

Culturally Responsive Student Support Model for American Indian Undergraduate Teacher Education Students

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Introduction

The College of Menominee Nation's (CMN) Teacher Education Program prides itself on nurturing and supporting all students. Our teacher education faculty members seek to provide opportunities and experiences that enrich students' perspectives and build on student's self-efficacy and confidence. Our students come to CMN and are eager to learn and grow professionally. They value the opportunity to put into practice and translate what they have learned in the college classroom into their own early childhood classrooms. Individuals who make up our Teacher Education program are professionals who work as daycare, immersion schools, and Head Start teachers. Some serve as paraprofessionals, teacher assistants, and long-term substitutes, all seeking new knowledge on providing a warm, supportive, caring, and educational environment for the children in their care.

CMNs Teacher Education Program is small; a majority of our students have returned to college after experiencing some life and work after high school. Many are first-generation college students, single parents, and have full-time jobs and families to care for. In addition to the daily challenges of maintaining a busy schedule, students struggle to adapt to "academia" and all the required demands. Beyond the academics that can be challenging for many students (as they have been out of high school for many years before returning to take classes), they experience many challenges affiliated with attending and persisting in college. The challenges become even more significant for students who attend classes part-time, have family responsibilities, and spend limited time on campus. Furthermore, students often lack the technology (i.e.,

laptops) and skills (i.e., Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, etc.) to complete assignments successfully. Lastly, many of our students are called on to support their families during crises and are left to juggle working on their educational goals without a robust support system. Non-traditional students juggling full-time work, children, classes, and homework have little time to focus on studying and learning new content.

As a result of the challenges our students face, the College of Menominee Nation's (CMN) Teacher Education department has always looked for ways to guide students successfully through each semester (i.e., avoid failure) as well as identify ways to retain students so that they can attain their educational goals. We see creating a strong sense of community through student-to-student and faculty-to-student relationships, faculty/peer mentoring and tutoring, culturally responsive practices, student resources, and support as critical strategies and support for our students in the Education Program. Our experience in higher education tells us that solid student relationships and a safe space where students feel cared for and have a relationship with faculty and peers are necessary for students to be successful in their educational attainment. Personal connections and interactions allow students to feel connected to CMN, our program, and their peers and provide students with a feeling of belonging, which is critical to student persistence and perseverance. Fostering relationships through building connections and mentoring provides a strong foundation for creating relationships and leads to student success. This paper aims to present a Culturally Responsive Student Support Conceptual Model based on our experiences working at CMN. In addition to proposing our model, this paper will examine research on retention and student support strategies related to American Indian success in higher education.

Authors Statement

We propose a Culturally Responsive Student Support Model based on our work with American Indian Teacher Education students at the College of Menominee Nation, a Tribal College and University (TCU) in Wisconsin. Based on the success of our Teacher Education

students who graduate and go out and teach in our local school districts, our proposed model's tenets are effective in their success and are critical components of a culturally responsive and welcoming environment in higher education. Dr. Kelli Chelberg's doctoral research and subsequent research around identifying strategies to support building on post-secondary students' self-efficacy while pursuing higher education has been an impetus for much of our work. We believe our proposed model brings value to the work that is being done at Tribal Colleges across the country, as there is limited research in the area of student success, retention, and persistence at Tribal Colleