indigeneity consists of relationship, responsibility, reciprocity and redistribution (Harris & Wasilewski, 2004). Through this worldview Indigenous peoples identified similar core values that are shared by most Indigenous peoples around the world. Harris & Wasilewski (2004) refer to their R's within the context of obligations. Relationship is the obligation we have for each other because we are all related or connected to each other and therefore we are to ensure everyone is included. Responsibility is the obligation to the community, and we are all obligated to contribute to each other's wellbeing and to play our part as we all affect each other in some way or another due to our connection or interrelatedness. Reciprocity is a cyclical obligation that is aligned with creation as seen in the seasons in nature and when you are in relationship with someone you are then in a give and take reality with them. Redistribution is the obligation of sharing wherein the balance within relationships is pursued and maintained often through cultural, social and spiritual practices.

In her book, *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body and Spirit*, Jo-ann Archibald (2008) utilizes Indigenous teachings, that are both principles and

practices, to create a space for Indigenous teachings and stories within curricula. The seven principles, which she names, “Storywork” are: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness and synergy. Archibald puts into practice and builds upon Kirkness and Barnhardt’s (1991) “four R’s” in her work with many examples in different scenarios painting a clear picture of how they are properly practiced in research. She shares knowledge in the traditional storytelling method, often using metaphors and examples of how she was obligated to build authentic relationships, practice cultural respect and gives examples from her own experience on how respect, responsibility and reciprocity was practiced within cultural protocols.

Shawn Wilson (2001) points out that Indigenous systems of knowledge are built upon relationships. He wrote, “We now need to move beyond an ‘Indigenous perspective in research’ to ‘researching from an Indigenous paradigm’” (2001, p. 175). An Indigenous paradigm includes Indigenous ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology (Wilson, 2001). Indigenous ontology and epistemology share the aspect of relationality, while Indigenous axiology and methodology share the aspect of accountability to relationships (Wilson, 2008). He also highlights that in this paradigm knowledge is relational and that research must fulfill proper obligations and build relationship with to those being researched. In other words, research must practice relational accountability.

Cora Weber-Pillwax (2001) refers to the aspects of the Indigenous worldview, respect, reciprocity and responsibility, as the 3 R’s (Steinhauer, 2001). Research from the Indigenous perspective must adhere to relationality and accountability. From this

Indigenous perspective trust must not be violated. Trust is vitally important and must be handled with a strong sense of responsibility; through research, relationships must be maintained and deepened (Weber-Pillwax, 2001). She wrote that, “Whatever I do as an Indigenous researcher must be hooked to the ‘community’ or ‘the Indigenous research has to benefit the community’” (p. 168). Bagele Chilisa (2012) summarized the R’s as, “accountable responsibility, respect, reciprocity and rights and regulations of the researched” (p. 7).

Within the above scholarship, respect, relationship, reciprocity and responsibility are mentioned in all of them. Although some are not listed in clearly defined bullet point lists, matrices or columns as is common within Western scholarship. In some instances they are referred to through story, experience, examples, analogies and metaphor. All of the R’s are present within the different works, as the principles and key worldview markers overlap, are interrelated and dependent upon each other. For example, what Wilson (2008) referred to as relational accountability, Chilesa (2012) labels as the rights and regulations of the researched. Harris & Wasilewski (2004) wrote that,

Each of these values, as you can see, is integrally related to all the others and builds on the others. Indigenous peoples understand that relationships define our roles and shape our responsibilities. We realize that these relationships, roles and responsibilities are reciprocal in nature and lead to the redistribution of both society’s tangible and intangible assets (p. 5).

The R’s that make up an Indigenous worldview in this research; and the R’s that will serve as a theoretical framework are: respect, reciprocity, relationship and responsibility.

### Colonialism and Imperialism

It is important to understand what an Indigenous worldview's context is situated in. To understand more fully the context of the R's and where the worldview is situated, it is important to understand colonialism and imperialism. An Indigenous person cannot escape the reality that imperialism and colonialism has created for us. The effects of colonialism and imperialism where Indigenous peoples around the globe have been exploited, dominated, and some even annihilated for their natural resources and land base. While many Indigenous peoples are still present, they have experienced, and continue to experience, an attack on the very core of their identities and existence. This violence has created the oppressor and oppressed phenomena that Friere (1970) referred to. Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) wrote that, "Imperialism frames the indigenous experience. It is part of our story, our version of modernity" (p. 20). The colonial experience of Indigenous peoples of the North America's is unique in that while colonialism seeks to exploit a region for its resources, settler colonialism seeks to eradicate the indigenous populations of the land and replace the inhabitants to create their own state.

While Indigenous peoples were dominated and suppressed, so to were their ideas, practices, beliefs and knowledge. Ways of knowing and relating to knowledge by Indigenous peoples were dismissed and ignored as invaluable. Western European ways of knowing were treated as true and right, and all peoples and knowledge's that was not Western European was attacked and treated as the other. Colonialism not only imposed Western authority over Indigenous lands, peoples and governments but it imposed itself over Indigenous knowledge, languages and cultures. It did so through the system of

education, namely schools (Tuhuwai-Smith, 2012). Because of this imposition of values, there has been resistance and struggle by Indigenous peoples to maintain their Indigenous identities and worldviews, therefore “Indigenous knowledge systems have been shaped by the struggle to resist and survive the assault on their culture” (Chilesa, p. 13).

Maori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) questioned Western research beliefs in her seminal work, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, by pointing out that the Western models of research and research methods and their knowledge bases contain powerful underlying assumptions, motivations and values influenced by imperialism, in particular positivism, empiricism and the motivation to dominate Indigenous peoples and knowledge’s. Chilesa (2012) wrote that, “...indigenous research methodologies must be informed by the resistance to Euro-Western thought and the further appropriation of their knowledge” (p. 11). When writing about decolonizing research methodologies Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) adds that,

Decolonization, however, does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather it is about centering our concerns and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes (p. 41).

As opposed to continuing to be the researched, Indigenous peoples need to determine the issues and priorities of research and to conduct research on what is deemed to be needed or important for the Indigenous community (Tuhuwai-Smith, 2012).

A vast majority of Native American communities experience the effects of alcoholism, drug abuse, children being forcibly removed from homes and exceedingly high unemployment rates. Currently, the Crow Indian Reservation has an almost non-

existent economy and an 80% unemployment rate while the state of Montana's unemployment rate of 3.8%, which can be linked to the federal government laws and policies that inhibit financial growth and prosperity (Not Afraid, 2018).

It is understandable that people do not want to talk about some of the destructive things that have taken place against Native American communities. The poverty and social ills now present in Native American communities were created by colonialist and imperialistic federal policies of the United States Government. While Native Americans are strongly encouraged to let go of the past and to stop retelling stories of their mistreatment by non-Natives; oftentimes the very same people, not wanting to hear of the uncomfortable past, are simultaneously retelling a negative narrative about the victims currently affected by this uncomfortable past. This narrative says that the poverty and social ills American Indian's are experiencing are somehow their own fault, by saying they are somehow morally inferior, lazy, worthless and to be blamed for the situation they are currently in. Some American Indians, especially students or children, living in an oppressive environment such as this, may even start to believe these stereotypes about themselves. Svingen (1987) quoted a Northern Cheyenne attorney in the article *Jim Crow, Indian Style* by writing: "...Indian people have been "put down" by non-Indians so frequently that some actually internalize the criticism. "After you are told you are incompetent long enough," Small said, "Some (Indian people) start believing it" (p.281).

The important thing to know is that these dire situations that exist for Native Americans are directly linked to policies, laws and actions previously taken by the United States government and its historical racist treatment of its Indigenous peoples. Freire

(1970) shares a story of an individual who comes to realize this truth and exclaimed in a meeting, “They used to say we were unproductive because we were lazy and drunkards. All lies. Now that we are respected as men, we’re going to show everyone that we were never drunkards or lazy. We were exploited!” (p. 64). Tuhawai-Smith (2012) pointed out the reason why talking about past issues of harm is important by writing. “Telling our stories from the past, reclaiming the past, giving testimony to the injustices of the past are all strategies that are commonly employed by indigenous peoples struggling for justice” (p. 36).

Being able to hear these types of stories and share our own has been very important for myself and many other American Indian leaders, to know where we have come from and why we are in our current situations as nations. It is possible to understand these issues without harboring anger or ill will, sure there is hurt involved and passion but that doesn’t necessarily mean all American Indians are angry when talking about these issues. The past teaches us why things are the way they are as current realities where not always so. Many are urged on by a strong desire to help their communities heal and continue to fight to keep their identities and life ways. To revisit these stories is to prevent the revision of our histories and to prevent the misshaping of societies understanding of indigenous peoples current situations. The past cannot be changed but making sure these issues are understood help to ensure that injustices and unjust oppressive practices do not have to be perpetuated. The encouragement to not tell these truths and the resistance to hearing the truths of the past, or in acknowledging these injustices, can be characterized as what DiAngelo (2011) refers to as white fragility.

### Racism's Roots

Scholar Ibram researched United States policy regarding slavery and found that it is a myth that racism is caused by ignorance and that education will solve this problem. What he found was that racism against African Americans is actually rooted in greed. Policies that worked to suppress African American's and treat them as sub-human fueled greed and atrocities against humanity but benefitted white Americans. Indigenous scholar, Hollie Mackey (2018) asked the question, "How can you get good Christian settlers to murder human beings?" To appeal to their greed and convince them Native Americans are sub human and once a person believes indigenous peoples are sub human it makes it easier to murder them and exploit them for their resources. It is actually simple American economics and greed fueled by settler colonialism that has caused most atrocities against Indigenous peoples in America. Mackey (2018) references Ibram Kendi's work explaining that that racism is falsely attributed to hatred and ignorance to which the antidote is empathy and education. Yet because we have misdiagnosed the cause of racism our efforts at curing it have been unsuccessful. She then pointed out that the real cause of racism is self-interest and greed, as evidenced in the laws and policies regarding American Indian's; making the theft of their lands and exploitation of their resources legal. The theft was of course immoral, but according to U.S. law it became legal.

Dr. Walter Fleming (2018) explained that the U.S. government wanted to civilize American Indians through Christianization, education and land ownership. The General Allotment Act of 1887, or Dawes Act as it is referred to, sought to force tribes to stop

living communally and start living individualistically by forcing land ownership. Indian territories were divided up and stolen. Their land was divided up into shares, called allotments, usually 160 or 360 acres in size and these were allotted to individual Indians. After every eligible tribal member received an allotment, the rest of the reservation was opened to non-Indian homesteading. This action has continued to devastate American Indian communities until this day. In the State of the Union Address (1901) President Teddy Roosevelt said of the Dawes Act, “The General Allotment Act is a mighty pulverizing engine to break up the tribal mass. It acts directly upon the family and the individual.”

One might think thefts from American Indian peoples have come to an end, but they have not. For example, in 1999 plaintiffs filed a case that came to be known as *Keepseagle vs Vilsack*. The lawsuit alleged that Native American farmers and ranchers were systematically denied the same opportunities that white farmers and ranchers accessed due to their race. Native Americans were denied low interest loans and credit through U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Loan program. The lawsuit was filed against the Federal Government for systematic racial discriminating against Native American Farmers and Ranchers. The U. S. Supreme Court decided in favor of thousands of American Indians and the USDA settled for \$760 Million. This denial of low interest loans and other assistance program put non-Indian farmers in a beneficial financial position and harmed the financial position and possible futures of many American Indian farmers and ranchers. Another popular example would be the issue with

the North Dakota Access Pipeline in 2017-2018 where Native Americans were protesting a pipeline that would illegally cut through their lands. The list goes on and on.

### American Indian Education

Including American Indians in their own educational process has been recommended time and time again to the school systems that serve Native American students, whether it be in one of the Government Reports or in a Presidential Executive Order. An important practice for school leaders is doing what is right by all the stakeholders and not just the school board, state and feds but the teachers, students and parents also. Many school leaders have not experienced success in Native American communities because of weak relationships with these other stakeholders (Martin, 2015).

Faircloth and Tippeconnic (2013) argued that, "School leaders should reflect the values and beliefs of Indigenous communities and be culturally proficient" (pp.480). Being a school leader in a Native American school or community it is, "...helpful to know what the local cultural beliefs are regarding 'personal qualities of leadership' and to work within the acceptable parameters" (Martin, 2015, p. 156). Many times school leaders may come into a community and unknowingly start burning bridges or building obstacles to practicing leadership by not properly understanding the cultural and unique landscape they are in because they may assume what worked in their last school will work anywhere. For example, I was saddened to see a well-meaning sincere school leader unknowingly offend a large group of stakeholders when he attempted to be fiscally responsible and serve the elders and community pizza at a community feed. To be able to feed a group of people is a great honor and showing of respect in the *Apsáalooke*

community and the school leader unknowingly offended them. Goddard & Goddard (2007) found that in schools that serve Indigenous students the perceptions of stakeholders and the perceptions of education leaders were in conflict as to the role and purpose of the school, the governing and management of the schools, and how and to what extent a school should adapt to the local cultural context. Native American school leadership is essential to perpetuating Indigenous values and tribal self-determination (Tippeconnic, 2000). If leadership is to be truly practiced, then the voice and values of the tribal community should be seen and heard in the voice of school leadership. It is also important to understand the issue that students face and why they face them. Rather than just knowing there is a problem, leadership must know why the problem exists and work to address it. For example, rather than just knowing we need to improve the graduation rate of Native American students, we need to know that Native American kids are not just dropping out of school they are being pushed out of school and experiencing constant racial microaggressions in schools (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017).

Within this study I hope to find out what the *Apsáalooke* community expects and wants from the school leaders that serve in their community, an Indigenous worldview provides a theoretical framework for a school leader to lead effectively by finding out what the families and community expect from them as leaders and also helps the school leader forge the vision and mission of the school. This finding could help guide leaders to lead in such a way that fits the community of utilizing a leadership model that does not fit the community, as each tribal community is different and unique there is no one size fits all approach (Martin, 2015). An Indigenous worldview leadership model can help

identify an appropriate leadership approach by listening and learning from the community. This study is a practice of Indigenous leadership in the changing times Indigenous communities find themselves in as Alfred (1999) writes in his work “the essence of [Indigenous] leadership is the governance of change” (p. 46).

TribCrit (Brayboy, 2005) is useful because it examines the motivations and operations of the educational system, undermining forms of oppression, institutional racism and actions to eliminate Native American identity and culture, much of which schools and teacher unknowingly perpetuate (Klug & Whitfield, 2003). TribCrit also provides a framework to inform school leadership for many issues Native American communities are struggling within the schools such as, low graduation rates, overrepresentation in special education, hegemonic curricula, language loss and identity loss (Brayboy, 2005). This is needed because oppression and colonization have been imposed educationally and racism has been a part of the disposition of educating Native American’s educational experiences not only in individual acts but in systematic and historical acts (Writer, 2012). School leadership, when informed with TribCrit theory, can help a school leader discover how they can work to end oppressive practices within the schools they lead and be informed by those communities that they serve and lead within, essentially using dialogue to inform leadership as Freire (1970) advocated.

Freire (1970) pointed out that oppressed peoples often manifest a distrust of self after internalizing their oppressors’ negative views of them not realizing that they have knowledge in their own communities and that they “know things” too and start to put their oppressors knowledge on a pedestal. He also argued that education must have a

meaningful relevance that is connected to the life experience of the students and too often education indoctrinates oppressed peoples to adapt to their oppression and accept their lot, rather than empower them. Deloria & Wildcat (2001) noted,

For many centuries whites scorned the knowledge of American Indians, regarding whatever the people said was as gross, save superstition and insisting that their own view of the world, a complex mixture of folklore, achievement of our species (p. 1).

Cajete (1994) pointed out that Native American students have been asked to abandon generations of ancestral wisdom and connections within schools and thus students have a severely negative educational experience. Organizations, such as schools, can have racist orientations, as individual people can (Carjuzaa, Henderson, & Ruff, 2015). Racism is not limited to individual discriminating acts but can be present in institutions or school systems that serve to protect white privilege (Delgado 1989; Harris 1993). Wildcat and Deloria (2001) pointed out that the historical racism present within the American education system cannot and should not be minimized, thus the need for school leaders to benefit the Native American communities rather than harm them. The education of Native American students needs to obviously include Native American's desires for the future and perspectives on what they would like their students to learn and why.

Writer (2012) wrote that Native American communities and students should not be worked on but worked with. Furthermore, unless tribes are not directly involved tribal sovereignty and identity can become undermined. Reyhner, Lee & Goddard (1993) wrote, "a problem with Native education is that non-Native teachers and Native students do not share a common culture within which to work and find mutual understanding" (p.

26). Native American parents and tribes need to be given equal rights and be allowed to be equal partners in the education of their students (Brayboy & Castagno, 2008). Using this theory, I hope to include “Indians” in the educational system and process that affects their children and their futures as *Apsáalooke* people.

Barnhardt (2015) in discussing Theory Z + N explained that for schools, to be successful in Native American communities, must consider the well-being of the community and those that it serves, and not just their own institutional well-being. If they want community involvement, they must authentically include Native American’s in the decision-making process, rather than including a token representative or hiring a Native American to make it look as if equality is taking place in the school system. When this comes to pass then the community will become more dedicated to the goals of the school and have a personal stake in its success. Barnhardt (2015) wrote that in Native American schools the ideal school leader would be a local Indigenous person, who is already immersed in the culture, should receive support to make the system more culturally relevant, but a non-Native school leader who is able to lead in such a way that they are effective in cultures other than their own could also be effective. We see this effort taking place specifically in places like Montana State University and its effort with the ILEAD program where as of today has trained over ninety American Indian school leaders who serve in the schools in six states (Ruff, 2018).

### School Leadership and Community Expectations

Some research has found what qualities and motivations Native American stakeholders desire of their school leaders. In regard to improving the quality of reservation schools, it was found school leaders here need to effectively respond to the wishes, desires and needs of the students and parents in the community (Martin, 2015). Carjuzza, Henderson and Ruff (2015) pointed out that while Western leadership is characteristically linear and focuses on ends achieved, Indigenous leadership is circular and measuring leadership tends to become about the leader's character and the essence of the leadership being will determine the degree to which they will have followership. Bird, Lee & Lopez (2013) found that Native American's view of school leadership was rooted within the importance of strengthening the community and was embedded in the tribal values and definitions of leadership.

There is an incongruence between the perceptions of Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous educators as to the role of schools, governance of schools and how the schools adapt to the local cultural context in Indigenous communities (Goddard & Goddard, 2002). One fallacy that school leaders who serve in Native American students partake in is the use of the Western leadership framework from the industrial model that American schools operate under, which contributes to a lack of success in these Native American communities (Barnhardt, 2015). Rodriquez and Fabionar (2010) point out that those in leadership positions must understand the needs of Native American school populations and the effects of poverty, cultural differences, language and other factors that affect their students.

Vogel and Rude (2015) also found that a principle for effective educational leadership among Indigenous communities is the importance of relationships. Faircloth & Tippecanoe (2013) advocate for school leader to be culturally proficient and to reflect the values and beliefs of the Native American communities that they serve and go on to write that,

If leadership is to be used as a tool for transforming schools into sites of empowerment and promise for Indigenous students and their communities, it is important for academics and practitioners to reflect upon the ways in which leadership is conceptualized and practiced in schools and communities across the nation (p. 480).

Goddard & Goddard (2002) found that in Native American schools, Western notions of schooling and leadership were preferred but this preference was often in direct conflict with the students, parents and communities that the school was to be serving. The communities held that schools should imbue the local cultural norms and beliefs and also act as propagators of linguistic and cultural knowledge while at the same time preparing students to operate effectively in the dominant society. Tribal communities have long requested that tribal communities, parents and leaders be involved in the educational process of their children, asking that the education given respect and support tribal sovereignty and self-determination, and be able to identify their educational own wants and needs not just the U.S. government and federal officials (National Congress of American Indians 2010; NIEA 2010). There is little or no evidence that Native American parents have been asked or been given a chance to give feedback on what type of education they want their children to have (Doyle, 2012). Deloria and Wildcat (2001) shared that within the Indian Education Act schools receiving federal funds have to

Native American representation within the process of education but are not allowed to determine the content of the education.

Bacheéitche [*Apsáalooke* Leadership]

We can find cultural descriptions of *Apsáalooke* leadership from Dr. Joseph Medicine Crow (2006) where he shared that in the old days an *Apsáalooke* warrior had to demonstrate their ability to lead by performing four actions, or coups, each of which put the individual's life on the line and literally their lives were literally put in danger. The first three (3) demonstrations of courage had to be performed before the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) action, and sometimes these were performed numerous times before the warrior was able to attempt the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) deed. Many young warriors lost their lives attempting each deed. The first (1<sup>st</sup>) deed Medicine Crow mentioned is sneaking into an enemy camp at night and successfully capturing the prized horse of an enemy, the second (2<sup>nd</sup>) deed was to be the first person to touch or strike the first enemy to fall in a battle, the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) deed was to take an enemy's weapon away from them during battle and the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) was to successfully lead a war party, thus proving one's leadership.

The leader of the war party or organizer of the military raid was called the pipe holder and did not act under the sanction or direction of a council or chief, it was strictly an individual motive and had to be sanctioned and directed divinely, often times through visions or dreams unless when a tribal member had been slain by an enemy then special war parties were organized (Lowie, 1935). Thus, leadership had a spiritual component to it that was intertwined and intermingled and could not be separate. Often times the leader

of the war party had experienced detailed revelations of the aspect of the endeavor such as good and horses to be gained, honors to be earned and the exact placed of the actions to take place. If a person wanted to do this but failed to receive divine guidance they would visit a mentor, or a person with war medicine, who was known to be able to receive such instructions and then would follow the mentor's instructions received from dreams or visions (Lowie, 1935).

The war party was judged as successful if all those involved returned home safely and they returned with horses and other spoils. This was a heavy responsibility because it put other people's lives in danger and if the things did not go well the one leading the war party would be required to stay behind and give their life so that the others who followed him into danger could escape. There were no shortcuts in accomplishing the four old requirements, which displayed bravery and military prowess, to becoming a chief, becoming an *Apsáalooke* leader (Nabakov, 1998) or in gaining social standing as a leader (Lowie, 1935). The leader or chief could in fact claim all the possessions or bounty gained in war parties, but in action always shared it and distributed it with those who assisted as greed was frowned upon. The idea that leadership qualities and deeds had to be displayed and proven before a person could be considered a leader is important in *Apsáalooke* leadership still holds true today.

In talking about modern *Apsáalooke* leadership, Bill Yellowtail (2012) said the Crow word for leader is *bacheéitche*, which is translated literally as "good man." In today's society when referring to a leader or a supervisor of an organization, Crow speaking people will use the word, *bacheéitche*, when referring to the person. Leadership

is not designated to a specific gender though, as there have been and continue to be strong female leaders and the tribe itself is matrilineal. The belief of being a good person was and still is the requirement for *Apsáalooke* leadership. In visiting with my father, he shared that in times past because of the way an individual lived their personal lives and their accomplishments they gained the respect from the community. These types of individuals were often appointed to places of leadership, and this has changed because it seems today that some younger people try to use the current political system to gain places of leadership and sometimes do; but they do not have the communities respect because they lack the quality of personal life and they cannot understand why no one will follow them (Cummins, 2016). Carjuzaa, Henderson, & Ruff (2015) attended to this reality of Indigenous leadership by writing that a leader's character, or integrity, determines if they will be followed and that the measure of leadership is not so much as the activity alone, but more about the depth of being a leader has. Grint & Warner (2006) also pointed out that Western models of leadership depend upon a formal position of authority yet in Indigenous models, leadership does not depend on formal positions and is available to anyone who has the skill to influence others to action that will benefit not themselves individually but those that will benefit the community. Harris and Wasilewski (2004) wrote, "Responsible Indigenous leadership is based on an ethos of care, not coercion. The most important responsibility of a leader is to create the social space in which productive relationship can be established and take place" (p. 5). This reflects the difference in leadership perspectives held between American Indian communities and Western Society whereas in Western view leadership often boils down

to following directives, policies, managing a budget and adhering to a bureaucratic system; the American Indian type of leadership emphasizes action, creativity, problem solving, creating consensus and doing what is best for the whole of the community and in essence practicing actual and true leadership (Holm, 2006).

Today young men may not always be able to acquire leadership status and honor through traditional acts of counting coups, although some do while in the United States military, as most recently at the Centennial Crow Fair a young woman was paraded and honored by the tribe for her war accomplishments in Iraq. Veterans lead the annual Crow Fair in a place of honor. But if a young person cannot do this they can still aspire to places of honor by displaying wanted qualities. Frey (1950) when writing about the Crow Clan System described qualities desired in a clan uncle:

A clan uncle should exhibit these qualities. He should be recognized as an honest and sincere person, a person called bache'em ("a man") by others. He is a "family man" with a "good home," perhaps with several children, all of whom show respect towards others. In his dealings with family, friends, and even strangers, he is known as a "generous person." Upon arriving at his house, one is always offered a cup of hot coffee. He has a "well used sweat" and regularly offers the prayer and the pleasure of the sweat-bath ritual to others. To be bache'em is to be "dependable" in one's obligations and in one's word. When the clan uncle is esteemed by others, his public announcements are given greater legitimacy. Among one's various clan uncles, a young unmarried man known for his drinking and pursuit of woman is not a good candidate to be asked to speak out for one (p. 51-52).

Realbird (1997) also adds that being honest, sincere and wholehearted are qualities pursued by the *Apsáalooke*.

*Apsáalooke* Education

*Apsáalooke* tribal members have a view of education. In history rather than waiting for education to happen to their children, or to continue to allow children to be forcibly removed to horrific boarding schools such as the Carlisle Indian School, *Apsáalooke* leaders progressively sought out means to get schools in their communities. Plenty Coups and Pretty Eagle approached the Catholic missionaries and asked for a day school in what is now known as Pryor and St. Xavier, MT, while White Arm and others approached the Baptists for a day school in what is known as Lodge Grass, MT and he also donated land for the school to be built.

Plenty Coups, the last formal *Apsáalooke* chief, who lived in an extraordinary time and led his people through the changing of a civilization to maintain the *Apsáalooke* way of life in new changing times, was an advocate for education (Lear, 2006). It was his vision that he had at 11 years of age on the highest peak of the Crazy Mountains that gave guidance to the entire nation of *Apsáalooke* for future generations in their relationships and dealing with non-Natives. As they were already surrounded by their sworn and mortal enemies, rather than fight against non-Indians they became allies. In doing so the *Apsáalooke* have never been defeated by the U.S. government. They are not a defeated nation. In reference to this alliance Plenty Coups said, “We did not help the whiteman because we loved him or hated our enemies, we did it because we loved our children.” From this foresight and wisdom the *Apsáalooke* reservation is a true reservation as it is literally land that the nation has reserved for itself and is their true

ancestral homelands. It was and has always been theirs and was never given to them by the U.S. government.

Concerning education he is famously noted as saying, “*Balewaachimmé kaliilhchilahkuxsuua báakussahke kook. Iilialuulak baaishtashiile kanniikuxxiommaachik baaleetdák kúhkan diiishdáatcheommaachik.*” This has been translated into English as, “Education is your most powerful weapon. With education, you are the white man's equal; without education, you are his victim, and so shall remain all your lives.” Others have also more clearly translated it as, “With what the whiteman knows, he can oppress us. If we learn what he knows, then he can never oppress us again.” He was not referring to the whiteman as an enemy, as they were allies somewhat, but he spoke in the reality of their situation that they needed to know how the whiteman spoke and thought and what they were motivated by, so the *Apsáalooke* could then defend themselves and their way of life (Holman, n.d). In his exhortation the word *balewaachimmé* is the *Apsáalooke* word for used for education, and the word *iilihchilahkuxsuua* is translated into English as weapon. The literal English translation of *iilihchilahkuxsuua* (weapon) is, “how you help yourself” which can also be translated as tool (Graczyk, 2015). Plenty Coups viewed the white man’s education, as a means of helping one’s self the same way a person could help himself or herself with a weapon or tool and a way to avoid being oppressed. He and other leaders leaned upon the input of men younger than themselves, who had received the white man’s education and he also encouraged *Apsáalooke* children to attend school with the belief it would help his people. Plenty Coups told a biographer, “I want them to go to school and become well educated.

Then I want them to return to the reservation and work their land” (McCleary, 2002). It is notable that although he wanted the tribe to adapt to the new way of life thrust upon them, he also wanted them to retain their unique practices and beliefs as evidenced in what he told the young people, “I would have you cling to the memories of your fathers. I would have you still go up onto the mountain and see visions so that your hearts may be clean and strong” (McCleary, 2002, p.177-178). While the federal government sought to use education in order to supposedly civilize, acculturate and turn the *Apsáalooke* into farmers in order to open up their lands to white settlers; the *Apsáalooke* had their own reason for embracing education. They used education in order to fight for their lands and for their way of life. Peter Holman (n. d.) writes about example of this happened in 1890 and the government pressured the tribe into giving lands west of the reservation, which are currently known as areas around Red Lodge and the Apsaroke-Beartooth Mountain Range. The lands were to be sold to white settlers with the tribe being paid for this land from the settlers. Plenty Coups gave in as the feds told him if he opposed the sale, the sale would gain support from other leaders of the reservation and undermine his leadership. This was at a time when the tribe was learning to deal with the U.S. government and before they realized that they had to have one spokesperson in dealing with them. Where Plenty Coups and others could say no, the government would just go find someone who would say yes. After this incident the tribe mobilized to have one voice and work in unison when dealing with the U.S. Government. Six years later in 1896 the federal government again wanted more land but was surprised when Plenty Coups and the other leaders of the tribe gathered in a unified front with Plenty Coups as

their spokesperson telling them they would not be doing anything until they were paid money from the last sale. He then brought in a group of young educated *Apsáalooke* men who had recently returned from boarding school, while another chief in the meeting, Spotted Horse exclaimed, “Here gather near me you see the boys we sent to school...They are young men now and can read and write; they are men now that we look upon with confidence.” The young men then spoke strongly to the commission in English and reminded them of broken promises, missed payments and grievances. The young educated men then handed the written list of broken promises, missed payments and grievances to the commission. This surprised the federal commission so much that they had to suddenly adjourn the meeting because they were caught off guard and were ill prepared to deal with educated Indians.

*Apsáalooke* scholar Dr. Lanny Realbird, speaking to younger *Apsáalooke* members in reference to education exhorts them by saying,

Whatever experiences are gained from the outside world can now be of service to you. This is like when the *Apsáalooke* first used the horse. It came from somewhere else, but there were good ways that the *Apsáalooke* could benefit from its use. Learning is like this (Real Bird, 1997, p. 242).

Windchief (2016) found in researching Indigenous graduate students’ connection to education that an *Apsáalooke* graduate student viewed education as, “Training and using education responsibly for the good of the community, to provide for one’s self, family, and community. (*“Iilihchilahkuxsuua”*)” (p.14). The graduate student used the word *Iilihchilahkuxsuua*, as did Plenty Coups, and viewed education as a way to preserve a way of life, undo oppression and communicated that there is a responsibility to the

community when receiving a formal education to help and assist ones community or people (Windchief, 2016).

There is an *Apsáalooke* story of a small boy who was thrown off a cliff in the *Basawaxaawuuu* (Big Horn Mountains), which are sacred to the *Apsáalooke*. The boy was searched for by his family but was given up as lost or deceased. The boy was rescued and was adopted by seven big horn rams. These rams raised him from a child to a young man, and while he was with them, and away from his family, they taught him much knowledge, like which plants did what, methods to cure illnesses and how to live a good life as well as many practices of respect still practiced today. He had a very close relationship to the youngest of the sevens rams, *Iisaxpuatahchee*, the Little Big Horn Ram. During his time with them the animals also gave him gifts: the eagle gave him the right to use the plume, the badger gave him the right to build a sweat and how do use it and gave him the strength to be immovable, the oldest and wisest of all the Rams in the mountains named White Horn, gave him the right to announce or speak in front of people. Even today when there are gatherings a person with the right to announce or talk in front of the group. This ancient practice still used today comes from White Horn. The elder brother of the rams, *Uuwatisee*, Big Metal, gave this boy his name to use, along with all the skills and knowledge necessary to be a great leader and he told him that he would be a great leader he himself was the leader of the Big Horn Mountains.

This story can be looked upon as an educational process that he went through, for he was gone from his home and family for a while, but he eventually returned home with knowledge and good gifts. Upon returning he was able to use all of the accumulated

knowledge and skills to help his people and he then went by the name *Uuwatisee*, or Big Metal, as the cliff he was thrown off of as a child before the rams adopted him, has metal deposits within it and is rust colored. This same ram who befriended the young boy, *Iisaxpuatahchee*, the Little Big Horn Ram, is who the *Apsáalooke* Nation named their tribal college after. Little Big Horn College is named after the youngest ram who adopted Big Metal. Mountain ranges still possessed by the *Apsáalooke* still bare their traditional name as the Big Horn Mountains as do the rivers anciently and currently named the Big Horn River and the Little Big Horn River. For many *Apsáalooke* today this story teaches the purpose of education (Good Luck, 2016). It is amusing that I once heard a tour guide retelling this story of Big Metal when he made the mistake of referring to the story as a legend, to which an *Apsáalooke* elder on the tour quickly corrected him and told him it was not a legend but a fact and continued to inform the tour guide that as a child her and her family would often times visit his grave to offer prayers and respect.

In his book, *Counting Coups*, Dr. Joseph Medicine Crow touched upon education a few times and wrote, “We were raised to be warriors but we were also expected to succeed in the whiteman’s world. In a way I have walked in two worlds my entire life” (p. 19). For many *Apsáalooke* families the starting and finishing of educational endeavors are usually occasions to utilize cultural practices, whether it be clan ceremonies, Native American Church ceremonies or family gatherings where the Clan system is utilized. In one such activity I participated in it was shared that, “in the past the old people would pray. They prayed that their children and grandchildren would go to school, come back and help the people” (Coversup, 2013). Beverly Bigman (2017)

shared her story of growing up in the then new town of Crow Agency and how life had changed so drastically for her grandmother who was raising her. The way of living was in such contrast with the life they knew and everything was different, from meals to cook and new ways to care for a new type of home, which was foreign to them. Her grandmother sincerely encouraged her, and her other grandchildren, to get an education to be able to live in the new world they found themselves in. Mrs. Bigman eventually became a teacher and taught at Crow Agency Public School for over twenty years. She regularly visits the Crow Agency Public School to visit with students about her experience and encourages them to obtain their education, the same way she was encouraged by her grandmother.

The view that education should be sought in a changing world remains constant and continues to this day, yet Real Bird adds to this discussion that education can be done in a better way, as the *Apsáalooke* way of life is currently threatened by the dominant culture and one of the main reasons for this is the fact that *Apsáalooke* are not in control their children's education system; and he advocates that *Apsáalooke* gain control of their children's educational experience (Real Bird, 1997). Yarlott (1999) also pointed out that due to dominant society, the most important traditional ways of learning, stories, traditions and oral stories, are now under threat. Real Bird calls up leadership to act upon this situation, "Leaders must reflect upon the current mainstream education systems that are in their communities and realize that over the past 150 years this system has forced the *Apsáalooke* to give and sacrifice many valuable aspects of their culture" (1997, p. 224). Real Bird (1997) also recommends the *Apsáalooke* people take control of their

school systems and require them to provide traditional instruction and base these school systems on *Apsáalooke* culture, restructuring their curriculum to teach from the reference point of the students experience, utilizing elders to do so, and incorporating cultural practices, languages and values as the foundation of the school system. Native American students should be taught their own history, language, sciences, cosmos and constellations; rather than just American History and American content because it's not their own history or knowledge (Merchant, 2016). McCarty (2013) says that true Indigenous education can only happen when tribes decide to exercise their sovereignty.

Instead of totally adopting the mainstream education offered, there is now a realization that the harmful effects upon the *Apsáalooke* way of life need to be addressed. Language is currently a major concern for the community. An article in the *Big Horn County News* pointed out that from 1969 to 2002 the *Apsáalooke* language as had roughly a 60% decline. It is classified as endangered by the Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization but is, “one of the only a handful of Native American languages that still has a chance of being revived for daily use and relevance in the modern world” (p. 1). Sparks (1994) pointed out that culturally responsive education consists of being aware of students unique identities and using this awareness of the students cultural background within the curriculum that will be taught to students.

This is the approach described by Friere (1970) who promoted the idea that student's education should be rooted and ground in their own reality and knowledge of the real world because traditional curriculum and schools tend to be disconnected from student experience and background. Many community members attribute this loss of

language to the school systems, which have sought to teach *Apsáalooke* language speakers to be more proficient in English though out the years. Schools have sought to colonize Native American students by eradicating languages and cultures for far too long (Faircloth & Tippecanoe, 2013). I have even seen the plains sign language, which is alive and vibrant in the *Apsáalooke* community, not welcome in schools. When non-verbal students only have this method of communication rather than accommodating the students school leaders attempt to force the students to use American Sign language instead of the traditional plains sign language still used in the *Apsáalooke* community. Some Native Americans cultural practices have even been treated as dangerous and not allowed in schools because they conflict with the assimilationist goals of the school (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). For example, Wetzel (2018) explains that in schools today it is acceptable to teach Eastern methods of health and healing such as mindfulness and breathing practices or mantras to calm oneself down. It is also acceptable to utilize Western European methods of healing such as therapy and counseling; but when American Indians want to utilize their own methods of mental health and healing such as smudging, schools and school personnel often experience a knee jerk emotional reaction believing school is not the place for this to happen. Both Clinton in 1998 and Bush in 2004 gave Presidential orders to examine educational practices for Native American students (McCarty, 2012). It was found that Native American students did well when their languages and cultures played a major and authentic role in the education system. McCarty (2012) wrote,

...a large and growing body of research from diverse cultural-linguistic settings has documented the academic benefits of approaches that

systematically include home and community language and cultural practices as integral to the school curriculum. These pedagogies—it is important to point out—go unquestioned for mainstream English-speaking students (p.98).

The results of the Presidential orders also found that a leading cause of educational disparities among Native American students is the cultural mismatches between schools and homes; it was also found that one does not have to choose between academic achievement or Indigenous language and cultural education, both can happen together (McCarty, 2012). Friere (1970) believed education should be based on dialogue that draws out and develops students' prior knowledge of the world. He also argued that the traditional curriculum and school systems; as well as the student teacher relationship need to be placed in the current reality of the students lived experiences.

Bird, Lee & Lopez (2013) found that many times schools serving Native American communities do not allow parental involvement and thus perpetuate assimilative practices of colonization. They do this by feigning parental or community involvement, when required by federal and state guidelines to include parents in school decisions, often times token Native American staff member are appointed to committees where they will be physically present but have no authentic decision-making power. This is also done by listening to parental/community concerns in mandated meetings but not following through on any actual implementation of putting forth any efforts. The public schools studied were legally bound to be accountable to the tribes they serve yet utilizing school policies and procedures to continue to marginalize the voice of the Native American community. Thus, the students in these schools felt that their perspectives and views were ignored and dismissed.

### Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the expectations that the *Apsáalooke* community in Montana has for the school leaders who work within their communities and who lead the schools that educate their children. School leaders have a great opportunity to empower Native American communities by practicing leadership that does indeed empower the students with knowledge that will enable the student to be able to operate effectively in society today, without perpetuating harmful assimilationist practices. The literature is dense with the experiences Native Americans have had with the Eurocentric American educational system, from forced boarding schools and racist assimilationist policies and practices in school systems from forcing students to ignore their own identities and teaching a “whitewashed” history, written in favor of the myths perpetuated by Western European immigrants, while ignoring the atrocities committed against the Indigenous peoples of this continent (Loewn, 2007).

Tribal critical race theory is a theoretical lens in this study that is based upon, “traditions, ideas, thoughts, and epistemologies that are grounded in tribal histories thousands of years old” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 441). Research (Abercrombie-Donahue, 2011) utilizing this lens contextualized the study of ongoing colonialist and imperialistic legacies as it has shaped the lived experiences of Native Americans, colonialism has been centralized in TribCrit research while researching education in relation to Native American students. It provides a useful lens to address the issues in Native American communities and the challenges they face with the impacts of racism, exploitation and marginalization as well as the lingering effects of oppression and attempted genocide.

There is a long history of attempting to destroy Native American identity, language and culture through the vehicle of American schools. With Tribal critical race theory the researcher hopes to include the *Apsáalooke* tribe by providing a perspective to school leaders.

The other lens that is of particular and crucial relevance to this research and that is congruous to TribCrit theory and to the research topic, is an Indigenous worldview that is described by various Indigenous researchers. The concepts, practices and values that make up the core of an Indigenous worldview are intertwined, interdependent and often overlapping. Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) wrote about four concepts, or core values, of an Indigenous worldview which they called the four R's in their breakthrough higher education article concerning Indigenous students. The four R's are respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility which make up an Indigenous worldview and are inextricable from the research methodology.

A review of the literature demonstrates that Native Americans have been allowed minimal participation in their children's educational experiences. Historically some tribes had their children forcefully taken from their mother's arms by the authorities where they were then put on trains to attend boarding school out of state. While this practice of forced boarding school has stopped many tribal communities can now face indifferent school leaders and paternalizing school systems who do not take their concerns and views seriously thus leaving them without a voice in their children's education (Bird, Lee & Lopez, 2013) and many people do not know how to give voice in the formal system. Karen Cockrell (1992) found that there are perceived communication

barriers between Native American communities and schools and wrote that, “Native American people must be actively engaged in the identification of educational problems and the search for solutions. Their voices and their stories must be heard, recorded and analyzed” (p. 65).

The *Apsáalooke* tribe has much literature on the accomplishments and type of qualities a person must possess to be to be considered a leader. There is much information on the early views that the tribe had regarding the formal American educational system where the tribe pushed their students to attend school in order to prevent oppression and domination. While children may be pushed towards formal Western education the realization of the harmful effects of it such as assaults on the *Apsáalooke* language and on the *Apsáalooke* identity. *Apsáalooke* scholar Realbird (1997) called for a better educational experience and for tribal leaders to become involved in the school systems in order to do so.

I am an *Apsáalooke* indigenous researcher and utilized an Indigenous research methodology that adhered to the formal protocols and responsibilities with the *Ashammaliáxxiia*, or the Crow Clan System. This is done in order to maintain relational accountability (Wilson, 2001) and show respect to those who have agreed to participate as well as adhere to the R’s mentioned by Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001).

The research will uncover an *Apsáalooke* view for education leaders who may work among the tribe as well as contribute to discussion of indigenous school leadership, culturally responsive leadership and the outcomes from this study can be used to guide and inform both current and future school leaders, such as school boards,

superintendents, principals, and community leaders in the vicinity of the Crow Indian Reservation and may be applicable to other similar Native American schools and leaders.

## CHAPTER THREE

## METHODOLOGY

Research Paradigm

Rather than continuing to allow research to assist in Native American people's colonization and oppression, I hope that by using Indigenous Research Methodologies the communities voice will be felt and heard (Wilson, 2008). My desire is to be able to conduct research that is respectful of my community and I also echo the desire expressed by Cora Weber-Pillwax (1999) that research done with Indigenous people could be "a source of enrichment to their lives and not a source of depletion or denigration" (p. 38). This speaks to the reciprocity involved in the four R's of this study. There are many different research methodologies. But in order to understand a research methodology, we must understand the underlying beliefs, as underlying beliefs are the foundation of a paradigm and are inseparable from methodologies (Wilson, 2001). In the following I will briefly discuss the often overlapping concepts of the researcher, reciprocity, respect, relationality, purpose, ontology, epistemology, axiology and cultural protocols and methodology as they are deeply intertwined within Indigenous research methodologies.

Respect

*Chikitchée*, respect, is an important aspect of *Apsáalooke* life and can be viewed and practiced in different ways such as how an individual carries themselves daily through dress, self-care and in fulfilling the different relationship requirements within the

kinship, familial and clan relationships as well as different spiritual practices. The practice of respect carries within it an adherence to the other R's of the Indigenous framework of this study: relational accountability, relevance, and reciprocity. Respect permeates every facet of Indigenous research methodologies, according to Tuhiwai-Smith (2012),

The term 'respect' is consistently used by indigenous peoples to underscore the significance of our relationships and humanity. Through respect the place of everyone and everything in the universe is kept in balance and harmony. Respect is a reciprocal, shared, constantly interchanging principle which is expressed through all aspects of social conduct (p.125).

David Neel (as cited in Archibald, 2008) wrote:

...Respect is the foundation for all relationships: between individuals, with future and past generations, with the Earth, with animals, with our Creator...and with ourselves. To understand [respect] and apply it to our daily lives is an ongoing process. This is the most valuable lesson the leaders have for us. It is not a lesson that can be explained with the simple formula [or definition], Respect is ... (p. 23-24).

### Researcher

The researcher fills an important role as a piece of the research and is also in relationship with the knowledge being gained (Wilson, 2001). Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) also wrote that the elements, or intentions, of an Indigenous research methodology can be found in words like healing, decolonization, spiritual, and recovery; and the agenda of an Indigenous research methodology is self-determination, social justice and the mobilization of Indigenous populations. In Indigenous research methodology's a researcher's purpose must be good and their heart right. Wilbur Pillwax (2003) wrote, "The source of a research project is the heart/mind of the researcher, and "checking your

heart” is a critical element in the research process. The researcher ensures that there are no negative or selfish motives for doing research, because that could bring suffering upon everyone in the community. A ‘good heart’ guarantees a good motive, and good motives benefit everyone involved” (p.49-50). Wilson (2001) wrote that the research must help, and not harm, the community and the researcher’s motives must be right. Research must help the community and must be beneficial in the Indigenous paradigm. Bagele Chiesa (2012) wrote that the researcher is a provocateur and transformative healer led by the four R’s and working within Indigenous protocols.

### Ontology

Ontology is the theory of existence, the nature of reality and what is believed to be real (Wilson, 2008, p. 33). And in Indigenous reality, ontology is relationships (Wilson, 2008, p. 76). Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) mentions Indigenous ontology in writing,

The arguments of different indigenous peoples based on spiritual relationships to the universe, to the landscapes and to stones, rocks, insects and other things, seen and unseen, have been difficult arguments for Western systems of knowledge to deal with or accept. These arguments give a partial indication of the different worldviews and alternative ways of coming to know, and of being, which still endure within the indigenous world (p. 78).

The differences between Indigenous naturalistic views of the world versus Western humanistic views we find that the naturalistic explanation of ontology link nature and life together and as connected, while humanistic ontology separate humanity from creation and place humanity above the earth, the animals, all beings, the spirit world, plants and all other created beings (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012, p. 50). In the Western view humans are not only separate from the rest of nature, humans are superior; while in an Indigenous

view nature is a sovereign entity in relationship with humanity (Grande, 2004). It should be emphasized that in the Indigenous worldview relationships are not merely important, but relationships are reality (Wilson, 2008).

### Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of the nature of thinking or knowing (Wilson, 2008, p, 33). How we come to knowledge, or how we know that we know something. It is tied to ontology, what is believed to be real. In mainstream society and Western academia knowledge is to be discovered, extracted, appropriated and distributed. Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) wrote that, “knowledge is treated as a thing, like a raw material to be found and owned” (p. 61). Whereas in an Indigenous paradigm knowledge is not owned but it is held in right relationship and knowledge is also relational (Wilson, 2008, p. 22). One has a relationship with knowledge and must strive to stay in current connection with it. One example of this is within the Native American Church where participants are admonished to respect the songs used (Medicine Horse, 2008). Knowledge is also shared with all of creation, including beings who are not human; which includes plants, the earth, the animals and the cosmos. In an Indigenous epistemology the relationships are of utmost importance, the relationships between the researcher and the other individuals involved as well as relationships with knowledge gained.

### Axiology

Axiology is the ethics or morals that guide the research or the search for knowledge (Wilson, 2008 p. 34). One's view, ontology, will guide what is valued to be studied and the axiology will guide how that knowledge is gained. Wilson (2008) wrote,

An Indigenous axiology is built upon the concept of relational accountability and gaining knowledge respects the sources of knowledge and the knowledge itself. Right or wrong; validity; statistically significant; worthy or unworthy: value judgments lose their meaning. What is more important and meaningful is fulfilling a role and obligations in the research relationship-that is, being accountable to your relations (p. 77).

### Methodology and Cultural Protocols

Methodology is how knowledge is gained or the science of how things are learned (Wilson, 2008, p. 34). Methodology is how one would find out more about their ontology. In the methods to conducting research with an Indigenous research methodology one must adhere to relationality, respect and relational accountability. The researcher's cooperation with a tribes unique cultural protocols assists in adherence to these practices of relationality, respect and relational accountability. In discussing protocols Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) wrote,

There are also protocols of respect and practices of reciprocity. The relatively simple task of gaining informed consent can take anything from a moment to months and years. Some Indigenous students have had to travel back and forth during the course of a year to gain the trust of an individual elder, and have been surprised that without realizing it they gained all the things they were seeking with much more insight, and that in the process they gained a grandparent or a friend (p. 137).

Cultural protocols serve to develop a proper respectful relationship as well as maintain and preserve that relationship. For example, Tuhiwai-Smith shares that, "Asking directly

for consent to interview can also be interpreted as quite rude behavior in some cultures. Consent is not so much given for a project or specific set of questions, but for a person, for their credibility” (p. 137). It is helpful to use an intermediary if one is conducting research. Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) states that, “Consent indicates trust and the assumption is that the trust will not only be reciprocated but constantly negotiated—a dynamic relationship rather than a static decision” (p. 137). Authentic relationship is vital in the Indigenous methodology. Yarlott (1999) states that in researching Indigenous people it is important to conduct research of cultural etiquette before beginning the main study. Walter Lightning (as referenced in Archibald, 2008), says of protocol,

That term, protocol, refers to any one of a number of culturally ordained actions and statements, established by ancient tradition that an individual completes to establish a relationship with another person from whom the individual makes a request (p. 216).

### Reciprocity

Reciprocity, sharing or giving back knowledge in a way that is respectful to the community, or people, involved in the research by following cultural protocols is an important part of Indigenous research methodologies. The sharing of knowledge and understanding that is the end result of the research project is key, may not be a one-time event, and may take many different forms (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). An explanation is given by Wilson (2008) who wrote that, “An Indigenous research paradigm is made up of an Indigenous ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology” (p. 13). Indigenous ontology and epistemology share the aspect of relationality and that Indigenous axiology and methodology share the aspect of accountability to relationships. Within this

accountability to relationships is the practice of properly attributing the sources of knowledge and information by using the sources name in order to validate the information. People credit their sources of information in order to show respect for what they have learned, to demonstrate accountability and to preserve the relationship and to ensure a good heart (Archibald, 2008). This is in stark contrast to the Euro-Western free market place of ideas where ideas are often stolen and credit is not properly given to the sources of information, in an attempt by the researcher to bolster one's resume, ego or professional ambitions. These aspects of relationality and relational accountability are put into practice by an Indigenous research in the selection of a research topic, methods of data collection, form of analysis and how information is presented (Wilson, 2008). These are of extreme importance and Weber-Pillwax (1999) seems to understand this as she says of being a researcher,

...while the context of a university may support a scholar's freedom to express learned opinions, it does not with the same strength and impunity guarantee support to the people and communities who may suffer as a result of those learned opinions (p. 35).

Archibald (2008) points out that

Researchers need to follow cultural protocols and take the time to develop respectful relationships with elders and if this does not happen the researcher starts asking for information more often than not questions will not be answered (p. 38).

In Indigenous research methodologies the protocols and guidelines of the indigenous peoples involved in the study are followed, not necessarily the guidelines of the Western academy as more often than not they do not fit and may even be disrespectful. In her own research experience Archibald (2008) writes,

Sometimes institutional procedures, such as making people sign documents and continually asking them to check the written versions for accuracy, may create an atmosphere of distrust or the impression that the learner/researcher can't get it right. The importance of establishing a teacher-learner relationship based on trust and ethical responsibility became more important to me in the work with Simon Baker and others (p. 44).

These cultural protocols are practiced in order to guarantee that reciprocity, relationships, respect and responsibility are maintained and kept intact. Within this research the cultural protocols of the *Apsáalooke* will be followed.

### *Apsáalooke* Cosmology

The *Apsáalooke* clan system is a part of the cosmology of the tribe and is still present in every facet of *Apsáalooke* tribal life today. *Apsáalooke* oral history starts with Isa'ahkawattee, Old Man Coyote, who is acknowledged as the originator of all that is primary in *Apsáalooke* society and figures heavily into the Creation story (Frey, 1950). Archibald (2008) writes that Western theoretical literary models are incongruent and inappropriate for Native American stories and if they are applied to them then the integrity of the stories are violated and new acts of colonization and conquest take place. The models of writing down these stories can be inappropriate when applied to them, misconstrue them and in effect possibly colonize them. In cultures where oral history is of great importance to ask whether the story is true or not true is asking the wrong type of question and that comes from a completely different worldview. The stories themselves exist and they are of importance as they contain teachings about how to live life, how to behave, facts about human nature, how to survive and how to be respectful in this world. The meanings, lessons and information within the stories are of importance; asking

whether or not something is a historical fact is missing the point completely. Often times Old Man Coyote teaches you what not to do by allowing one to see him in the stories making mistakes himself along with the resulting consequences that are sometimes comical. Although some early mistranslations and misunderstandings and disagreements are present in thinking about Crow ways of worship and understanding of the Creator. Although much of Lowie's work such as *Myths and Traditions of the Crow Indians* (1918) and *The Crow Indians* (1935) is of great value and cherished in the *Apsáalooke* community. It is understood that in some issues he did not know what was going on or what was being explained to him in some instances, as he had a lot of assumptions and at that time there were very few *Apsáalooke* fluent enough in the English language to explain many nuances in the belief system. Much of Robert Lowie's text in relation to the religious belief system is skewed as Lowie writes the Crow worship the sun as a god, while the Crow worship only the Creator, in a position deserving of worship (Baurele, 2004). Realbird (1994) writes that Old Man Coyotes role of Creator and Helper differs from family to family and from clan to clan. From all of the stories we find that Old Man Coyote is the sun, God or a helper. There are many versions of the stories and they are all good and they all have a good purpose.

Baurele (2004) writes that while Crows do admit that certain entities are shown respect through rituals and have power, but prayers and worship are only extended to First Maker. McCleary and Old Horn (1995) succinctly share the *Apsáalooke* creation story in their work, "Apsaalooke Social and Family Structure" which can be found on Little Big Horn Colleges website:

The Crow people say the Creator, Ichikbaalia, created the humans by instructing four ducks to go down into a body of deep water and retrieve mud from the bottom. The first three ducks failed, but after a long time, the fourth duck brought some mud from the bottom of the water. From this the Crow were formed. The Creator then breathed into his creation and for this reason Crow people say that speech or the word is sacred. Then he brought the Crow to a very clear spring and inside this spring they were shown a man with his bow drawn taught. The Creator said, "This is Crow people, I have made them to be small in number, but they will never be overcome by any outside force." The Crow people say that neither man nor woman was made first, it is simply said that the Crow were created

### *Ashammaliaxxiiia*

The *Apsáalooke* Clan system is a formal learning, teaching and educational institution as well as the foundation for learning among the tribe (Realbird, 1997). This system given to the *Apsáalooke* continues to influence and shape the life of the tribe and how traditional learning and knowledge is gained as it is the foundation of the *Apsáalooke* educational system (Realbird, 1997). It provides a framework of identity, ethics, spiritual and social beliefs and is also fluid and adaptable to our modern times and still very relevant in helping the *Apsáalooke* keep their unique identity and to survive in today's society. This is the protocol the researcher used as it is from one of the surviving customs of the *Apsáalooke* lifeway, known as *Ashammaliaxxiiia* (driftwood lodges together or where the driftwood intertwined and connects) the *Apsáalooke* clan system, which signifies driftwood gathering together along rivers (Realbird, 1997). The characteristics of driftwood floating down river together provide a metaphor or teaching about life and the *Apsáalooke* worldview and the interconnectedness of the clan system as well as all other *Apsáalooke* life (Frey, 1950).

Wilson (2008) emphasizes that Indigenous research is relational, accountable and respectful of the community engaged in the research. In this project the researcher adhered to the principles of Indigenous research methodology and utilized the *Apsáalooke* protocol for obtaining knowledge as I am *Biiluuke* and the research is relevant and of benefit to my own community. The protocol utilized for this study is found within the *Ashammaliaxxiia* (Driftwood Lodges) or the *Apsáalooke* clan system, and contains the pattern of obtaining permission, endorsement, selection of the participants that were involved in the research.

In 2006 when I graduated with my Master's degree in educational leadership, my family had a ceremony to express their thanks and appreciation to the Creator, at the end of the ceremony when we were "giving away," it was spoken to me that I should continue in my education and keep going as far as I could go. From the *Apsáalooke Ashammaliaxxiia* the researcher was given direction to continue his higher education studies, when I myself had not yet conceived of continuing my education. It is from the *Ashammaliaxxiia* that I conducted my research obtaining their permission and help.

#### Origins of the *Ashammaliaxxiia*

One story goes that there was a man was fasting and praying next to a river and seen a vision and driftwood gathered together along the bank, from this he was given the *Ashammaliaxxiia*'. One person alone will break easily but if the *Apsáalooke* are united and gathered together then they cannot be broken.

McCleary and Old Horn (1995) write that one day when the people were gathered together along the shore of a river,

The tradition relates that there was a time when the *Apsáalooke* people were gathered together as two boys had gotten into a disagreement, as young boys often do. The mothers of the children started to defend their sons and refused to give in and the strife of the incident had all of the people and camp in an uproar. When all the people were in groups, Old Man Coyote came along and noticing what was going on and said, 'I am a member of this *Ashammaliaxxiiia*' pointing to some driftwood lodged and intertwined together on the riverbank. The people replied, 'What is an *Ashammaliaxxiiia*?' and he explained, 'An *Ashammaliaxxiiia* is when people are related, you are not to marry within your *Ashammaliaxxiiia*' (p.69).

The clan system also taught people how to relate to one another and gave clearly defined and prescribed methods of behavior toward different relationships a person might have.

He then gave all of the groups their clan names. An *Apsáalooke* child receives his or her clan membership from one's mothers clan as it is a matrilineal system and identity and personality are directly related to the mother's clan membership, as it was the mothers who were defending their children, so the children would belong to their mothers clan (Lowie, Baurle, Medicine Crow). There were once thought to be twenty to thirty clans, then thirteen clans but now there are nine to ten clans (Realbird, 1997). The clans that remain have also merged into phratries, or sister clans, who are:

1. Uuwuutasshe (Greasy Mouths) and Ashiiioshe (Sore Lips)
2. Bilikooshe (Whisliting Water) and Ashkapkawiia (Bad War Deeds)
3. Xuhkaalaxche (Ties in a Bundle) and Uussaawaachilia (Brings home Game Without Shooting)
4. Ashshitchite (Big Lodge) and Ashhilaalio (Newly Made Lodge)
5. Ashkaamne (Pieigans)

The utmost importance is placed upon the family and what could be thought of as secondary in the social organization is the clan system (Medicine Crow, 1992). The

*Ashammaliaxxiia* is such a prominent part of life that an *Apsáalooke* member may not be fluent in the *Apsáalooke* language, practice any of the traditional spiritual beliefs such as the sweat lodge, Native American Church, Fasting, Sundance, or may not even attend the annual Crow Fair, but to be acknowledged as members of the tribe they must feed and honor their clan parents through giving four traditional gifts (Frey, 1950). While tribal members may not participate in certain cultural practices due to new Christian beliefs, all *Apsáalooke* members participate in this expression of *Apsáalooke* life and pray in their own manner whenever called upon by a clan child (Frey, 1950). I have seen many families from different economic, traditional and spiritual backgrounds continue the practice of feeding one's clan parents in times of need and in times of celebration and thanksgiving such as birthday parties or educational events. Real Bird (1997) states that, "to be *Apsáalooke* means to know one's clan." The *Ashammaliaxxiia* is present and functional today in every area of Crow life and has endured the test of time (Yarlott, 1999).

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research was to explore the expectations that the *Apsáalooke* community in Montana has for the school leaders who work within their communities and who lead the schools that educate their children. Outcomes from this study can be used to guide and inform both current and future school leadership, such as school boards, superintendents, principals, and community leaders in the vicinity of the Crow Indian Reservation and other similar Native American schools and leaders.

### Research Questions

Information was sought from *Apsáalooke* community members on their expectations from school leaders such as school principals and superintendents who serve their students. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What kind of behavior and actions do *Apsáalooke* tribal members expect from school leaders such as principals and superintendents serving their students?
2. How can a school leader work well with parents and leaders in the *Apsáalooke* community?
3. What do *Apsáalooke* tribal members want school leaders to know and be aware of in the education of the children of the tribe?

### Self-Location

In congruence with Indigenous research axiology and the methodology of relational accountability it is important that I share my background and position as a researcher (Wilson, 2001 & 2008). I will also identify where I am and where my point of view comes from. Savin-Baden, M., Major, H., & Clare, (2013) say that a strong positionality statement typically includes: The researchers lenses, relevant researcher beliefs, potential influences that are relevant to the study, the position a researcher has chosen to take up within a study, and concerns about the researchers study (p. 75).

I am a member of the *Apsáalooke* Nation who grew up on the Crow Indian Reservation and now serve as an education leader and have spent my career working with *Apsáalooke* students. School leadership, Social Justice, and Research Methodologies are

of great interest to me in my pursuit of an Ed. D. degree and in my desire to serve my people through education.

I spent formative years within a large close-knit *Apsáalooke* family with many mothers, brothers and sisters in an area called *Bineete*, or No Water, which is an area between the present day town of Lodge Grass Montana and the foothills of the Big Horn Mountains. Among the *Apsáalooke* I am a member of the Sore-Lip Clan, and I grew up with the Crow name *Awaachia'ookaate'* which was received by my grandmother through a dream. My father is *Apsáalooke* and my mother Blackfeet. I was raised by my grandmother as a *kaalisbaapite*, which is a place of privilege in many Crow families, by the late Gloria Goes Ahead-Cummins (or as us grandchildren affectionately called her, “*Ama*”). My grandmother was a traditional *Apsáalooke* woman as well as a devout Christian in the Catholic way. Some of her story can be found within pages of the book, *Crow Jesus: Personal Stories of Native Religious Belonging* (2017). Later on in my adult life I was traditionally adopted through *Apsáalooke* custom when I received another Crow name, *Bilaxpa'akdaashteesh* and was born-again as a member of the Big Lodge clan and a child of the Ties the Bundle Clan.

I grew up hearing about my grandfather and great grandfathers leadership, their ideas for the future, deeds, as well as their character and qualities from family members and family friends. Often times I heard stories about them from older people who expressed their deep appreciation for them by showing me genuine kindness, assistance and respectfulness. Growing up I continually heard prayers at home and in ceremonies with my family that I along with others would obtain an education and then in turn help

our people. From this experience I have never viewed education as anything other than a means of protecting, helping and preserving our people. I view it as a means of preserving the story, identity, language and culture of our community, as well as empowering us towards a successful future. The stories, prayers and wishes I have heard continue to guide me to this day and in my career I see the answer to my grandfather's prayers that *Apsáalooke* would become teachers and school leaders as well as fill other professional roles in our own Crow communities.

### Indigenous Protocol

Indigenous protocol addresses the Four R's that Kirkness & Barnhardt (2001) discuss in their breakthrough article for Indigenous higher education, which are respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility. The concept of reciprocity was adhered to by reporting back or sharing with the people whom I interviewed in order to conduct my research (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). In this process I was able to share with them the information that they have provided for this research project and the opportunity to clarify what they meant or to opt out of providing information. The idea of relevance made up the research itself, in order to be relevant within an Indigenous research methodology the research must benefit the community and this research will be available to be used by future school leaders who may have the opportunity to serve among the *Apsáalooke* (Wilson, 2008). Utilizing the *Apsáalooke* clan system's protocol the practice of respect, relevance, responsibility and reciprocity was maintained. According to Tuhiwai-Smith (2012),

Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behaviors as an integral part of methodology. They are ‘factors’ to be built into research explicitly, to be thought about reflexively, to be declared openly as part of the research design, to be discussed as part of the final results of a study and to be disseminated back to the people in culturally appropriate ways and in language that can be understood (p. 16-17).

Yarlott (1999) also wrote that in researching Indigenous people it is important to conduct research of cultural etiquette before beginning the main study. Walter Lightning (as referenced in Jo-Ann Archibald’s book, *Indigenous Storywork*), says of protocol,

That term, protocol, refers to any one of a number of culturally ordained actions and statements, established by ancient tradition that an individual completes to establish a relationship with another person from whom the individual makes a request (p. 216).

Because of my background and the context of my study, I employed the *Apsáalooke* Clan System Protocol of seeking information that is described in the dissertations of *Apsáalooke* tribal members Dr. David Yarlott and Dr. Lanny Real Bird.

In the *Apsáalooke* tradition of protocol I informed them both that their work assisted as a guide for my own work and expressed to them the appreciation I have for them and their work (Real Bird & Yarlott). This is in accord with the Indigenous concept of relational accountability to knowledge, as knowledge cannot be owned but can be shared and is often times transmitted through relationship (Wilson, 2008). I also hoped to demonstrate respect for their accomplishments and their efforts in documenting the process they undertook in their own academic studies and effort in maintaining cultural *Apsáalooke* protocol by mentioning them here and telling also by them in person. Clan relationships continue in modern times and are still of utmost importance among

knowledgeable *Apsáalooke* clan siblings enjoy a close-knit relationship of warmth, support and enjoy the opportunity and obligation of helping one another (Singer, 2015).

This protocol consisted of first seeking guidance from family, friends and clan uncles and aunts. When visiting with my family and clan parents for guidance I was given persons who would be sources of knowledge to visit with for this study.

Participants identified were those who were had obtained a higher education and who had emphasized the importance of formal education in their own families. Yarlott (1999) also identified potential interview subject based upon the recommendation of clan elders.

Once potential candidates were identified, depending upon the proximity of the relationship, it was necessary to seek an intermediary to inquire if the selected Clan parents and elders are willing to participate in the research, in order to give the possible source of knowledge the opportunity to turn down a request without directly turning down the researcher (Wilson, 2000). The people identified to be interviewed already had a pre-existing and ongoing relationship with myself or my family and the fact that the people identified had such a connection to the researcher is an accepted characteristic of research within Indigenous research methodologies (Kovach, 2009).

Realbird (1997) also followed the *Apsáalooke* clan system protocols as an active participant with his research authorized by nativist elders in different situations such as observations, conversationally constructed interviews, informal visits, personal communications and formal communications in ceremonies such as the sweat lodge, peyote religion, clan system and other culturally significant gatherings. The participants

from whom he gathered data were related to the researcher through birth, adoption, *Apsáalooke* or Hidatsa clan or from recommendation.

It was important that the study follow this protocol in order to have validity for the *Apsáalooke* community as Yarlott (1999) pointed out that, “Following Crow protocol ensures the acceptance of the research as valid in the eyes of the Crow people” (p. 80). Interviews consisted of informal conversations and allowing them to share stories, examples and to utilize other means of natural communication and allowing them to share their knowledge in the *Apsáalooke* language if they chose to do so and recording them if permission was granted and if the subjects felt comfortable doing so, having the patience of letting them tell the whole story without interruption and honoring their wishes of how the information was to be shared and, when necessary, afterwards the meeting the giving of traditional gifts to the individual providing assistance and knowledge will take place when necessary (Yarlott, 1999).

### Setting

This study took place among the *Apsáalooke* nation’s current 2.2 million acre reservation located in south central Montana. The reservation is located mostly in Big Horn County and Yellowstone County and also borders the state of Wyoming. The reservation has three mountain ranges, the Big Horn Mountains, the Pryor Mountains, and the Wolf Mountains. It also has three waterways, the Big Horn River, the Little Big Horn River and the Pryor Creek. The reservation is made up of seven districts: Center Lodge, the Valley of the Chiefs, Arrow Creek, Valley of the Give-Away, Mighty Few,

Black Lodge and No Water. According to the 2011 U.S. Census Bureau there are currently approximately 14,500 enrolled tribal members and of those approximately 10,000 live on or near the reservation. The median average age is 27 years old and 38.2% of the tribe has a High School Diploma and 17% of the tribe has a bachelor's degree or higher.

### Participants

Individuals that were interviewed were identified through an Indigenous research methodology and protocol and were interviewed in different situations such as conversationally constructed interviews, informal visits, and personal communications.

The participants of this study are enrolled members of the *Apsáalooke* nation or are members through adoption and are respected in the *Apsáalooke* community. The participants were connected to the researcher through the clan system, birth or had been identified through recommendations as people of interest to interview for this study by those involved through the clan system following the methods utilized by Realbird (1997) and Yarlott (1999). Participants have been named, in accordance with Indigenous research methodological protocol's unless they wished to remain anonymous, in which case they are given a pseudonym taken from the *Apsáalooke* language.

### Data Collection Procedures & Analysis

In this process relational accountability differs from member checking as the researcher continues to be accountable to the sources of information and as well as to the

information gathered through the maintenance of respectful relationships and the continuation of cultural protocols. The data collection processes included in depth interviews, structured and non-structured interviews, informal visits, personal communications and in various contexts and situations. Once the interviews and/or conversations were completed the researcher connected again with participants to share personal reflections, notes, and summaries from the interview. This was in order to share the information that was collected with the subjects in order to validate that this was in effect what they were communicating in order to preserve relational accountability (Wilson, 2008) and give them the opportunity to correct any misunderstandings, to omit any information or even then, to choose not to contribute to this work if so chose. For those who had email access, notes and direct quotations and summaries were emailed back to give the participants an opportunity for corrections, omissions and clarifications. The interviews gathered were collected and then the researcher looked for certain themes that emerged and codified them looking for responses that could answer what *Apsáalooke* tribal members, identified through the clan system, want educational leaders serving students in their school to know and be aware of thus providing an *Apsáalooke* view for educational leadership. Certain stories, examples, or metaphors that convey meaning were preserved and shared. Participants are named, in accordance with Indigenous research methodological protocol's unless they wished to remain anonymous, and in this case they were given a pseudonym taken from the *Apsáalooke* language. The data collected was stored in a password protected computer. The files were destroyed 6 months after the interview.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify what *Apsáalooke* tribal members, identified to the researcher through the clan system, want school leadership such as superintendents and principals who serve the children in their tribe to know and to be aware of, because of the influence school leaders have on schools and so that they can be successful in their leadership efforts. The study was conducted in a culturally sensitive and appropriate method, as well as an academically and valid scientific method of gathering data. It utilized the already existent tribal protocol for learning and obtaining knowledge among the Crow tribe, called the Crow Clan system which is an institution that has been in existence longer than the United States of America, or any Western University on this continent. This study was conducted in adherence to Wilson's (2008) work, "Research as Ceremony," which emphasizes that Indigenous research is relational, accountable and respectful of the community. This study was also a practice in the use of an Indigenous research methodology.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## RESULTS

Introduction

This was a qualitative study done through the theoretical lenses of Tribal Critical Race Theory and an Indigenous worldview described by various indigenous researcher's called the Four R's, which are: respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility.

The purpose of this study was to seek information from *Apsáalooke* community members concerning their expectations for school leaders, such as school principals and superintendents, who serve their students. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What kind of behavior and actions do *Apsáalooke* tribal members expect from school leaders such as principals and superintendents serving their students?
2. How can a school leader work well with parents and leaders in the *Apsáalooke* community?
3. What do *Apsáalooke* tribal members want school leaders to know and be aware of in the education of the children of the tribe?

The major themes found in this study, which are elaborated below, are:

1. A leader's first job is to learn;
2. Lead through relationships;
3. Crows take education seriously;
4. The preservation of *Apsáalooke* identity and culture.

Almost all the participants mentioned that leaders need to be open minded and ready to learn rather than coming into the community with preconceived notions. In doing so school leaders should learn about the community and the people in it.

The need for leaders to be able to work with the community, and within its multifaceted layers of relationships and connections, is important. But in order to lead through relationships, a leader needs to be present and in the community in order to develop their own relationships.

The Crow tribes relationship with formalized western education is rather new, but they did already have education systems set in place so education is important to the tribe. Although they have mixed experiences with Western education, they do have high expectation for students and also for educators.

The preservation of *Apsáalooke* identity, culture, and language of the tribe is of utmost importance. While some things have changed and evolved over time the *Apsáalooke* identity remains present and it is of critical importance that school leaders understand the significance of its maintenance and preservation and not perpetrate any actions to attempt to do the opposite.

### Profile of Participants

After interviews with eighteen participants saturation was achieved. All of the participants, but two, were enrolled *Apsáalooke*, and they did have different life backgrounds and experiences. Four had bachelor's degree alone, five had a bachelor's degree and a master's degree, three had doctorate degrees, and three were highly skilled

craftsmen who had training beyond high school and are considered leaders. The two non-tribal members have been adopted by the tribe, have also lived among the Crows for 30 years or more and had come to participate in the life and pathways of the Crow. The average age of the participants was 61.88 years old. The participants have spent the majority of their lives on the Crow Indian Reservation, except at a point when they had left to receive educational and job training or had left for work. The two non-enrolled participants have been on the Crow Indian Reservation for 30 years or more. There were six females and 12 males. Sixteen currently had, or previously had, children enrolled in *Apsáalooke* schools while fourteen currently have grandchildren in schools on the Crow Indian reservation. Fourteen have worked in a school at one point in time, or currently do, on the Crow Indian reservation and ten are considered to be educators on the Crow Indian Reservation. Through interviews with the participants, four salient themes emerged.

It is important to note that the communication styles of the participants do not always follow a linear structure and is often circular. Many times two or three themes were mentioned in the same sentence, or the theme was mentioned then the topic seemingly changes but then returns to the original topic. Out of respect, and to maintain the original meaning the quotes have been maintained and with permission, stories have been paraphrased for readability with the original intent and meaning preserved. In writing about this communication style, Yarlott (1999) wrote that,

For the *Apsáalooke* people, events occur at the right time and do not follow a linear timeline. As in other Indian cultures, time is circular. The topics may follow this same pattern, where they may overlap and/or return to a previous topic.

There was also a lot of humor and inside jokes during this research project that made it particularly enjoyable, but those were omitted as prior cultural and personal knowledge is needed to understand the humor and they could be easily misunderstood or misinterpreted.

### A Leader's First Job is to Learn

The participants emphasized the importance of school leaders being open minded, vulnerable and willing to learn about the community and its unique culture. This seems like the attitude and approach that any new leader would have entering a school, yet often times in schools this hasn't been the case. *Binauxchéesbase* talked about the importance of listening when one is a leader, "Part of leadership is having a listening ear, you have to listen, you don't have to agree but listen. Be open-minded, you don't have to accept but listen." In emphasizing the need to learn, participants shared that many times school leaders existing knowledge base isn't sufficient in relation to working with the *Apsáalooke* community; and what approaches may have worked in a non-Native school, or with other tribes, does not guarantee they will work amongst the *Apsáalooke*. In some cases, this sentiment of desiring open-mindedness from school leaders comes from past experiences with school leaders, and schools in general, where the Native American communities felt their opinions and desires were not taken into consideration or given any respect or real weight. *Ish'bishiaxupeé Iibaaet'itchish* mentioned that it was difficult when school leaders came in closed minded and said, "when school leaders

come in with my way or the highway approach it is very difficult." Yarlott talked about the importance of being teachable and learning about the *Apsáalooke* culture. He said:

Leaders need to have an openness to realize that everyone does not see the world the way they see it...Coming in they might be experts in their field with a master's degree or a doctorate, and they may have even worked with other tribes previously they had better be ready to learn again because different tribes have different attitudes, perspectives, and perceptions. For example, even though the Crow and Northern Cheyenne are neighbors they have completely different customs. The Crows respect their brother-in-law's and the Northern Cheyenne's tease theirs.

Respondents talked about the importance of being heard and truly listened to by school leaders. People desire a leader who will listen to their concerns and take action.

*Íhchihchia Isítcheesh* said:

That they are patient and listen, I think mostly it's listening, we give them more respect if they sit and they listen to us and take action on whatever our concerns are because sometimes we feel like they're not doing anything. Maybe they are and we don't know but sometimes it feels like our concerns aren't valid.

### Learn about the Culture

All the respondents mentioned that it is important for school leaders to have respect for the people, and know about and respect the *Apsáalooke* culture, origins, beliefs, heroes, history, and family structures and even the social-political identity of tribal members who have dual citizenship, first with the *Apsáalooke* Nation and second with the United States of America. Before answering many prefaced all their comments by emphasizing the practice of respect for kids and community must come first. Many said things like, "they have to be respectful of all community members," "First of all respect," and, "Of course, respect..." When talking about what he wanted school leaders

to know Pretty On Top simply stated, "...underlying everything that I'm saying is respect for the individual and for the tribe and for people." *Chikitchée*, or respect, is a very important practice as well as a quality of character strived for amongst the Apsaalooke. School leaders must be what could be considered good role models and display moral behavior and high personal standards of ethics and care. This being said, being good role model alone, does not nearly translate the depth and expanse of meaning that *Chikitchée* has. School leaders must display respect of themselves and for others.

When talking about the need to learn about the culture respondents said that school leaders need to respect it and be aware of it. In doing so it will be helping their leadership practice as doing so will often times prevent issues and misunderstandings and it also helps build trust and support from the community. In talking about being aware of the culture Graczyk said, "They do not have to become experts in it but they should be aware of it, respect it and have some working knowledge." *Ish'bishiaxupe'* *Ibbaeet'itchish* added that "Not every person, principal or superintendent is the same, but as long as they are respectful of our culture and traditions it will be helpful." When talking about the superintendents that have been in the community previously *Íhchihchia* *Isitcheesh* mentioned that leaders should have an interest in the culture that their students are a part of and not try to change the students' ways. She commented:

What I expect from superintendents would be just an interest, as long as they have an interest a little interest in our culture because our kids come [to school] with our culture. As long as they have an interest and validate it rather than trying to change us and make us conform to their ways, I think that's I would look for or want. It doesn't necessarily happen but that's something that would be good to have.

This advice for learning about the culture not only applies to non-Indians or non-tribal members but also applies to tribal members themselves who may be school leaders, as there are some who may not be aware of cultural practices for one reason or another and even if they themselves do not practice cultural traditions in order to be successful they should be respectful and not impede it. School leadership is also encouraged to respect the tribes' beliefs and culture as well as become aware of them. One participant said:

I think administrators need to learn about the culture our culture if they are not Native, in order to incorporate it through the school, this for me makes the school environment a place students want to be, a place where I want to be. This goes for Indians too, many don't even know and practice cultural ways.

Real Bird mentioned that as a faculty member of Little Big Horn College some staff were unfamiliar with the cultural ways, for example *Apsáalooke* women will often cut their hair when they lose a loved one and are in mourning and this made for an uncomfortable situation when unaware coworkers in with good intentions would attempt to complement their new haircut or when staff wanted students to speak publicly and didn't know the culture as it pertains to public speaking. So he created a DVD which he recommended school leaders be orientated with, Little Big Horn College has been using it to orient personnel as well as new faculty and students where they learn about, "the characteristics of what it means to be a Crow." The topics the DVD covers are divided into four sections which are: 1. Clans, Kinship, and Values, 2. Language Structure and Public Speaking, 3. Religion and Tribal Holidays, and 4. Crow Naming and Mourning. He also added:

Talk about conceptual processes, object/subject/verb, the levels of translation, subject/verb/object, because Crow thinkers may be talking English only but these issues are still present because they are Crow thinkers, even if they are not fluent in Crow. Tell them about plural religions, multi-religions, the clan system. It's critical to understand the interpretation of Native holidays which is basically when everyone gets together. Examples are of these holidays are a clan feed, a new sweat, or other holidays and even modernly basketball games.

In speaking about the need for school leaders to learn about the culture, *Binauxchéesbase* likened school personnel to sometimes making the same mistakes of the early missionaries who did not understand some things and because of misunderstanding and fear tried to do away with cultural practices and ways. Talking about this, he said:

For some of them [school leaders] it's probably like going into another country and it's probably scary for them, missionaries were afraid of our ways and their big mistake was trying to throw it all away. Instead of being afraid and trying to throw away our spirituality and sacred objects they needed to learn, let them know. When I go to another tribe I have to watch, not judge, but learn and not try to change their ways, but respect.

Many times leaders come into the community thinking they do not need to learn anything and that their previous experiences and training are sufficient, and because of this they may not be open to input from local community members but the truth is there are some real and legitimate cultural differences that must be taken into considerations. In describing this, Graczyk said:

Be open to parents and community members rather than coming in with all the answers. Your first job is to learn that you are dealing with a different culture, kids are kids everywhere but in many respects, these kids and their families have some cultural differences that you need to be sensitive to.

There are very few non-Indians who live in the area who have become familiar with the culture and community. Many times a separation exists between non-Indians and the Native American community they are living in for whatever reason and this also sends a

negative message. But when there are non-Indian individuals who do come into the community, are friendly and open to the community and develop connections, whether it be by attending church or playing sports with Natives, or doing anything, this is a very positive thing and people sincerely appreciate it. When describing this, *Chiiláape Biissáane* said,

Know who we are, know our clan system, know our culture. I'd like for them to teach the non-Indians our culture. A lot of them still don't know our culture. They live here and their parents are born and raised here along with the Indians and they still don't know our culture. It would be nice for them to know our culture, we know their culture. It would be nice for them to say, 'we need to know their culture because they know our culture.' Once they start doing that and the community sees that the morale will be high.

Pretty On Top also talked about school leadership learning about the culture and also discussed an administrator who would become aware of the community. He also went on to describe this and said:

There are elements of our culture that are still strong and the administrator should make a point to become aware, to know understand and respect, underlying everything that I'm saying is respect for the individual for the tribe and for the people. And that there are elements of Crow culture that are still powerful and hoping that administrator somewhere along the line, that the longer that administrator stays in the community, get to know the people, be out there, be visible. Respect. If your heart is in what you're doing you'll do that, if you're in it just for professional growth, the professional there's nothing wrong with it, but I mean if it's just for your professional self-esteem then you're in the wrong business. You're working with people you're committed to people in education. Relationships, develop positive relationships, I say for someone coming in, you're not going to get anywhere if you just sit in your office and watch your camera's to see who's coming in.

It seems that often times learning is viewed as a one-way street going from the school to the community but it needs to be a two-way street. *Úute Basséesh* told a story about her father who was on the school board and a very involved parent. She mentioned

that at that time he was one of the few tribal members who would take the time to visit every one of his children's teachers. She shared:

My dad would say to teachers, 'if we have to learn about your ways and language you should have to learn about our ways. If I have to learn about your ways and how you teach, then you should learn about our ways and watch how I teach my kids and how we learn.'

One respondent said that if a school leader respected and started to learn about the *Apsáalooke* culture it would have a positive effect on the community and be thought of positively by students and families. *Chiiláape Biissáane* said:

It would be nice for them to know our culture; we know their culture. It would be nice for them to say, 'we need to know their culture because they know our culture,' once they start doing that and the community sees it the moral will be high.

A very practical reason school leaders need to be aware of the culture is in planning and scheduling school events and in developing the academic calendar. In discussing this one respondent said, "It would be helpful to understand the culture so that they can plan with the community and not against it." One event spoken of in particular is the tribe's annual Crow Fair celebration that has been happening every third weekend in August for 100 years. This celebration has been taking place longer than *Apsáalooke* students have been allowed to enroll in and attend public schools. It is a celebration with deep cultural significance and a time of reconnecting as tribal members travel home during this time to see family and friends as well as participate in the activities. The problem is the school leaders often do not care that they are planning the start of the school year in a conflicting time as this enormous community event and if they would be open-minded and learn about the culture they would understand its significance. Another

issue is that most contracts and policies within schools that serve *Apsáalooke* students are based upon white American culture and this is most visibly seen in student attendance policies and their interpretation as well as employee personal, sick and bereavement leave, which does not include the definition of family for *Apsáalooke* tribal members who may be employed by the school or enrolled in the school. In discussing the importance of this gathering, *Chiiláape Biissáane* said:

Crow fair is our New Year and we have a Parade Dance Ceremony where we pray together as a tribe and we don't break camp until this ceremony is completed because we believe we can't take our camp down until this is complete. It is important and a lot of elders will say, 'I want to see one more Crow Fair,' or, 'as long as I see the next Crow Fair.' But schools honor the non-Indians celebrations such as New Year's Day and Christmas and plan the calendar around their own cultural holidays.

### Learn about the Community

Almost all the participants emphasized the need for school leaders to be willing to learn about the community and to be open minded. *Daxbiishé* said:

It's common courtesy for them to come into our community and try to learn about our community...you're not going into a Greek or Italian community, it's an *Apsáalooke* community. As a school leader, it seems like you would want to know something about the community.

She also added that we live in rural communities with their own set of challenges such as a lack of access to healthcare and things like grocery stores. And when there are sometimes major snow storms in communities like Wyola or Pryor and students have a difficult time making it to school because the roads are not plowed, this makes travel almost impossible and very dangerous and often times schools do not care and just mark the kids tardy without understanding.

And the incorrect assumption is that each *Apsáalooke* community is the same because they are all *Apsáalooke*, but although they share the same culture, cultural practices, and identity each community is different. It is important to note that the Crow reservation is made up of seven districts which are: No Water, Valley of the Chiefs, Arrow Creek, Might Few, Center Lodge, Valley of the Give-Away and Black Lodge that are defined geographically. There are also five towns which are: Lodge Grass, Pryor, Wyola, Crow Agency, St. Xavier and Fort Smith. Each district has its own unique community identity and different leaders and families that are present within them, yet they are also deeply connected to the rest of the reservation as all the tribe is one. Pretty On Top said, "...each community is different and you have to get to know the community." In speaking of the interconnectedness of the community and the need to be able to navigate successfully within all the relationships, McCleary remarked:

Have the skills to know understand the community, which for the Crow's is everyone. You have to know all the districts and towns on the whole reservation. Because someone's father might be from Crow but their mother may be from Pryor. Knowing who they are and who they are connected to is very useful...Connect and understand who that person is and who they are in Crow society. Knowing who a person is, is helpful because in Crow Country everyone knows everyone. The primary thing is to know who a person is. Non-Indians are taught not to take this into consideration. Crow relationships are so valuable they need to take these relationships into consideration. In a non-Indian community, a person may say, 'I don't care how Timmy is related to anyone or even to his own mother,' and it doesn't impact their work. But in the Crow community, it does.

Within these communities, there are also family differences to be taken into consideration and to be aware of. Most schools are completely on the reservation and one school district, Hardin is located on and off the reservation with two elementary schools on the

reservation while the others are located less than a mile from the reservation. In speaking of these differences in schools and families *Íhchihchia Istcheesh* said:

The other schools are right on the reservation whereas we're kind of different, our district is different because only our school [Crow Agency Public School] is on the reservation. Other school districts are on the reservations. But it seems like they should be really involved in whatever culture the children bring, and it's not just the Native culture, it's like their own culture wherever they come from because within our culture there are so many differences. There's the traditional people and then the ones who are Christian and completely let go of anything traditional and then there's all those in between. And there are differences too, there are the ones who pow-wow the ones who hand-game, they're all different. They should just at least know. Maybe try to make a connection with those who run hand-games and say when you're having hand-games, we're not saying don't do them, but maybe make parents aware that hey it's kind of getting late maybe you should send your kids home so they can get some rest. Maybe make some sort of connection like that, like we don't want to say don't do hand-games during school but give them some kind of incentive or information saying hey it's important that they [the students] go to bed so they're not up all night and then don't send them to school or you send them to school and they sleep. But something. But I don't think that's ever happened, it's always kind of like they [schools] dread hand-games.

In speaking of the difference in schools between the communities one respondent also mentioned a difference between the larger school district located in Hardin and the other districts as well as the approaches those school leaders take when coming into a school and their approach to understanding them. *Chiiláape Biissáane* said:

The smaller schools like Pryor, Lodge Grass, and Pretty Eagle, those leaders make the effort. They already understand they are coming into an Indian school. They know that. But when someone comes to Hardin they don't want to be an Indian school but they are an Indian school. When I was on the school board I seen the numbers and at that time the district of 78% Native American. Once they accept it things will be a lot better, but they have to accept it. They used to have a segregated parking lot until a couple of years ago they finally stopped it.

When attempting to forge relationships sincerity and authenticity were mentioned as important qualities in getting to know the *Apsáalooke* community. One participant mentioned how as children they were taught to listen and pay attention and how body language and tones were very important to communicating and how sometimes educators might be saying the right thing but their body language and tones of voice tell otherwise. *Úute Basséesh* said, “Our history is not written down but it’s all verbal because we listen. We have developed more listening skills than verbal because we listen.” When discussing and describing how one should connect with the community, Yarlott gave some advice and commented:

Be open to learning and connecting with the community. Be sincere, don’t go overboard, nothing will tank a leader faster if they are insincere and fake. This is related to being sincere, be who you are, don’t try to remake yourself to what you think people want you to be, be authentic.

He then went on to use a metaphor to describe overboard insincere efforts to get to know the community, likening it to sugar, it tastes good at first but if you have too much of it makes you sick and you do not want to have any more to do with it.

### Learn About Relationships

Many participants cited that learning about and respecting relationships present in the community was very important for school leaders. Relationships are already present within the school and it is important to understand them. A leader must know who cannot interact with each other, who can tease each other and who may be closely related through blood, clan, traditional adoption or marriage. Cummins said of those with close ties within the tribe:

You have to be aware of the relationships, we're more close to each other culturally and have closer relations than most. We help raise each other and we help each other with everything and that is because of the close knit ties that most families have, in the white world when their kids are of age some of them kick their kids out to go and fend for themselves. They [school leaders] got to realize that. Know what's going on with families.

When talking about getting to know the community, Small stated:

Get to know the families in the community, get to know where they are at. We all kind of have a spot in our communities whether we're a leader a follower or anything like that. Know what's going on with families.

Graczyk, in speaking of the practical helpfulness of having knowledge of community relationships can have in being a school leader, said:

It really helps once you can get some idea of family relations, this is important as an administrator and this takes time but if you can figure out how people are related that often explains a lot. How these relationships interact. How different people react.

Also talking about cultural differences *Binauxchéesbase* said:

Part of the way we are is that we are not to have eye contact, especially a brother and sister. The white want eye contact and we don't do it because we respect each other. When we talk to each other we may glance at the person talking, that's it, we don't stare. White's say to kids 'you look at me and listen to me.' That's their way, not our way. We even think different. If there's a big tree somewhere we look at it and appreciate it, maybe sit in the shade and have respect for it, it's alive. A white may look at the same tree and instead of seeing something alive they see money, or a resource, then they kill it and cut it down and cut it to pieces. We see something alive, they see something to sell.

Adding to the importance of understanding the community and all the relationships within it one respondent noted that it would be a mistake if a school leader thought all they had to do was their work within the school because the relationships in the community are also present within the school and to ignore these relationships would only invite trouble. McCleary, speaking of the importance of relationships, explained:

Dynamics of the community need to be understood. Know who is who. A big mistake non-Crows make is thinking they only need to do their administrative work. Even within their own staff relationships and connections are already present. There are family, generational and clan relationships. To ignore this is to create problems....Crow relationships are so valuable they need to take these relationships into consideration.

He then shared a story about the relationships that are often at play. A student from off of the reservation wanted to come and observe his classroom. Within the classroom he had connections with the students that extended beyond the boundaries of the educational institution. He had many nephews in the classroom as well as nieces. The nieces in the classroom and he were very respectful towards each other so their interactions were very reserved and minimal, as per Crow culture they did not interact too much directly as they did not want to do anything that might embarrass one another. The males on the other hand were very talkative and he and them bantered and teased back and forth during the class time. Afterwards he and the person doing observations had a meeting to debrief. The observer saw the females and being quiet and the males as being outgoing. Without being aware of the relationship dynamics, the observer was unaware of the cultural dynamics happening within these relationships in the room.

In talking about her desire for how school leaders should respect and learn about the culture *Daxbiishé* said, "There's a lot of Crow literature out there that they could read." She then mentioned that school leaders should learn about things like the cultural relationships and then mentioned a humorous childhood memory when she was a student in P.E. Her class was made of mostly her brothers or cousin brothers and the boys outnumbered the girls in class and the teacher wanted them to square dance. She refused to dance with any of her brothers because it was disrespectful. The teacher got upset and

sent her to the principal's office. When her grandfather came in she told him that they were trying to make her dance with her brother so he talked to the principal and the teacher. The teacher was really upset and said, "This isn't Crow, this is high school and she has to do what we tell her." After her grandfather met with the principal and teacher, she doesn't remember what was said but she ended up dancing with a girl cousin in class. She then said:

That was hard because they didn't understand and they refused to. When I look back and remember the story, I can see the teachers reactions when I refused to dance with my male relatives, she believed that we should no longer believe in our *Apsáalooke* culture and thought it was no longer necessary, She thought we needed to let it go. The teachers need to understand that students have two cultures to learn from, one you are born into, the *Apsáalooke* and you learn the way of our life, the other is school education life, where you complete the high levels of education and become self-supportive and have a secure future through working. We wish and pray for our children and grandchildren to do this and yet hold strong to our *Apsáalooke* life. We do not choose either, we belong to both, now we use that education to help and protect our way of life and we teach our children to be strong minded in both worlds.

Laughter and teasing are a large part of traditional *Apsáalooke* relationships and this must be understood. Teasing is not always bullying and it sometimes serves as a friendly way to interact and banter back and forth and laugh about each other's deeds or misdeeds. When needed it serves as social control and even then respect is to be present. If members of a teasing do not interact one may suspect something is wrong in their relationship so it is expected to joke and have fun with one another. *Binauxchéesbase* in speaking of this type of interaction and explaining respect is still to be present, said:

Part of respect is when I was young if someone teased you, you didn't get mad. You would get back at them in a teasing way if you don't overdo your teasing. *Chikittuu*, respect them. They say teasing clan would go and tease their sick brother until he would get mad and then get up and be better. So

us Crows invented bullying [laughing]. We like to tease and laugh at each other, it's good we do that. We still respect each other but we like to laugh. Even though it's hard to respect my teasing brother [laughing]. But white people say teasing is bad, but us Crows say it is good.

Even the relationships between parents and children may be different than what an unaware school leader may be used to. When talking about the cultural differences in childrearing that may be present, Graczyk explained:

Have an openness to realize that Native people have different values and ways of life even in regards to child raising. Crow parents respect their children's thoughts, opinions feelings, and desires. Even real young little ones are almost in a sense treated like little adults with their own opinions and desires and that has to be respected. He then shared a story of a time when he asked a mother where her son was going to attend school in the fall and she responded, 'I don't know I haven't asked him yet.' This was a first grader.

*Apsáalooke* understand that children need to move and it is unnatural to sit still for long, so the students are allowed to move, play and have fun. Of course, there are times when children need to be still, but children are not punished for natural behaviors and oftentimes this can be seen in church services or other gatherings where children play together while the parents are involved in the activity. *Binauxchéesbase* commented on this difference in culture reflecting children's movement and respecting their individual personalities, and said:

It's in us as a Native to be respectful, we respect nature, Creator and the people. But if we completely turn to white culture we are losing everything. Native kids listen to adults even if they are playing around on the floor wrestling they are still listening. White culture wants their kids to sit still and do nothing but sit there and listen.

There are differences in the concepts of family. While people may think the nuclear family is the right or correct version of family, this is incorrect as nuclear families only

became a norm after the industrial revolution. For the *Apsáalooke*, there is a large close-knit family structure. Rock Above mentioned cultural differences in the definition of family when visiting with a school principal and said:

Don't say the terms step-child, half-sibling and adopted or foster. This generation keeps trying to use the *Basschiile* way, if you're in that family you're in that family. Don't use those words, that's not Crow to separate yourselves from each other, that's the white way.

### Lead Through Relationships

Intertwined within the theme of learning about the culture, community and relationships and somewhat congruous and inseparable is the theme of leading through relationships by being present in the community, connecting, working with leaders in the community and also defending your relationships.

### Be Present and Connected

Connections cannot authentically be made without actually making oneself vulnerable enough to in order to connect, because a school leader needs to get out of their comfort zone. Oftentimes school leaders who are not familiar with a community, and even those who are from the community they work in, are not comfortable being in the community, are tired, or sometimes stuck in a rut and unwilling to leave the comfort zone of their offices or school building. Small commented, "too many times, our superintendents live in another town. They don't live in the district so nobody knows them, they really don't have a vested interest in that community."

It has a positive effect and sends a good message when administrators and teachers live in the community, but the reality is that sometimes it isn't possible to live in the community due to lack of housing availability. Being present is key because if the community perceives that a school leader thinks little of them and that they are not valuable enough for that leader to spend time with, it is probably not going to be very easy getting parental support and buy-in. Often times leaders who do not spend any time in the community outside of the school day may be viewed as being there only for the paycheck. One easy way school leaders can start to connect with the community and to become present is by attending school functions as often times school leaders are not present during their own school's activities beyond the school day. Speaking to the reality that some leaders may not be able to live in the community, Graczyk said:

But even if they don't live in Pryor, if they would show up for stuff like dances, basketball games and dinners it would mean a lot. Often times if leaders are not present in the community it leaves the impression that they don't want to be there any more than they have to.

When school leaders do show up to events outside of their workday or work with students after school on things like running programs for homework or enrichment activities, rather than going home immediately this demonstrates care to the parents and community. Being seen and present also demonstrates care. On the other side of the same coin, not being present at events and consistently leaving immediately when the contracted work day is over sends a message that one doesn't care about the students or the community as demonstrated by the following response by *Ish 'bishiaxupe'* *Ibaaeet'itchish*, where he said:

When the teachers or principals are seen at extra-curricular activities, afterschool activities and putting in the extra time to help students after school with homework, I seen that they were putting in the extra miles and it is very helpful because it shows they are here to help our children to learn and they care about them. It shows that they do care, I've seen some that punch in and punch out and they are gone and you don't see them. They never apply themselves, I've seen a lot of them.

Pretty On Top shared this same observation from his observations and explained:

To me where a lot of administrators miss the boat, even what I've seen here in Lodge Grass as I've been associated with them over the years as a board member or as a social worker, administrators come in and sit in that office and don't come out. Involve the community and bring them in because they are the parents, grandparent aunts, and uncles of the students that you're working with.

When one becomes a school leader they are not only leaders in the school but also become de facto community leaders also as in most Crow communities the schools are the center of all social interactions and events. Small added that school leaders need to demonstrate that they are in the school for the right reasons, which would be to for the benefit of the students and the community itself and said:

You want school leaders in the community talking to people and visiting with them. You know not only are they leaders of the school but they're leaders of the community. Be seen, be visible and show that you are there for the community and the kids.

Many respondents suggested that a school leader in an *Apsáalooke* community should be proactive in their efforts to connect with the community instead of waiting for people to come to meet the leader. Holding an authentic social setting, as opposed to a business meeting or an informational giving meeting, where people could get to know the school was emphasized by many respondents. All mentioned that a good meal should be provided for the community in order to bring people in to connect, some shared this fact

very seriously while others laughed about this important part of the meeting.

*Baatatbaachaaliileesh*, recommended that school leaders to have a social event in order to communicate with parents consistently, and by consistently she suggested maybe even monthly in order to talk about things that are happening at the school and emphasized that they need to provide the parents with a good meal. She said, “The other thing I would do is just have a dinner tonight and everyone’s invited. Don’t have to be no business, just visit. And then pretty soon parents feel good and comfortable around you.”

Making a recommendation on what administrators could do to connect with the community and the need to do so no matter what one’s background or previous experience, Pretty On Top recommended:

They need to go out if you come into a school anywhere. What I would recommend to a new administrator is that you don't have to wait to be invited, say if a Choctaw Indian comes to Lodge Grass I'd say set up a meeting at your own expense, a feed, invite the people, invite the community. You can't come into any community if you don't know the people and sit in your office and say I'm the new superintendent come and see me.

*Úute Basséesh* also said that when meeting with the community school leaders should do so with a meal. *Chiiláape Biissáane* described these events and meetings where people feel welcomed and explained:

When you [a school leader] provide a meal at events like parent-teacher conferences, families plan for this and they like hanging around the school and once they see the school they understand it's a learning institution. By opening the door and saying ‘we're going to feed you and you can come and see your child's teachers,’ everybody is in good spirits when this happens.

The provision of a meal is important. Many times people don’t understand a meal’s spiritual and cultural significance when gathering a group of people together. Whereas

school personnel might think of it as merely just eating food or disparage the idea of providing a meal for school functions and think people are only attending the meeting to eat. It is actually so much more than that because at important events and in order to show respect towards people a meal is given and shared. This is a way to show people that they are welcome and a way to fellowship and connect. People of all cultures around the world often times break bread to connect with each other. In the Crow culture when visiting one's home a meal cannot be turned down and to be a good host visitor in your home one must always offer a guest a meal if one doesn't have anything to offer they can still offer a glass of water. In mentioning the cultural significance of a meal and why it is important for gathering people, *Chiiláape Biissáane* added:

For Natives, a meal is important, whenever you honor someone you have a feed. Clan feeds are really key to us (*Apsáalooke*) because we feed our clan aunts and clan uncles and they turn around and say good wishes for us. That's why a meal is important to the Native community.

Respondents also spoke of being present and connecting with the school community beyond the confines of the school. Yarlott extended this idea of being present in the community by saying:

Leaders need to connect outside the school environment. It is easy to stay in your school and say, 'come see me.' Connect with people, and not just at sporting events, although this is a good start... to be interested is one-way leaders can demonstrate that they are sincere and they are not just a suit in an office collecting a paycheck.

When school leaders are present in the community they are able to gain a better understanding of the parents and community they serve. The need to get to know the community is very important. It is very noticeable when educators to participate in the life of the community because it so rarely happens. One respondent expressed the desire

of school leaders to do so in order for them to understand their students better and shared that often times they do not do so. Talking about her desire for leaders to become involved in the community in order to work better with families and students, *Úute Basséesh* said:

Principals need to mingle in the community. If they would just mingle in the community and maybe get to know the backgrounds of the students and community they would know them and know whether those students go to Sundance, different ceremonies or church. They would be able to know what influences the students have in their lives. They would know who is who and what is important to others, some teachers won't even go to church with Indians...the only place they see our students is in school. They need to get to know us and our kids.

Small, explaining how school leaders needed to be present within the community added:

Be a part of the community. Being respectful to all community members, especially those who are Native, like in Lodge Grass you can have two sets of community members, it was really so when I grew up. It was half non-Indian and half Indian in the community, but you need to be respectful no matter who is in the community. Participate in the activities of the community if they have anything going on. Show up at dances and show your face in Lodge Grass or Crow, those places where the activities are going on.

According to one respondent, in order for school leaders to build trust they, “need to be present in the community so that people will start you trust you. Being present in the community and visible at events is important.” *Daxbiishé* gave advice to school leaders to become present in the community and interact with elders. She commented, “Be involved in the community. Recognize and talk to elders and things will go well. Get to know people in the community.” *Íhchihchia Isítcheesh* mentioned the importance of a leader being accessible in order to communicate. She replied, “Be available to

communicate. I know that's hard being a leader and trying to be accessible but sometimes they're not assessible. It feels like you can't get past that secretary.”

In the *Apsáalooke* community gatherings are of important significance and attendance at those events are very special as relationships are considered wealth, and it is important to note that gatherings carry with it the same weight as a holiday. There are many different events that take place throughout the year such as dances or pow-wows, masquerades, hand-games, parades, veterans day events, and even religious camp meetings or church services. *Úute Basséesh* said in talking about the need for school leaders to attend community events that if school leaders attend these events it, “...would be good and people would know they are interested.” She then went on to tell a story of an educator at a Native school who participated in one of the local masquerade events and said, “It [the performance] was really funny, but it meant a lot that someone from the school would participate and join one in on one of these events.” She also said that when educators attend these types of events, “It breaks the ice with the community.”

One participant, *AasúaXíassaash*, talked about being present in the community and mentioned the different events school leaders could be present at and hesitantly mentioned funerals, as it is often taboo to talk about issues to do with someone passing to the Otherside Camp but did communicate how important this was and shared an example, and said:

When they're not just working from 8 to 4 with events and all that, not only with that Excuse me I don't want to put it in this perspective, when there's a funeral we don't see some of those leaders, they don't go there. They said, 'Oh, out of respect I didn't go.' Bologna. You got to show your respect, you have to show your last respect to that person because you knew that family. That means a lot to that family when they do come. At times that helps out.

I know there's so many deaths we can't go to all of them. But as long as I know I got to be there and send one of your staff or something like that to represent, I think that's important. With that, I think events and just being there out of the blue. Showing up for something they probably don't expect them to show up to. At least they're showing their character, he cares about us or she cares about us, at least not just 8 to 4.

*AasúaXiassaash* then mentioned that a former staff member passed away and only one non-Native staff member showed up. None of the former non-Native employees of the school or current employees attended other than those who were Crow tribal members and this was noticed by her and other members of the community. *Baatatbaachaaliileesh* also added an observation she made at some of the community gatherings and said:

In the summer there's a lot of events going on and I don't see administrators going to our Sundances, our 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration in Lodge Grass, the Real Bird Reenactment, or the Crow Native Days. But they'll go to Hardin's celebration or the Battlefield celebration [meaning they will attend the events put on and hosted by non-tribal members]. If they went to these events they would see what's going on.

When connecting with the families and communities it is advised to tread lightly, to be cautious and do not come on too strong. Yarlott's advice about not going overboard and his metaphor about sugar are useful pieces of advice to remember.

*Baatatbaachaaliileesh* offers similar advice and commented:

Lay low but gradually get to know the staff and gradually get into the community. Don't go full force otherwise, they will turn their back on the leader. Once you get your trust from the staff and community it will be a piece of cake. But first, you have to go slow.

Yarlott also added that when wanting to connect with the community that they might want to make sure you are there for the right reasons. He said:

The community will test you and treat you with distrust, but keep trying to reach out. Be genuine, be authentic, be yourself. Then the formal professional will be seen as a real person. If you are new to our community

you will be viewed with distrust at first, don't let the fact that you are questioned and challenged put you off. We want to make sure you are here for the right reasons.

The right reasons for working in a school were mentioned a few times and they are to be there for the wellbeing and education of the students. Rock Above explained, "I've seen people go into schools for the wrong reasons, for glory, for self-promotion, not for the right reasons. Some just to get a job but not to help our students." While

*AasúaXiassaash* explained what it means to be there for the right reasons and said:

Well the one thing, the love and the heart for the kids, if you don't have that compassion how are we going to, how are you as a leader going to fit into that role for our kids? Because it's having, to help our kids out of love to get them where they need to be. When you have that compassion the kids will be receptive. At least the majority of them. When they receive that love that you have they will respect you as a leader and it trickles down to the teachers, not just your teachers but your staff, custodians and even your cooks. When you have that compassion then it reflects from the leadership to your staff workers.

Also speaking of the leaders being in the schools for the right reasons Cummins said:

There's a lot of principals I worked with and that's what I've seen, some of them leaders are just there for the money. They have to have feelings for their job, they have to want to do their job and be there. Be sincere about what they are doing and be sincere about helping kids. That's the main reason they are in the community with the parents, in the long run if the individual leader is doing that the community will see that and start understanding.

### Work with Leaders in the Community

Leaders must be able to work adeptly with, within and sometimes around the different types of relationships in the *Apsáalooke* community in order to effectively lead. *Baatatbaachaaliileesh*, talked about the vital importance of working with the community and not just those on staff, said, "It is a mistake to think that leaders only need to work

with their staff and the school board, they also need to work with the community also.”

This is especially true with the *Apsáalooke* as there are many layers of intricate relationship whether it be by blood, by clan, by traditional adoptions or through marriage.

McCleary talked about working with the community and said:

Dynamics of the community need to be understood. Know who is who. A big mistake non-Crows make is thinking they only need to do their administrative work. Even within their own staff relationships and connections are already present. There are family, generational and clan relationships. To ignore this is to create problems

In talking about soliciting help to work with students *Baatatbaachaaliileesh* said, “Leaders need to involve the community and bring them in because they are the parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles of the students that you're working with.”

*Baatatbaachaaliileesh* went on to say, “Utilize the people in the community, they are your resources.” Pretty On Top explained the need to develop strong connections with the community members and also explained informal leaders and leadership structures in the community and shared:

Develop healthy relationships. You’re not going to go anywhere if you just sit in your office. There are informal power structures in the community and these are the respected individuals. Get out of that office, go out and make home visits, make an effort, it doesn’t take long to figure out who the leaders are, who the power brokers are in the community. They are not the mayors, the Crow Legislatures or the Tribal Chairman, the Crow Tribal vice secretary. They are not. Sometimes I’ve seen in my lifetime the people who are the most respected are usually not tribal officials or anybody in any formal position. There are people in the community that simply on the basis of their character and how they conduct themselves, with qualities of humility and a respectful attitude towards people and openness. Without wanting to these people become leaders.

Small also offered similar advice and offered up an example of leading through relationship and said to, “Make connections with elders because they can be your go-to

people.” He then went on to tell of his own leadership experience in a Native school where he was able to gain the support of two prominent and respected elders in the community who helped him while he led the school. Spending time in the community and getting to know who is who is very important. Leaders must learn who is who and who their go to people are. He said:

So those two I gave them a free pass, no matter what was going on in my office, if they come into see me they’d get my attention. So then people saw that I was working with them because we were out in the community a lot with them and they just really made it easy. They saw kids misbehaving and they let me know and they saw kids doing good stuff and they let me know and we publicized that stuff. They were like my community front runners, I guess if you would say. And everybody knew that.

This supports the statement of *Daxbiishé* who said, “Recognize and talk to elders and things will go well. Get to know people in the community.” She also shared a story of a successful principal who led through relationship and had previously worked in the Crow community. She remembers that he didn’t live in the community and had a long commute but he was always present at community events and that made a positive impression with everybody. He showed respect to the elders by creating a section for them to sit at home basketball games, which was near the door, and he didn’t charge them or the visiting teams elders an admission at the gate. This went over well and he also knew all of the elders and parent by name and would often greet them and visited, and he often laughed and joked with them. She said, “He made an effort to get to know people and he made a point of know who parents were.” He also got involved outside of the school and was involved in a local church where people got to know him and they helped him get to know others in the community. Then when there were issues with students

whom he had to reprimand no one argued with him because they trusted him and they had gotten to know him. Prior to him, people were known to go to the school angry whenever there was an issue, but using his relationships he was able to sit down, communicate with parents, and try to help students.

Being present in the community can solicit support from leadership but it may not happen right away, it may take several efforts while the community attempts to assess the school leaders motives but obtaining that support is valuable. In talking about the importance of continuing to reach out and the importance of gaining support, *Chiiláape Biissáane* explained:

Working with the leaders is a two-way street too. When you have a good superintendent who's involved in the community the tribal leaders do whatever they can to help that superintendent out. Then they start working together, once they start working together the moral is really high. If a school leader doesn't get involved the community sees that person as uncaring, so that's a minus for that person. If they don't know who the leader is how are they going to know that he cares. School leaders may have to make several efforts they can't make just one effort and say 'I tried.' No, you keep trying and you keep trying. Once the community sees that your trying then those doors will open. But you can't just make one effort thinking 'well I did my part.' Once you do that then everyone loses. Someone is going to have to take a step forward and it's going to have to be the school leaders who take that step. For example, my son was at school and he liked the fact the superintendent acknowledged him by name at school. When a key figure in the community acknowledges your child it make them and you feel good.

School leaders do not just work with teachers and parents, after all, they are educating students and there are times when they will need help working with students. In attempting to work with students there are ways to reach them and motivate them and this is usually through activating the dynamic of family relationships who hold influence with

students. In explaining the influence family has with students and the need to utilize this important resource

*Baatatbaachaaliileesh* added:

There are ways that you get to students and you've got to bring in resources because there are resources in the community, you've got to bring them in, and you will learn at the same time because you're interacting with the community.

She then shared that early on in her educational career some students were struggling no matter what she did. She approached her mother for advice who was also her role model. Her mother decided they should go and visit the families at their homes so they did. The families were very traditional and when they met the grandmother, the mothers and all the family members showed up to meet with her and her mother. They told them what they wanted to accomplish and that they weren't being as successful as they wanted them to be. The grandmother shared that the local Head Start wanted her kids to speak English and none of them wanted their kids to speak English because they were Crow speakers and all spoke Crow at home. The grandmother said that the kids were at school all day, and now the kids were starting to speak English and she thought the kids were having trouble comprehending both languages together. After listening to her mom asked the family if they could make sure that the kids would behave at school and help them learn at home too? Then she added, "We want them to read." All of the family members agreed to do that. She then said she visited with all of her students' families in that manner and the families were all respectful and provided their support. In closing the story she laughed and added, "That administrator didn't know what was going on, he just thought the kids were crazy!"

### Honor and Defend Your Relationships

It is a reality that often times Native Americans face with stereotypes and racism. Often times there can be unchecked biases and prejudices that could be subconscious and under the surface that affect their interactions with students. It is the school leaders job to train and help prepare their teachers to make sure these do not harm students and to make sure teachers are healthy in this regard in order to ensure their teachers success as well as their students' success. In speaking of the reality of students possibly being stereotyped Pretty On Top expressed his desire for students to be treated as individuals and said:

But the thing is these kids have individual personalities based on their own experiences. I guess that would one of the major things that I would expect an administrator coming into a situation is to understand that all of these kids are individuals. This may be an assumption on my part but teachers and administrators bring their experience before they gain the formal education and formal professional experience, their behavior is based on their upbringing where concepts are formulated by their families and spiritual values. All of those things are formed and as they grow and they refine or develop these things and unfortunately prejudices come into play too. These are formulated early on and they come to a school, for example like Lodge Grass, these stereotypical attitudes kick in and the dangerous part is that if the unconscious is there, the unconscious is powerful, no matter what they say or do they're going to believe hey these kids are this way. You know the big thing is to look at these kids individually.

An obvious place that a school leader can defend their relationships is in the classrooms in regard to teacher and student interactions. This can be a delicate procedure as school leaders must also maintain their relationships with staff, and although this may take much skill and effort, any mistreatment of students cannot be tolerated. Talking about her desire that children be treated right *Baaapánuulaash* said:

Parents want kids to be treated right and for their kids to be able to keep their self-confidence. Not mistreated to where they lose their confidence. They want their kids to learn. Because for us being a parent never ends, no

matter what age our kids are we are always a parent and we always want the best.

If a school leader takes a position in a school that has a predominantly Native American enrollment they become the leader of that entire school population as well as the community it represents. They may even have to deal with racism from within their community and outside their community as it affects their students and their schools. When these situations arise it is the school leaders job to rise to the defense of her or his students and community and not look the other way. In speaking of these situations

*Chiiláape Biissáane* said:

We always deal with racism but they have to be on the Native's side when the community is 80% Native American. You can't always side with the minority because the majority of the community is Native American. You're going to have to support the Native side because that is your community, you're the leader of that community. You're the leader of the 80% and not the 20%. I've heard people comments about apartheid where the minority controls the majority. If they are going to work in an Indian school they are going to have to protect their students and community against racism. That's their community. When they chose that job they chose to represent and lead that community. When the community is 80% Native they had better support and protect that community. They can't sit back and be quiet. Because the people see that, if the people see that happening then they know there that person doesn't care about us.

In one instance a non-Native teacher who was also a middle school football coach defended the relationships he had formed while he and his team were in a neighboring community competing. During the game, the announcer uttered some racist comments about his team over the loudspeaker system during the game. The non-Native coach walked onto the field, interrupting the game and asked him to apologize over the microphone since he said these things over the microphone and he refused. He then asked the athletic director to make the announcer apologize and then got flagged,

penalized, by the referees for delaying the game as he was standing on the field while he interacted with the school official. When the athletic director refused he then loaded up his team on the bus and they went home. He did get in trouble with his own school's athletic director who did not share his opinion that this shouldn't have happened and he received no support. But the communities respect for that coach/teacher grew greatly as the people then knew where his heart was.

A participant shared a relevant example that had taken place in a school in the early 90's where Native American students organized a walkout in protest and the school leaders missed an opportunity to defend their relationships with the Native American community, students body missed an opportunity to build bridges between communities.

*Chiiláape Biissáane* added another example where school leaders could have defended their connection to the students and community and said:

In the early 1990's the Native American students had a walkout because they had Native American day and the non-Native didn't want to participate in the activities for that day. Instead, the parents and students agreed to skip school that day. When the Native students seen that the non-Indian students didn't want to learn about who their classmates were, where they came from, they didn't want to learn about their culture. But then all the other days of the year we have to live about their culture, but when the one day out of the year they had activities for them to understand what our culture is about, they skipped that day and no one got in trouble for it. There was no acknowledgment of the wrongdoing from the school leaders and officials and the students got upset and had a walkout and went and sat in the gym saying this is not right. They stood up and said we're people, and just because we want to celebrate one day of our culture and then you guys say they don't have to do it, but we have to come every day and celebrate your culture. All the Indian students went and sat in the gym but didn't leave the building like the others did. There were some negative effects from this because after this the KKK came and put their pamphlets in all the yards in town. Their propaganda and literature were out in the community. Once again the leaders could have said, 'We are going to have this event today and all the students need to be here.'

School leaders need to respect everyone and often times respect is not shown to all groups within the community due to racism or other factors. The different communities within the larger community of the Crow Indian Reservation are made up of different groups the majority being Native Americans and Caucasians as well as a small percentage of other ethnic minorities, and all these families need to be respected and shown dignity. Small said in reference to school leaders:

Being respectful to all community members, especially those who are Native, like in Lodge Grass you can have two sets of community members, it was really so when I grew up. It was half non-Indian and half Indian in the community, but you need to be respectful no matter who is in the community.

### Crows Take Education Very Seriously

The majority of participants talked about having high expectations for students as well as staff members. They all communicated that they wanted the best education for their students as well as the best treatment of their students.

### High Expectations for Students

According to the 2011 U.S. Census, 38.2% of Crow Indians are high school graduates and 17% have a bachelor's degree or higher. In my first visit with Tim McCleary, the first things he said was, "Crows take education very seriously." McCleary (2019) explained that prior to the arrival of formal schools there were already learning institutions present and the tribe looked at formal schooling as beneficial, he said:

The Crows already had foundational education systems such as the sweat lodge, the clan system, the Sundance and the Peyote Way. Western European education was recognized as a new system coming in, schools

were looked at as new knowledge bases, and if you can learn it, it will benefit everyone...different institutions like the clans, sweat, peyote, and Sundance coalesced around the idea that European education is something valuable that can benefit Crows.

High academic expectations for students was expressed and desired by many interviewed as well as a desire for deep commitment on the teachers' behalf to help students achieve academically. It is important for school leaders to know that the *Apsáalooke* value education and have high expectations for students and for teachers and not fall into the trap of thinking families do not value education. Instead of assuming people do not care one should ask, "How can I teach families to become involved in their student's education?" One respondent said,

Most of all have students receive an education and so they can be where they are supposed to be educationally instead of being treated like second class citizens. Get them to where they are supposed to be instead of sliding them through because they don't want to work with them or they don't want to put in the time and effort. They are smart, sometimes they don't want to work and they [the students] know that but there's a way to get them to work, you can also give them more help.

### High Expectations for Teachers

This desire for high expectations is desired as well as the desire of for the teachers who work with their students to be good quality educators. Rather than having low expectations for teachers and hiring anybody who applies the *Apsáalooke* want good teachers. When school leaders hire and keep poor performing teachers it sends the message that they think less of the students because they are Native American. In talking about educators who may have lost their focus or passion for being in the profession, it is the school leaders job to address this, Cummins said:

They [educators] got to know when to get out and when to move on. Or, if they are doing good, tell them, 'hey keep it up and hang in there,' as long as they can do the best they can. Some teachers know they kind of overextended their time but they are still here because of the money. They are not here to help, they are here for money and themselves then. I don't think that's right, they're not helping the children then.

When school leaders hire and keep poor performing teachers on staff it sends the message that they think less of the students because they are Native American, one contributor said:

Our kids need the best teachers because we have high expectations for them. It seems that some leaders think just because we are Indians that they shouldn't have high expectations, but we are people too and we have high expectations for our students and we shouldn't lower our expectations. Principals need to hire good quality staff and not just settle with having any person in the classroom. We are human too and we are people.

Rock Above shared that there may be school employees who may not know how to properly fulfill their job duties and it's up to the principal to make sure they receive the proper training. Many times those who need training react badly when given directives by the school leader. He then gave some examples of how people work with the public when they are not fully equipped. He went on to explain:

There are school employees who may have been hired because they're related to someone or any other reason, but a lot of school employees need proper training and they don't have it. So when they want them to do the actual work they become hostile because they can't do it, so they feel threatened and have a fight or flight response. They need training.

Right, where we're at if these young kids want to be successful, in High School they have to be prepared in math, English, and communication. They have to be able to communicate with other people to know what's going on.

High expectations for students are wanted but those expectations must be realistic. And teachers need to be able to help their students reach those expectations by teaching and

ensuring students learn. Often times punitive practices and zero tolerance policies are incorrectly called high expectations. Yarlott said, “Students need to be challenged and then given the help and tools to meet those challenges. Don’t confuse rigid, unbending rules with high expectations.” He then shared a story from his own experience as a freshman English class where a teacher held him to high expectations. He had an assignment that was due and he was pressed for time so he wrote the paper quickly and handed it in. The teacher said, “I know you can do better than this,” and handed the paper back to rewrite. The teacher didn’t say “That’s what you turned in on the due date so that’s what I’m grading.” Instead, he said, “I know you can do better than that, re-write it and turn it in tomorrow.” Of course, there was still the rule that if he didn’t rewrite the teacher would have graded what he originally handed in.

Even if students may be struggling academically school leaders need to keep academic expectations high because when often times there might be students who are struggling academically but this doesn’t mean we need to lower our standards but continue to help our students meet them, and in doing so we must not forget about the students who are not struggling but also help them to grow and flourish as well so they don’t fall behind their capabilities. In discussing high expectations and some student who may have fallen behind, *Íhchihchia Isítcheesh* said:

That we want the best for them, they should have high expectations for them and not have low expectations because I see that happen. Even in the classrooms, they are teaching with low expectations and they’re not trying to get them to have higher thought processes and there just kind of giving them information not allowing them to think and grow. They only look at the low-level kids and then they leave behind those kids that are ready to learn and so they never get the opportunity to grow, even personally growing up I went to the elementary grades in Crow and it was fine, but

once I got to Hardin it was like they didn't expect anything from us, they didn't challenge us...but I think education is changing, it's getting better.

Barriers to learning were acknowledged but high expectations remained steadfast in the participant's minds. The knowledge that many students might be a little behind academically was acknowledged but cases where students particular backgrounds may have been difficult but did not keep them from achieving or becoming successful were shared. Small said, "I feel strongly that you don't gift a kid an education, they earn it. Your gift is teaching them and helping them learn."

When discussing a staff member who said the school was too strict so she was going to take a job elsewhere, *Íhchihchia Isítcheesh* said:

A lot of times teachers come into our school thinking that we have low expectations and want to do the bare minimum to just get by. Or they may come from a school where they haven't had any leaders that held them to a higher standard. But really we want the best for our Crow kids. Just because it's a rez school they think we should just allow them to do whatever they want, but we are not like that.

A very real reason for providing a relevant and quality education is so that people are not taken advantage of and so they are self-sufficient, financially literate and able to provide for themselves. *Binauxchéesbase* mentioned how a lack of education can affect self-sufficiency and harm them and stated:

We need our kids to learn how to use money like the white people. Give them an allowance and have them work for it instead of just giving it to them. Crows used to have their own land and put up their own hay, then the Crow politicians started talking with the cattlemen and talked the Crows into leasing their land. Because we don't understand money, we just sign the piece of paper. Many people do not understand money or cannot read well and they just keep signing the lease papers without knowing what is going on. We need to train our kids to be independent and how to use money so they can do well. Their minds are like a sponge, whatever we teach them they will end up doing. Whether it's good or it's bad they will

do it. So we need to teach them good things and they might try to stray a bit, but because we taught them good things they will end up doing the good. We want them to be able to take care of themselves so we need to train them to do that instead of giving them everything and they become helpless. Like a horse, if you feed a horse every day and it gets used to being fed when you turn it out to pasture it will come back and just wait there to be fed. Instead of knowing to feed itself, it's kind of like that. Right now the land buyback is sad. People are just signing papers without knowing what they are signing and getting money. Some are buying cars and those cars are getting repossessed because they cannot make the final payments. Then their land is gone and they have nothing to show for it. It's real sad.

The education that is provided to *Apsáalooke* students' needs to be relevant in order for students to be engaged and for the education to impact their present reality. This is common practice and highly recommended in education, yet this rarely happens for Native American students. Yarlott said:

Education should be relevant to the students' lives, for example, they need to learn the difference between trust lands and fee lands, they could learn about the Crow Tribal government and history alongside U.S. government and history, different jurisdictional issues and how to get a home on the reservation. Instead many times our kids are taught as if they live off of the reservation in dominant society.

### Overcoming Barriers and Resilience

Different barriers were mentioned and Real Bird said, "Some students still come from homes that primarily speak the *Apsáalooke* language and while many of the kids may not be fluent in the *Apsáalooke* language they do think in *Apsáalooke*." Graczyk shared this same concern and said:

Well you know that this is probably not true today as it was years ago, the whole language thing and I still think there still affects from that, if the parents have Crow as a first language and kids are raised by grandparents who speak Crow, it's not a level playing field as it is with white kids. I think that's important to realize, it may not be that evident because everyone does speak some English.

The issues of poverty and the social ills that come with it such as alcohol and drug abuse were also acknowledged as being present and they cannot be ignored. Speaking of this barrier many students might be experiencing *Ish 'bishiaxupe' Iibaaet 'itchish* said:

I would like for them [school leaders] to really know what's actually going on because of all the drugs, the opioids the meth. I have become aware of some of these kids going home very hungry. School leaders need to be aware of the condition of the students home life, is it a single parent, a grandparent raising them? Because there is a lot of motherless and fatherless children trying to get an education. The school leaders should be aware of the conditions at home. Some kids do not have food at home, shoes, coats, gloves and other things. It breaks your heart. The leaders need to be aware of the condition of the homes. We do have a big responsibility, community leaders and teachers are very important.

Poverty is a real issue in the lives of many students and schools do face a difficult challenge.

One participant talked about some of the challenges associated with what she called hidden poverty and how it might affect teaching and learning, *AasúaXiassaash* said:

My heart goes out to the kids because I've never seen so many parents neglecting their kids. That just shocked me it was almost like a culture shock. It's just sad because this is there safe haven here 8 hours out of the day, 5 days out of the week 9 months out of the year. This is where they have a good feel of having to be safe. When they go home when they leave this building we don't know what happens. We don't know if their lights are on, their waters running, are they eating? This is the first time I've ever had to see that, backpacks that we have to give out on Fridays, I've never seen that in Crow country until now, at least we have a heart to help them out...There's going to be behaviors but at least we get a handful to be respectful, sometimes it's hard to see kids that they don't care about them. And they think 'why should I care when no one cares for me.' One of my students it showed, the dad came in here with unmatched shoes, it's ridiculous. It's hidden poverty that we don't see, it's almost like man where did we go wrong here.

In talking of his own teaching experience, McCleary acknowledged the hardships that some students face but has seen those same students excel despite the odds. Of this, he said, “There are broken homes and single parent families, but some of those kids do great, despite their backgrounds. So we cannot hold that against them.” *Daxbiishé* added that no matter what kind of background a kid has teachers shouldn’t hold that against them and wanted students to understand the following, and she explained:

Be proud. Whatever your background, if your parents were poor, if you were raised by a single parent, or if you were raised by someone else or a grandmother. We are all doing our best to raise our kids. And we are all *Apsáalooke* and will always be *Apsáalooke*. If God wanted you to be *Baaschiile* you would be *Baaschiile*, but he made you *Apsáalooke*, nothing can erase that.

*Úte Basséesh* also spoke of some of the hardships that are happening in families because of poverty and other social problems such as alcohol and drug abuse but communicated that students still need hope to know they can make it, she said:

Nowadays mothers are not raising kids, it’s almost the norm and it’s a shame nowadays, parents need to raise their kids. I would tell kids going through that, kids without parents, say to them, ‘just because your parents are like that doesn’t mean you have to be that way. Focus on yourself and what you want to be and do.’ Look at you [the researcher], you have went through a lot and look at you now.

When speaking of the possible barriers to learning, Yarlott wanted school leaders to know that they still shouldn’t lower their expectations because a good quality education is what is going to help students, he shared:

Don’t let kindness and compassion get in the way of really helping Native American students. Don’t make allowances for kids because of their struggles. The kids are already starting behind and if you lower your expectations and expect less you are just going to ensure they stay that far behind.

He also communicated that teachers shouldn't only have high expectations for the students only but they should raise the expectations they have for themselves and do what needs to be done to help their students achieve academically by continuing to learn, invest in efforts to get kids connected to what they need to learn and to put in the time needed to do this whether it is before school or after school. In the view of the *Apsáalooke* having high expectations is a two-way street, they want high expectations for students and also want high expectations for teachers. They want their students to have a good quality educational experience.

#### Resistance to Expectations

In having high expectations sometimes the community will grapple with this for one reason or another and resistance happens. There can sometimes be a dichotomy between the expectations of learning that are desired and the implementation of these expectations. Often times the race card is pulled by parents who might be emotional and want their students to get a passing grade they can misplace their anger. Small shared that oftentimes people will say they want high expectation for their students but be unaware of how to support their students and help the students achieve and he also shares one such story that his wife, a non-Native experienced. He said:

What a lot of community leaders say is they want a good education, every parent wants a good education for their kid, you ask every parent, 'you bet I want a good education for my kids.' But often they are not willing to stand up and help you make that happen. And so you need to know that, so how do you engage that parent by not turning them off but engage them somehow and help them be aware of their behavior and how they act is what's hindering their own kids from having a good education?

Another prime example that my wife said. This is how, if their kids are in trouble or if parents don't get their way, they say you're a white guy. Or if you're Indian they'll say you're an educated Indian and you don't know our Indian ways so you're prejudiced. So my wife was working with some kids and this parent came up and said, 'You don't know us, you're a white woman and you don't know us. And you should cut my kids some slack and make it easier for them to get their grades.' And my wife looked at them and said, 'That might be so, they might be having a tough time but here's the thing, to me it's the highest degree of racism if I don't have expectations for your child. If I don't have high expectations of your child I'm not giving them a good education, therefore, you could call me racist if I do that. But I expect your child to do good, that's what I am here for.' And I use that story a lot.

Speaking of working with resistant parents from his experience of working with students who struggled behaviorally and academically in a special education program, Cummins said:

Parents stick up for their kids no matter what, whether they are right or wrong, that's what I ran into for four years. I ran into a lot of them, but if you talk to them and be reasonable they will listen. Sometimes they would come over angry and want to argue, I would have to listen until they cooled off, then we could talk with them. A lot of these leaders need training on how to deal with people when they are confronted because they wouldn't explain what was going on, they would just make excuses and try to get out of the situation. They need to explain, 'Hey we're trying to help your child here and that's our main purpose.' There's a lot of principals I worked with and that's what I seen, some of them leaders are just there for the money.

Another respondent spoke from their personal teaching experience and mentioned that it is the school leader's job to ensure all of the teachers are on the same page and that they all have high expectations. In speaking of the need for all teachers to do a good job, it is especially important that the teachers from the community and Native American teachers in particular have high expectations, Cummins said:

If white teachers come in and see some of the local teachers who might have low standards, they might see that and just lower their standards and do the same thing. Our local teachers need to care more, do more and work harder

because these are their children. It's really hurting our future, maybe that is why things are the way they are right now in our community.

There can be pushback from other teachers as well who do not appreciate a teacher with high expectations because in her experience she has faced this and it is not easy to keep your expectations high when the other staff members are doing the bare minimum to education students. Yarlott acknowledged the reality that there will possibly be resistance and pushback towards a school leader who has high academic and behavioral expectations and also recommends that they reflect upon their school leadership practices but also encourages the leader to not let those complaints or criticisms cause them to lower their expectations. He said:

When a school leader starts to ask a lot from our kids and raise expectations, some will complain. They might be parents or politicians who complain that they are not being sensitive to the kid's personal situations or culture. They [school leaders] need to be able to reflect upon their practices and be sensitive but not let that criticism sidetrack them from having high expectations and helping our kids.

He also added that school leaders need to, "Distinguish what is cultural and what's because of generational poverty." There are some possible explanations for this pushback and they may be due to misunderstandings or previous negative experiences or perceived slights with the school systems or experiences relatives may have had or even a culture class. School leaders should be aware of this and not take it personally. Of possible conflicts, Gracyzk said, "I think maybe realizing the anger that is expressed to administrators and principals isn't personal it's sometimes the product of a culture class maybe." McCleary talked about some of the possible reasons why some families may not be supportive of education and explained:

The Crows who aren't favorable to education and do not have a good relationship with it have some good reasons for that. The book *Indian Oasis*, which is the biography of a school matron who started in Crow Agency, and finished her career at Pima. It gives insight into why certain Crow families may feel negative about education. As she was very demeaning and looked down upon the students. Kids didn't have a good experience with her. The underlying narrative of the book was that she and superintendent Reynolds had assimilationist ideas with the boarding schools.

### You Will Always Be *Apsáalooke*

#### *Preservation of Apsáalooke Identity & Culture*

Most respondents mentioned in one way or another the importance of students being able to keep their culture and identity alive. The idea of preparing students for life in broader society and preparing them for a career path, vocation or profession through education is desired alongside the preservation of the *Apsáalooke* identity and culture as well as a sense of pride and dignity in who students are as a people. When interviewed,

*Binauxchéesbase* said he wanted school leaders to:

Respect our ways, don't be too lopsided, don't just let the kids know the white way, let them know both ways. They will need to learn and work in the white way but they need heritage, especially language and culture. You have to educate them into the white culture, getting them ready for a career, let them know where they come from, let them be proud of who they are. They are from the bloodline of chiefs. I've traveled all over and lots of tribes have lost everything, their language, their culture, everything. One time I was in Oklahoma and some Crow kids came up to me and we visited in Crow and the other Indians there were shocked. Some of those Indians wanted to be white and they let it go, now it's too late to get it back because they lost it. When they lose it, they look around for it to learn, only to find it's gone.

One respondent share that a loss of culture and identity has caused many some young people to become lost and involved in negative behaviors. The practice of culture is where students learn how to be respectful and this will help them in life. In describing the need for respect to be kept alive and practiced, Cummins said:

Kids need to know their Clan System and how to practice respect. The ceremonies that we practice: the Sweat Lodge, the Sundance, the Native American Church, they help us to keep our respect alive. That's where we learn respect. These are good.

Then he went on to share a story about a conversation he had with a social worker who had gone to work at a different reservation community for a year and then returned home.

The social worker said:

We have some problems, but at least we have some respect left, we have a chance. Over at the reservation, she was working at it was hard. There were young people stealing from elders and mistreating them. They had no respect and it was very hard to be around, the kids were lost and the adults weren't teaching them.

She then said, "We have a chance and it's up to us adults to teach our kids how to respect to teach them who they are."

The loss of culture and language is of real concern to the *Apsáalooke* community and they feel the schools should assist in preventing this from happening. This concern of culture and language loss was expressed in the following by Pretty On Top, as he said:

I hate to use the word, but it's the reality of losing the Crow culture, because of the influence over the years, the evolution of our tribe the loss of language the loss of customs and practices. Even though we are fairly stronger than probably most tribes in this country. Well, I agree with something I read years ago in a magazine on anthropology that talked about culture and language and the writer said that the language is the core and anchor of identity in culture and the gradual erosion of language is the erosion of that culture and I agree with that.

### Culture and Language in Schools

*Daxbiishé* explained that first and foremost students should be proud of being *Apsáalooke*. She said: “Be proud to be *Apsáalooke*. We will always be an *Apsáalooke* no matter what. You were born an *Apsáalooke* and you will die an *Apsáalooke* and then you will be an *Apsáalooke* forever. Don’t try to imitate anyone else, be *Apsáalooke*.” She then shared a story of the time her parents visited with school officials to explain the importance of the *Apsáalooke* identity to them and shared that her father said:

My child is an *Apsáalooke*. God made us *Apsáalooke*. God made you German but you refused to be a German. You chose to be a nun and not German, or an American and not Irish. English is my daughter's second language. We teach our children how to respect.

*Daxbiishé* also explained the importance of school leaders allowing students to be who they were created to be and said, “School leaders shouldn’t try to replace our *Apsáalooke* identity. It's important to us because once it's replaced it's hard for the student to get back to their true self.”

The importance the community has for students to know who they are was shared by Graczyk, when he said that thirty years ago when he became the school leader of St. Charles Mission School in Pryor, a group of Crow elders got together and expressed their concern to him that many children did not know their clans and they wanted to ensure the students had their identity. So the school started the annual Clan Day so the children would know who they are. This clan practice and celebration has been happening at St. Charles in Pryor, MT for 30 years now and needs to continue to happen there as well as in all other schools that serve *Apsáalooke* students.

School should be a place where students are comfortable and where students want to be. The social interactions should mirror their own personal culture when possible after all this happens for white students every day because school systems are based upon their culture they do not experience the same type of cultural discomfort Native American students might feel in school. McCleary said, “Crow culture should be in schools because the Crow kids are in the schools, and are already part of the Crow culture.” Another responded talked about her desire for the Crow culture to be present in school and how they make students and adults feel welcome, she said:

I think administrators need to learn about the culture our culture if they are not Native, in order to incorporate it through the school, this for me makes the school environment a place students want to be, a place where I want to be. This goes for Indians too, many don’t even know and practice cultural ways.

Another responded said when talking about what she wanted school leaders to know when they educate the children of the tribe and emphasize that the *Apsáalooke* culture isn't just content or subject to be taught but a way of life that needs to be practiced so it is not lost. *Aasúaxíassaash* said:

I want them to know who we are as Crow people, our culture. If we don’t continue our culture we are going to lose it. My mom always said, the way of life of Crow people, if we don’t keep it up especially our clan system and our language those two things go hand in hand along with our crow fair and that because that’s a gathering. They need to keep that alive, if they don’t keep that alive we are gone. We will be like those tribes who have lost who they are, their identity and as Native people. Those two, our clan and language, we have to hold onto. She said one thing as being a Christian I will never turn away our Clan System. Because if you look in the Bible they had clan systems in there too, and we have to respect, it goes to show the word of God of how we’re to respect our Clan people. It takes a village to raise a child, nowadays it’s like people see a kid [misbehaving] and turn away. Twenty years from now that’s what I want to see that principal do, is to train our kids. Not only our culture but the other core subjects. Because

this culture is not a subject it's a way of life, that's who we are as Crows. I think that's something we need to hang onto and respect.

One participant stated that school leaders need to be aware of the culture students bring with them into the school building and that leadership shouldn't attempt to assimilate the students by changing their identities and forcing them to conform with dominant society's view of who they should be. Oftentimes this seems to be the misguided approach many school leaders and educators working with Native students take not knowing the harm it has caused in the past or can cause to individual students who experience it. *Íhchihchia Isítcheesh* said:

What I expect from superintendents would be just an interest, as long as they have an interest a little in our culture because our kids come [to school] with our culture. As long as they have an interest and validate it rather than trying to change us and make us conform to their ways, I think that's I would look for or want. It doesn't necessarily happen but that's something that would be good to have.

One respondent shares the need for someone to be able to help connect the school leaders to the community and educate them about the activities going on.

*Baatatbaachaaliileesh* said,

If it's a non-Native administrator maybe they can go to an event with someone that's Native from the staff and then see the actual situation and have the staff member explain it. They need to see what's going on, but they also need someone there to tell them. Because if they just went to an event by themselves and seen all the giveaways they might not understand and get bored, they'll just probably leave and not finish.

One respondent shared how her school district was betting better although this was a slow and gradual improvement. The past couple years her district respected the Parade Dance ceremony at Crow Fair and did not plan any meetings or mandatory workshops for teachers as they have done in the past. This was a big step forward as

in years past this did not happen. Staff was allowed to attend and participate without fear of reprimand for missing a mandatory day of work or fear of being judged as unprofessional or uncommitted to their jobs. She said:

I think looking at where we're at now we've come a way, before it was like our district never even went to Crow Fair or had anything to do with it and kind of worked against it with our schedule. But now I think they are kind of acknowledging it a little, so some of our newer staff are way more open than some of the past staff who never had that exposure. It seems like they are more aware and not as cynical about what we do or how we are.

*AasúaXiassaash* mentioned the same school districts new staff orientation and said, “I like what [one principal] did in inviting those new teachers to Crow Fair, that’s good I’m glad the principal did that because they got to see a part of our culture there and I think that’s good.”

### Summary

Four salient themes emerged from the research. These themes are: a leader's first job is to learn, lead through relationships, Crows take education seriously and the preservation of identity and culture.

Almost all the participants mentioned that leaders need to be open minded and ready to learn rather than coming into the community with preconceived notions. In doing so school leaders should learn about the community and the culture.

The need for leaders to be able to work with the community, and within its multifaceted layers of relationships and connections, is important. But in order to lead through relationships, a leader needs to be present and in the community in order to develop their own relationships.

The Crow tribe's relationship with formalized western education is rather new, but they did already have education systems set in place so education is important to the tribe. Although they have mixed experiences with it they do have high expectation for students and also for educators that serve their students.

The preservation of *Apsáalooke* identity, culture, and language of the tribe is of utmost importance. While some things have changed and evolved over time the *Apsáalooke* identity remains present and it is of critical importance that school leaders understand the significance of its maintenance and preservation and not perpetrate any actions to attempt to do the opposite.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This research allowed *Apsáalooke* community members to provide their perspectives and expectations for school leaders who lead the schools that serve their students thus providing an *Apsáalooke* perspective for school leadership.

Research demonstrates that there is a positive correlation between effective school leadership and a school's success (Marzano, 2009). Within Indigenous communities, Indigenous models of leadership are found to exist and are utilized for leadership practice (Henderson, Ruff & Carjuzaa, 2016). Yet, although these Indigenous leadership models exist, dominant Western models of education and education leaders have been forced upon American Indian communities for decades with no success (Barnhardt, 2015).

Most school leaders in American Indian communities are what could be called socio-cultural imports (Foster & Goddard, 2002) that serve in communities vastly different from areas of their own upbringing. In these situations, many times principals can be caught between hegemonic legislation of the dominant class and the hopes and aspirations of marginalized and oppressed peoples (Goddard & Foster, 2002). Although there is literature that discusses the influence of school leadership upon a school and its importance, there is a lack of documentation on Native American concepts of leadership (Munson, 2007). Furthermore, there is a lack of studies specifically examining school leadership and American Indian schools.

Bird, Lee & Lopez (2013) wrote that it is important for understanding the traditional Indigenous views of leadership in Native American communities and schools or to understand the expectations that Native American students and parents have of teachers and administrative leaders. It is important to understand leadership from a dominant leadership perspective as well as the Native American perspective (Munson, 2007). Hallinger and Leithwood (1996) wrote that "Most published theory and empirical research in [educational] administration assumes that leadership is being exercised in a Western cultural context" (p.100). Grint and Warner (2006) pointed out that leadership practiced in Native American communities is often overlooked.

This study was viewed through the lens of Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) and an Indigenous Worldview: 4 R's. According to Brayboy (2005), there are nine tenets of TribalCrit that address the range and variation of experiences of individuals who are American Indian:

TribalCrit is based on the notion that colonization is endemic to society; 2) TribalCrit recognizes that U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain; 3) TribalCrit believes Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of their identities; 4) TribalCrit is rooted in a belief in and desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification; 5) TribalCrit problematizes the concepts of culture, knowledge, and power and offers alternative ways of understanding them when viewed through an Indigenous lens; 6) TribalCrit recognizes that governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples have been oriented toward the goal of assimilation; 7) TribalCrit emphasizes the importance of Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but also illustrates the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups; 8) TribalCrit honors stories and oral knowledge as real and legitimate forms of data and ways of being. Stories are not separate from theory; they make

up theory; 9) TribalCrit believes theory and practice must be connected in such a way as to generate movement towards social change. (pp. 429-430)

The other theoretical lens this research was conducted through was an Indigenous Worldview: R's, which is congruous to TribCrit theory and to the research topic, and an Indigenous worldview that is described by various Indigenous researchers. The concepts, practices and values that make up the core of an Indigenous worldview are intertwined, interdependent and often overlapping. Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) wrote about four concepts, or core values, of an Indigenous worldview which they called the four R's in their breakthrough higher education article concerning Indigenous students. The four R's are respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility.

The purpose of this research was to explore the expectations that the *Apsáalooke* community in Montana has for the school leaders who work within their communities and who lead the schools that educate their children. The outcomes from this study can be used to guide and inform both current and future school leaders, such as school boards, superintendents, principals, and community leaders in the vicinity of the Crow Indian Reservation and other similar Native American schools and leaders.

The research questions that guided this study are:

1. What kind of behavior and actions do *Apsáalooke* tribal members expect from school leaders such as principals and superintendents serving their students?
2. How can school leaders work well with parents and leaders in the *Apsáalooke* community?
3. What do *Apsáalooke* tribal members want school leaders to know and be aware of in the education of the children of the tribe?

Four salient themes emerged from the research. These are:

1. A leader's first job is to learn;
2. Lead through relationships;
3. Crows take education seriously;
4. The preservation of *Apsáalooke* identity and culture.

### Findings

The first theme that all participants mentioned the need for school leaders to respect their children and the members of the community as individuals and to be open-minded and teachable. School leaders who may have come into the community with preconceived notions about the community with an unteachable spirit burned bridges and did not do well as school leaders. There were different areas where participants felt school leaders needed to be open minded about and utilize, which make up the other three findings of the research.

School leaders will need to be able to be aware of and understand the multi-layered relationships within the *Apsáalooke* community and practice leadership navigating within and sometimes around these connections. Thinking one can take a relationship free approach and just do their school leadership work void of the deep interconnections between staff, students and community is often asking for trouble. Being able to depend on these relationships and lead through relationships will solicit support for the leader in serving the students. In order for school leaders to be able to forge and develop relationships they first need to be present in the community at different

community events and be able to sincerely and authentically develop relationships with people in the community, as opposed to merely attempting to network in order to do their job better, which is practiced in the many of the dominant society's professional circles. Part of the responsibility of having relationships is protecting those relationships. The community expects school leaders to courageously support and protect their students from bigotry and racism.

The community has high expectations for their children to succeed academically and for them to be taught by high quality educators who are in the community for the right reasons and with the right heart. Meaning they are here to help care for and provide a good education for the students. Although parents the desire for students to achieve is present many times leaders will face resistance or pushback from parents because they may not understand how to support the school and their students academically; and may be in a victimhood state of mind with other unhealthy habits such as blaming, self-pity, and having a sense of hopelessness. In these situations it is the school leaders job to help parents gain the skills to help their students achieve and to look past any anger that might be expressed towards them while simultaneously keeping their expectations high without being rigid. The leader needs to empower the community in these situations and lead them towards academic student success and preparation for life beyond school.

The community wanted school leadership to be respectful and aware of their culture. Many of the issues students may be facing as well as negative behaviors they may be engaged in are seen as a result of poverty, being lost and having no sense of identity as it is often the schools where culture is taught and identity passed on and

reinforced. Participants did not expect school leaders to become cultural experts but wanted school leaders to be respectful of the culture and allow the culture to be a part of the schools that their students attend because they understand what most teachers are not aware of, which is that the school celebrates and practices white American culture every day from the organization of the school year to the policies that affect staff leave and students attendance. Participants want schools to help perpetuate their way of life rather than harm their identity and practices.

#### Interconnectivity Among Questions

Much like the concepts, practices and values that make up the core of an Indigenous worldview are intertwined, interdependent and often overlapping, as well as the circular communication style of indigenous peoples the conclusions of this research are also related and dependent upon one another. One finding would not contain the complete understanding independent of the other findings and often each question shines a light on a different facet of a particular finding. A prime example is in the discussion by participants about respect. Respect is a behavior and action participants want from school leaders, as well as a way to work well with the community, and something the participants want school leaders to be aware of and know. Another example of how concepts are interdependent upon each other and related to one another is in the recommendation by respondents that school leaders being present in the community in order to work well with the community by genuinely getting to know people, which answers all three research questions. And these three pieces of information are so

interrelated or connected that to break them a part would leave them without their true meaning.

### Discussion

With the understanding that these relationships exist within the knowledge presented I will share the findings of the research questions. The researcher summarized the data presented in Chapter 4 that addressed each research questions and interpretations of the data were guided by the literature review

*What kind of behavior and actions do Apsáalooke tribal members expect from school leaders such as principals and superintendents serving their students?*

First and foremost *Apsáalooke* tribal members expect school leaders to demonstrate respect. *Chikitchée*, respect, is an important aspect of *Apsáalooke* life. It is strived for and expected from leadership and can be viewed and practiced in different ways such as how an individual carry themselves daily through dress, self-care and in the fulfilling the different relationship requirements within the kinship familial and clan relationships as well as different spiritual practices. While one may have a leadership position they also need to display the qualities and character desired of a leader to solicit respect from the community through humility, openness to people and kindness. Carjuzza, Henderson and Ruff (2015) found that Indigenous leadership is concerned with the leader's character and the essence of the leadership being will determine the degree to which they will have followership. Respect is a foundational construct discussed in Indigenous lifeways and methodologies in many articles of scholarship. Kirkness and

Barnhardt (1991) wrote about the core values of concepts of an Indigenous worldview and respect is one of them. Jo-ann Archibald (2008) named respect as one of the seven Indigenous principles and practices used to create space for Indigenous teachings.

Weber-Pillwax (2001) also names respect as one of the aspects of an Indigenous worldview. From the research one can see that respect plays a foundational role in the way Indigenous people see the world and interact with the world and each other.

According to Tuhiwai-Smith (2012),

The term 'respect' is consistently used by indigenous peoples to underscore the significance of our relationships and humanity. Through respect the place of everyone and everything in the universe is kept in balance and harmony. Respect is a reciprocal, shared, constantly interchanging principle which is expressed through all aspects of social conduct (p.125).

David Neel (as cited in Archibald, 2008) wrote:

...Respect is the foundation for all relationships: between individuals, with future and past generations, with the Earth, with animals, with our Creator...and with ourselves. To understand [respect] and apply it to our daily lives is an ongoing process. This is the most valuable lesson the leaders have for us. It is not a lesson that can be explained with the simple formula [or definition], Respect is ... (p. 23-24).

School leaders must also be openminded, vulnerable and willing to learn about the community and its unique culture. Having a teachable spirit and openness to learn is of great benefit, regardless of how learned or experienced one might already be and is a desirable disposition. School leaders must realize they do not have all the answers. Have a listening ear and truly listening and hearing concerns, validating them and acting upon them is desired in school leaders. School leaders will have a difficult time if they take the opposite approach by being closeminded, unteachable and in effect uncaring by not listening to or being willing to learn and ignoring valid concerns that people may have.

In regard to reservation schools it was found that school leaders need to effectively respond to the wishes, desires and needs of the students and parents in the community (Martin, 2015).

School leaders need to learn about and respect the students and parents as well display an interest in and respect the culture. One must not attempt to change the culture or make them conform to the dominant society's culture. Deloria and Wildcat (2001) pointed out that, "the thing that has always been missing from Indian education, and is still missing today is, Indians" (p. 152). The U.S. government and Native American tribes have a strong history of conflicts between the views on the best way to educate Native American children (Klug, 2012). Assaults against family and social structures happened in attempt to mirror white family structures, along with attempt to stamp out Indigenous epistemologies and spirituality as well as life maintenance and sustenance practices with capitalism, farming and trades forced upon communities (Writer, 2012).

This is not to say students shouldn't learn about dominant societies' culture, but their *Apsáalooke* culture should be treated as equal and as valuable and not lesser than the society and culture of the dominant society. Leaders must ensure their teaching staff does this as well. Friere (1970) wrote that oppressed peoples often manifest a distrust of self after internalizing their oppressors negative views of them not realizing that they have knowledge in their own communities and that they 'know things' too and start to put their oppressor's knowledge on a pedestal. *Apsáalooke* participants do not want their students to be made to feel ashamed of themselves, their families, traditions or their origins. All members of the community, *Apsáalooke* and non- *Apsáalooke* must be

respected. All the community members and groups must be respected equally, not showing favoritism to one group over another. As offending on individual may result in possibly damaging many other relationships due to the close knit relationships but winning the support of one supporter will possibly win over other supporters similarly.

The intentions of a school leader being in an *Apsáalooke* school is also important. The *Apsáalooke* want school leaders who are there for the right reasons. School leaders must be passionate about their work, displaying care and compassion for the students and keeping the students at the forefront of all that they do. They also want good teachers who are working with their children for the right reasons.

Being at the school for the right reasons will allow someone to work well in the community. Native American communities do not just want empowerment individually but want it for their tribes, nations, communities and want it as a people and Native American communities with their inherent rights to determine the nature of education provided to their students, have a strong connection between education, self-determination and sovereignty, yet this is rarely recognized within mainstream education (Brayboy & Castagno, 2008). Harris & Wasilewski's (2004) Indigeneity, refers to relationship as the obligation we have for each other because we are all related or connected to each other and therefore we are to ensure all people are included. Responsibility is the obligation to community, and we are all obligated to contribute to each other's wellbeing and to play our part as we all affect each other in some way or another due to our connection or interrelatedness. Reciprocity is a cyclical obligation that is aligned with creation as seen in the seasons or in nature and when you are in a

relationship with someone you are then in a give and take reality with them.

Redistribution is the obligation of sharing wherein the balance within relationships is pursued and maintained often through cultural, social and spiritual practices.

These concepts play heavily into what *Apsáalooke* respondents refer to as being in their community for the right reasons. Barnhardt (2015) explained that for schools to be successful in Native American communities they must take into account the wellbeing of the community and those that it serves, and not just their own institutional wellbeing. In *Apsáalooke* leadership the leader or chief would always distribute their material wealth and share it with others, and were sometimes left with nothing, as greed was frowned upon and the motivation of leadership was to serve the people and it is an honor to be able to give away material wealth. This is why many respondents talked about loving the community and doing what was best for the students as opposed to only being there for the job or being there for money. While there is no issue with properly compensating school leaders or educators it is seriously frowned upon to be thought of as one who is only there for the money and not the community and children. Native American leadership does what is best for the whole community and not one's own self (Holm, 2006).

School leaders are expected to be present in the community as they are community leaders as well. In being present in the community they will then develop relationships which can serve to support the schools purpose to educate students. These relationships are also resources that can help students become successful. Leaders must

develop relationships with the staff as well as with the informal leadership within the community in order to lead more effectively for the benefit of the students.

School leaders are also expected to defend and support their school, students and community. By becoming a leader in an *Apsáalooke* school one becomes a de fact community leader as well and is to represent and stand up for the community. School leaders are expected to defend the relationships with the community or the relationships they have inherited as a school leader. Their *Apsáalooke* students may experience the negative effects of bias and racism knowingly or unknowingly from staff or other communities. *Apsáalooke* participants want school leaders to defend the relationships they have with their students and the *Apsáalooke* school they may be leading. As community leaders, a principal or superintendent cannot remain silent, stand idly by, look the other way or dismiss what is happening if any issues arise because of race and discrimination towards their students and community. Many times looking the other way and wishing the problem wasn't there is disguised as taking the high road and racist actions towards Native American students is never called out and thus continues without consequences. Whether it be rude treatment on a field trip or racist taunts from an opposing teams fanbase, the leader cannot look the other way. There is the thought that kids are kids everywhere but school leaders need to learn that race is an endemic part of society and life (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002). The belief of ideological neutrality or colorblindness have, "camouflaged the self-interest, power, and privilege of the dominant groups in American [Society and Schools]" (p. 25). Omi and Winant (2005) wrote that race continues to be a part of our everyday experience and an impermeable part of our

identities. The misinformed view, colorblindness, propagates the idea that achievement is not due in any part to race or ethnicity but is solely the result of hard work. This has caused educators to become blinded or distanced from racism in the schools they serve in (Giroux, 2008). Sparks (1994) recommended that teachers need to understand the deep effects of racism and discrimination have upon minority students and says teachers have a moral responsibility to be culturally sensitive.

Incorporating the culture and providing a welcoming atmosphere to students by being friendly and culturally sensitive is desired and will make the school a place where students, *Apsáalooke* staff and community members want to be as well.

*How can school leaders work well with parents and leaders in the Apsáalooke community?*

School leaders can work well by respecting the individual students, staff members, board members, parents and their culture. While school leaders need to work with staff and the schoolboard they must also authentically listen to parents and community members and develop healthy relationships with parents and leaders in the *Apsáalooke* community. School leaders need to work with the community, get to know who is who, and who the power brokers are as well as the informal leadership structure in the community made up of influential people who may or may not hold an elected office. School leaders must gain the support of the leaders in the community. Bird, Lee & Lopez (2013) found that many times schools serving Native American communities do not allow parental involvement and thus perpetuate assimilative practices of colonization.

The best and easiest way to learn about the community and the relationships present in the community is by a school leader being present themselves. Leaders must be present at different events in the community and by forging solid authentic connections, building trust with the community and behaving as a community leader in order to build community support for the education of students. Writer (2012) wrote that Native American communities should not be worked on but worked with; and unless tribes are not directly involved, tribal sovereignty and identity can become undermined. School leaders must do right by all stakeholders and not just the school board, state, feds and teachers but the students and parents also. This is important because many school leaders have not experienced success in Native American communities because of weak relationships with these other stake holders (Martin, 2015). It is important to lead through the community power brokers and the informal leadership structure within the *Apsáalooke* community. Barhardt (2015) wrote that Native Americans must be authentically involved in the decision-making process, rather than including a token representative making it look like equality is happening in the school system. When this happens then the community will become more dedicated to the goals of the school and committed to its success.

While working with the community, reaching out and attempting to make these connections it is important to be sincere and authentic, not coming on too strong and to give people time and space to develop trust in the school leader. One effort is often not enough, continue to reach out consistently and create these alliances to support the school, students and leaders in the community. School leaders must also reach out to

community by hosting different events and constantly communicating with parents. It is important for the school leader to do this in order to build trust. Sosic and Dionne (1997) wrote that building trust is, “the process of establishing respect and instilling faith into followers based on leader integrity, honesty and openness” (p. 450). Harris and Wasilewski (2004) wrote, “Responsible Indigenous leadership is based on an ethos of care, not coercion. The most important responsibility of a leader is to create the social space in which productive relationship can be established and take place” (p.5). In addition to creating the social space to build relationships, attending important events in the community can demonstrate ones care and respect for the community. Vogel and Rude (2015) also found that a principle of effective instructional leadership among Indigenous communities is the importance of relationships. It should be emphasized that in the Indigenous worldview relationships are not merely important, but relationships are reality (Wilson, 2008). McCleary mentioned that one cannot just do their administrative work but they must take into account the relationships in the community and staff. Similarly (Holm, 2006) says that in the Western view of leadership school leaders follow directives, policies, manage a budget and adhere to a bureaucratic system; but the American Indian way of leadership emphasizes actions, creativity, problem solving, creating consensus and doing what is best for the whole of the community and in essence practicing true leadership.

Accepting the *Apsáalooke* culture and working with it rather than against it in school controlled issues such as the school calendar and events is desired. School leadership must be present and connect with the community by attending extra-curricular

events as well as events that are not school sponsored. Being present demonstrates interest and care, there are also events outside of the school year that leaders can attend to connect with the community.

*What do Apsáalooke tribal members want school leaders to know and be aware of in the education of the children of the tribe?*

School leaders need to listen to and work with the school community as well as the larger community and respect the *Apsáalooke* culture, developing an awareness of it so that it can be worked with rather than worked against. Faircloth and Tippeconnic (2013) argued that, “School leaders should reflect the values and beliefs of Indigenous communities and be culturally proficient” (pp.480). When being a school leader in a Native American school or community it is, “...helpful to know what the local and cultural beliefs are regarding ‘personal qualities of leadership’ and to work within the acceptable parameters” (Martin, 2015, p. 156).

School leaders also need to know about the different relationships, whether they be blood, clan, traditional adoption or marriage and the different expectations each relationship has whether it is supportive, reverent and respectful, a friendly teasing or complete avoidance. Knowing how these relationships present in the school systems between staff, students, interact can assist school leaders in avoiding embarrassing situations or embarrassing someone inadvertently. School leaders need to be aware and respect the unique culture, the close knit society of *Apsáalooke* relationships and the structure of *Apsáalooke* families and they must help, rather than hinder, the perpetuation

and development of *Apsáalooke* identity and culture in the students is desired. Doing this can foster support and good will from the leadership in the *Apsáalooke* community

School leaders need to know that the community has high expectations and want their students to succeed academically in order to have a good life after their K-12 experience. They also want and desire high quality teachers in the classroom working with their kids. Leadership can put forth efforts to recruit and retain high performing staff. It is important to know that some families may not know how to best support their students but the school leader needs to teach them how to support their kids and the school without turning them off or offending them. *Apsáalooke* students deserve a good education so school leaders must not lower academic standards and offer a second class education but also be willing to put in the extra time and effort required to support students in achieving these expectations rather than incorrectly assuming high expectations are the same thing as being punitive and rigid. Participants also want high expectations for teachers in their treatment and educating of students. Training and professional development for teachers and support staff is needed in order for them to be successful in supporting the students body.

School leaders would do well to learn about the culture in order to be aware and to be respectful of the practices and way of life. Allowing the students to be who they were made to be and not to impede the cultural practices is important. Many participants feel some of the negative behaviors students may be involved in are due to a loss of identity. Participants did not want school leaders to attempt to replace students identity as they believed the consequences are severely harmful to the students themselves and to the

larger *Apsáalooke* community. This relates hegemony as defined by Gramsci (1971) where a system of values, beliefs, attitudes, ideas or morals so permeate a society that they are considered common knowledge or common sense. These ideas govern the daily life of school systems and social interactions and are not the values that *Apsáalooke* students may bring to school with them. *Apsáalooke* culture should be a part of the life of the school to protect the identity of the students and also make them feel welcome in the school system, thus eliminating a barrier to learning.

McLaren (2009) suggested that schools act as agencies of transmission of a dominant culture through curriculum and pedagogies by maintaining dominance. Battiste (2000) explains how within hegemonic social structures, or schools, “Indigenous students have been subjected to multiple forms of cognitive imperialism within colonial educational systems that have destroyed and distorted their Indigenous ways of life, histories, identities, cultures, and languages” (p. 193). School curricula has deliberately privileged on language, culture, and frame of reference (Brayboy, 2006), and asked Indigenous students to disconnect themselves from their intimate and life-giving relationships with their ancestors, their ancestral homelands, and Indigenous ways of knowing and understanding the world (p. 198). Writer (2012) pointed out that present within the educational systems that serve Native American students, there are educationally imposed oppressions with the school system such as the value of whiteness and the practices of colonialism and a history of psychological conditioning to erase student identity and origins with attempts to create a distaste for their Indigenous origins. Education was utilized as a tool for white aggression (Prucha, 2000) to wage a cultural

war against Native American ways of life and became the weapon of choice as families, communities and children were managed ideologically (Spring, 1996). *Apsáalooke* participants did not want this to be so in their schools, they wanted their students to be proud of who God made them because if God wanted them to be *baashchshiile* they would have been *baashchshiile* and nothing can change that.

Participants want school leaders to provide a relevant education that is useful to *Apsáalooke* students in their real world context with content such as financial literacy, the difference between trust and fee lands, *Apsáalooke* history, tribal government and jurisdictional issues; while allowing students to maintain their identity and fostering in them a sense of pride in who they are, instead of teaching them as if they were non-tribal members living off of the reservation.

School leaders need to be aware that there is poverty and other harmful elements such as crime and drug and alcohol abuse in the community. School leaders need to communicate to students affected by this that they do not have to live in those situations and can have a good life with the help of an education. It is also important to know and be aware of the reasons why this poverty exists as well as how it affects students and parents. Along with poverty students may experience hopelessness and be exposed to drugs and alcohol abuse and other unsavory activities associated with poverty. School leaders need to be able to inform students that education can make their lives better and their communities better. The effects of colonialism and imperialism were Indigenous peoples around the globe have been exploited, dominated, deceived and some even annihilated for their natural resources and land base. While many Indigenous peoples are

still present, they have experienced, and continue to experience, an attack on the very core of their identities and existence. The experience of Indigenous peoples of the North Americas is unique in that while colonialism seeks to exploit a region for its resources, settler colonialism in American seeks to eradicate the Indigenous populations of the land and replace the inhabitants with their own. Poverty and related harmful activities connected to low socio-economic reality is the result of this settler colonial experience in *Apsáalooke* communities. Rodriguez and Fabionar (2010) point out that those in leadership positions must understand the needs of Native American school populations and the effects of poverty. Knowing this a leader must be able to lead families to support their students success. It is important to understand the deep issues that poverty can have upon a community and not fall into common trap in America to blame the victims or those in need and help student to utilize education to make better lives for themselves.

School leaders must know that they might experience pushback from community members or individual elected officials but they must keep pushing for academic success. School leaders in *Apsáalooke* schools must learn to work with people and win them over, be patient, listen and explain what you are trying to accomplish while holding their ground for student academic achievement by not allowing any criticism to side track them or distract them from their purpose.

Even with the poverty in mind, school leaders must keep pushing students to be successful and hold their expectations high, not allowing hardships to become an excuse to provide a second rate education. As academic success is desired for students the desire for students to have their identity reinforced and kept intact and to be able to learn to

respect themselves and others is also present. School leaders must create an environment that allows the students to be happy and proud of who they are and one that will not make them feel ashamed or make them feel less than.

### Interconnections Revisited

Wilson (2008) highlights that in an Indigenous research methodology knowledge is relational and Indigenous ontology and epistemology share the aspect of relationality. All these facets of knowledge in the researches findings are interconnected and incomplete without one another and must be take into consideration as a while and not apart from each other. Much like the concepts, practices and values that make up the core of an Indigenous worldview are intertwined, interdependent and often overlapping, as well as the circular communication style of indigenous peoples, the conclusions of this research are also related and dependent upon one another. One finding would not contain the complete understanding independent of the other findings and often each question shined a light on a different facet of a particular finding.

### Trustworthiness

When participants were given transcriptions everyone returned them as is with the exceptions of correcting grammar and flow; no substantive changes were made, but changes to the way things were expressed was changed at participants request and with permission. The information was triangulated from different points of view throughout the tribe, is replicable and the specific *Apsáalooke* cultural protocols were followed.

### Recommendations for Practice

Respondents spoke of the need for school leaders to be respectful as well as openminded and teachable. School leaders need to make sure any preconceived notions and unconscious bias concerning Native Americans are not influencing their approach to leadership in *Apsáalooke* Schools. The idea that all people are the same can be true in the fact we are members of the human race, but the truth is people have different cultural, social and political identities and *Apsáalooke* children and parents have different political statuses as members of a sovereign tribal nation. School leaders must work respectfully with all members of the community with the knowledge that the *Apsáalooke* have a uniquely close knit society and working positively with one family can have a positive effect on other families. The opposite is also true whereas if school leaders is viewed as uncaring or disrespectful to one family other families may then approach the leaders with this in mind. School leaders need to become culturally proficient and sensitive.

School leaders should be aware of the history of schools not paying attention to the concerns and needs of Native American communities. This could stem for the original intents of systemic attempts by educational agencies of assimilations by removing the identity, culture and language of American Indian children and viewing Native American parents concerns and wishes as null and void when it comes to educating their children. Often times school personnel unknowingly reinforce stereotypes and can inadvertently deface Native American cultural ways. For example when an *Apsáalooke* refers to a sibling, an uninformed teacher may attempt to correct them and then enforce the white American definition of sibling, or they may refer to the

white world as the real world; but the *Apsáalooke* world is not false, it is the reality and lived experience of *Apsáalooke* students and families and their reality needs to be acknowledged as such. School leaders need to ensure they take parental and tribal concerns seriously and begin to learn about the community they are in so that they can authentically serve their school population, as they would in any other community to make sure they provide a quality education that helps rather than harms the students intellectually, psychologically, spiritually and physically. The need to authentically listen is important and can develop trust and build bridges between the school and community that are necessary.

In learning about the community the different aspects of cultural life must be respected and learned about. The different relationships in particular needs to be learned about, whether people are connected by blood, *Ashammaliaxxia*, marriage, cultural adoption of close family connection. The community's life, culture and relationships can best be learned by being present in the community and not separate from it. School leaders must be present at school functions such as basketball games where community members are sure to be present. A school leader will not be effective in learning about the community if they are always in their office and never leave the confines of the school building. There are many different community events, functions and gatherings that school leaders can attend and be present at. School leaders should form relationships with staff members who would be willing to help them attend these gatherings and introduce the school leader to people in the community and teach them about any events that they may be observing such as giveaways, adoptions or proclamations.

Relationships must be developed and worked with in the *Apsáalooke* community, they cannot be ignored and ignoring them may cause problems.

Although a school leader does not need to become an expert in the culture, having and interest and awareness in the life of the community will assist them in their leadership practice. They should strive to learn about different topics such as: the origins and history of the *Apsáalooke*, the *Ashammaliaxxii*, different historical figures as well as some of the language. There are many resources available such as books, videos, apps and the local tribal college. With this said, there is also no excuse for a school leader working in an *Apsáalooke* to remain uninformed about the culture of the students and community.

There are also various Baptist, Catholic and Pentecostal churches in each community that school leaders can attend and in so doing will send a positive message of good will to the community. The annual events a school leader can attend in the summer are the Crow Native Days which holds the annual ultimate warrior competition, a rodeo, cultural dances as well as many other events including a reenactment of the Battle of the Little Big Horn; Crow Fair, which holds cultural dances with attendees from literally around the globe. Dances are held during the day and the evening as well as a rodeo. Rodeo competitions along with horse races are big as the *Apsáalooke* people are proud horseman and children can be seen riding their horses in the communities almost daily. There are many camp meetings style church gatherings as well throughout the summer. Sundance's are also held during the summer months and as these are deeply meaningful and significant gatherings so a school leader will want to lean upon a guide to take them

to these gatherings so that they are not there alone. In the winter months there are many communities that have New Year's Celebrations with cultural celebrations as well and Hand Game competitions held between different communities and visiting tribes. Being present at the many events that are not school sponsored will help the school leaders to be present in the community as well as develop authentic relationships. Many families practice sweat lodge ceremonies and one should take advantage of any invitation they might receive. Attendance at any of these many community events can help a school leader become aware of and connect with the informal leadership structure in the community made up of respected citizens whose support is vital.

There are also political type events that a school leader will find it useful to attend. School leaders can learn about the tribal government and who the tribal government leaders are during events such as legislative sessions and tribal council meetings. Being present will allow school leaders to know who the formal community leaders from the different *Apsáalooke* schools, district legislatures, the executive branch, the Indian Health Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the BIA & Tribal police and the BIA and Tribal social services and the many other programs in the community. Support from the elected officials can help schools tremendously as the programs they have at their disposal can be of great assistance in serving the student body.

When being present and reaching out school leaders must not come on too strong, not be pushy or overbearing as people will then avoid the leader. They must also avoid discouragement as they will most likely be viewed with distrust at first. After all the community is used to school leaders coming and going and want to know if the school

leader is there with the right heart and right intentions; authentic relationships take time to develop. Every year many different groups and organizations come in to help the community with different initiatives and programs but rarely stay for long. One community leader likened these types of initiatives and leaders to seagulls in contrast to eagles. Whereas eagles are in *Apsáalooke* country all year around and are even present during the bitterest of winters, seagulls come around every now and then when the weather is nice, but as soon as it gets cold they leave for an easier climate.

School leaders must be aware of the poverty that is present in the community and the reasons why it exists, which finds its roots in the historical treatment of Native Americans and current legal, political, and policy issues of the U.S. government. The poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, as well as lack of local law enforcement can sometimes prove to be challenging. Thus the serious need to connect with local leaders, organizations and resources within the community. Some students may be coming from affected homes and must be worked with skillfully to make sure they receive a high quality education. Staff may need specific training to become trauma informed and work effectively with students who may have had adverse childhood experiences as well as how best to work with students in poverty. Staff may also need training to become more proficient and must not falsely attribute the effects of poverty with culture.

Even with the challenges of poverty and trauma in mind, school leaders need to have high academic and behavioral expectations for *Apsáalooke* students while displaying respect for them and communicating with them the same way they would communicate with a peer. These challenges must not be a reason to lower academic

expectations as many students may be starting out behind their peers from non-Native schools. Lowering their expectations may set them back even further. High expectations are not only for students but for the school leader themselves and the teaching staff. School leaders must recruit, hire and retain good quality teachers who are committed to their students. School leaders must help their staff maintain these expectations; as opposed to being content with low performance from teachers. They must be aware of what is going on in their schools and set learning benchmarks and work towards them. There has historically been a practice of teachers and principals working in reservation schools because they may have been unemployable elsewhere, the *Apsáalooke* community want the best teachers for their children and school leaders need to make sure this happens.

Education is desired for *Apsáalooke* children and is not a foreign concept, although the format of western education is different. When school leaders hold high academic and behavioral expectations they can receive pushback and be challenged because of different reasons. School leaders need to be kind, patient, understanding, often times they must lean upon relationships and hold their ground when it comes to providing a high quality education for their students. School leader must do this in a tactful way in order to maintain positive relationships. Holding one's ground and having high expectations does not mean school leaders should take a my way or the highway approach, be closed minded, rigid or punitive; it does mean that school leaders and staff should be flexible but maintenance of high standards and just as important they must be willing to do the work to help students achieve at a high standard.

The education provided to *Apsáalooke* students' needs to be relevant to their lived experience and they must not be taught as if they are non-Indian students living off of the reservation within dominant society. The jurisdictional issues that affect their lives must be taken into consideration as well as their rights as members of a sovereign nation. Students must be taught their treaty rights as well as their tribal laws. Tribal government needs to be taught alongside the U.S. government as well. In providing a culturally relevant education their unique *Apsáalooke* history must be taught reinforcing their identity, culture and language. School leaders must be aware that schools were used in a long systematic attempt to assimilate children and remove their identity and not allow this to happen on their watch. *Apsáalooke* student will always be *Apsáalooke* and school leaders must work to build their students identity and not damage it. A school leader who acknowledges the *Apsáalooke* identity and does not ignore it will gain family and community support; a school leader who doesn't will not go very far in leading an *Apsáalooke* School as this is very important for the community. Efforts to provide a relevant education must go beyond the surface level activities such as Native American day or Native American week held every September. Although these events are appreciated and enjoyed they often times have no clear connection or impact upon the life of the school. Efforts at providing a relevant education must have a real influence upon the schools culture, curriculum and content taught in schools daily. The school calendar should not conflict with *Apsáalooke* holidays such as Crow Fair but should be planned with these events in mind. The student attendance policies for students and leave policies for employees should reflect *Apsáalooke* society, not only dominant society. The

*Apsáalooke* reality is just as valid and real as white reality, and it has been operating here in the *Apsáalooke* community for much longer, school systems need to acknowledge and honor this.

School leaders must understand that they are not only school leaders but they become community leaders when working in an *Apsáalooke* school. This is a responsibility that they inherit when accepting a school leadership position. If the need arises, they will be looked upon to defend and support their students, schools and communities from racism, bigotry and stereo types. They and cannot remain silent or pretend these issue are not happening. They must care enough to defend their relationships within the school and in the community. School leaders must ensure unconscious bias towards Native Americans is not operating in their schools and classrooms.

### Implications

There are potential practical implications within the results of this research for practicing school leaders who currently work with an *Apsáalooke* K-12 school or who will work with *Apsáalooke* schools that could serve as a road map and inform the practice of these school leaders or similar Indigenous communities. There is also data suggesting advice on how to connect with the parents, community and the informal leadership structure that is found within the *Apsáalooke* community as well as working with and gaining the support of the informal leaders within the community. There are recommendations in planning the school year with the community cycle of events rather

than against them. There are also implications in school policy considering student attendance policies and collective bargaining agreements in the areas of staff leave in respect of the *Apsáalooke* definition of family.

Along with this advice contains advice on holding expectations high for student achievement and dealing with pushback as well as possible reasons for the resistance one might experience as a school leader. This research is applicable to leaders of organizations outside of the school systems such as the Indian Health Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs as they also work with *Apsáalooke* tribal members. The work is also generally applicable to similar school leaders serving an American Indian population. Where schools offer an education of which members want a high standard it could be found that they also have high expectations in health care and other services these organizations provide.

The research also adds to the body of *Apsáalooke* education research literature whereas Real Bird found the Crow Clan System to be the foundation of education and called for *Apsáalooke* to influence school systems for the benefit of *Apsáalooke* children, this work gives specific practices that can aid in leading the schools to provide a better educational experience for *Apsáalooke* students and work to maintain the culture and identity of students. This work also provides some methods of working with the community that are relevant and meaningful and it contains an *Apsáalooke* view for education leadership. This work adds to the field of culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally responsive leadership in specificity is the *Apsáalooke* nation.

The work also identifies the *Ashammaliaxiia* and the protocols it employs as being a particular and unique Indigenous research methodology relevant to the *Apsáalooke* that is congruent to the R's associated with Indigenous research methodologies and highlights the importance of community relationships in relation to Indigenous leadership, school leadership in Indigenous communities and research in Indigenous communities. This research adds to the body of work of Indigenous Research Methodologies as an example of the practice and applying an Indigenous methodology. Other tribes that have specifically different cultural protocols than the *Apsáalooke* but similar adherence to respect, relationality, reciprocity and relevance within their protocols could formulate their research in a similar model.

There are also implications in school policy regarding students attendance policies and collective bargaining agreements in relations to staff leave in respect of the *Apsáalooke* definition of family. This study highlighted at a minimum two clear areas that could be changed or modified to better accommodate the *Apsáalooke* community and educate its students. In these two areas we find attempt from the dominant culture to lay claim to the norm, or right definition, of how things are or should be. Another study could be conducted to find more examples of this phenomena at play within *Apsáalooke* schools in order to create better school systems. These two areas are attendance policies and leave policies as related to the definition of family.

There are methodological implications as well. In conducting research within an Indigenous methodology I found the commitment to being authentic to the process of relational accountability required a lot of time and investment. Setting up times to meet,

whether they were in person or over the phone, traveling to meet with people, providing meals and any other appropriate gifts required much commitment and sincerity. Then setting up meetings again to allow the participants to see what they had said and allowing them to revise any things that may needed clarification as well as omit information. Some participants did not want to read the notes or transcriptions and wanted me to read them and informed me of any corrections or clarifications and gave permission to fix grammar in order to have a better flow for readability in English. This commitment was needed in order to preserve the voice of the respondents involved and adhere to relational accountability.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

Further research should be conducted to assess the current status of culturally relevant pedagogy in *Apsáalooke* schools. Respondents expressed a desire for a more culturally responsive education for their students. Treaties, history, law and financial education as well as using the *Apsáalooke* worldview as a point of reference in the school systems and instruction given to *Apsáalooke* students in the communities of Wyola, Lodge Grass, Pryor, St. Xavier, Fort Smith, Crow Agency, Hardin and Pryor needs to happen. Students need an education that is relevant to their lives. It is happening all over the country; the problem is that is usually only happening for non-Indian students. An inquiry should be made into what curriculum could be developed to support the unique identity, history and context of *Apsáalooke* students in order to make their education more relevant to their context and thus making it meaningful instead of providing them

with and education not in relation to their background that is contextualized for a middle class white American student.

Further exploration of *Apsáalooke* schools and community/family engagement is suggested as family engagement is a strong predictor of student success and Freeman and Fox (2005) found that a lack of parental involvement was a serious concern in schools that were 25 percent or more Native American. A specific study to uncover tribal specific approaches to working with *Apsáalooke* parents is suggested. Research needs to be done to uncover the perceptions of *Apsáalooke* parents and community members when it comes to being involved in their students education as well as unearthing the best approaches at facilitating family/community involvement.

A study could also attempt to identify the specific informal power structure made up of powerbrokers and respected people of influence within the *Apsáalooke* community, as well as the specific ways it functions and more data should be collected to learn how to best solicit community support and to create partnerships with the informal *Apsáalooke* leadership. Henderson, Ruff & Carjuzaa (2016) found that Indigenous models of leadership exist and are utilized in communities. Barnhardt (2009) also found that there is a problem of school systems utilizing a Western administrative framework in communities that are non-Western communities. This type of study could also be done in other similar American Indian communities.

Research should be done to unearth and highlight practices and methods to incorporate within American Indian schools, that will empower students to overcome the barriers of poverty in Indian country. Poverty is often blamed on those affected by it yet

we know that for American Indian communities poverty is the result of governmental policies and actions, settler colonialism, as well as genocidal efforts to remove the indigenous peoples from their lands. Teachers need to be given tools to help connect their students with the benefits education will provide as well as understanding how best to work with students in poverty. Students need to be empowered through an education that helps students understand the systematic issues involved in order for them to overcome these issues through education.

A study can be done that focuses more on *Chikitchée*, the pillar of respect in the *Apsáalooke* community and how leadership can utilize this desired and valued characteristic. Gaining a clearer view of it as well as how it is practiced within leadership is an important aspect of *Apsáalooke* life and can be viewed and practiced in different ways such as how an individual carries themselves daily through dress, self-care and in the fulfilling the different relationship requirements within the kinship familial and clan relationships as well as different spiritual practices. Respondents mentioned that this is wanted their students to retain the practice and belief of *Chikittúu* and be able to practice it in their daily lives. The practice of respect carries within it an adherence to the other R's of the Indigenous framework of this study: relational accountability, relevance, and reciprocity. Respect permeates every facet of Indigenous research methodologies according to Tuhiwai-Smith (2012),

The term 'respect' is consistently used by indigenous peoples to underscore the significance of our relationships and humanity. Through respect the place of everyone and everything in the universe is kept in balance and harmony. Respect is a reciprocal, shared, constantly interchanging principle which is expressed through all aspects of social conduct (p.125).

David Neel (as cited in Archibald, 2008) wrote:

...Respect is the foundation for all relationships: between individuals, with future and past generations, with the Earth, with animals, with our Creator...and with ourselves. To understand [respect] and apply it to our daily lives is an ongoing process. This is the most valuable lesson the leaders have for us. It is not a lesson that can be explained with the simple formula [or definition], Respect is ... (p. 23-24).

### Summary

Therefore, based on the findings, what is the answer to the questions of “What kind of behavior and actions do Apsáalooke tribal members expect from school leaders such as principals and superintendents serving their students,” “How can school leaders work well with parents and leaders in the Apsáalooke community,” and “What do Apsáalooke tribal members want school leaders to know and be aware of in the education of the children of the tribe?” The answer to these three questions is closely related to the intentions of the leader and being a school leader for the right reasons which would be to do what’s best for students provide them a quality education. These three questions are accomplished through the forging of authentic respect for the students and community while understanding the nuances and responsibilities of the multilayered and many faceted relationships. The school leader must create authentic relationships in the school and outside of the school by being present in the life of the community, in order to implement high academic expectations for students, staff and oneself and must be responsible to these relationships.

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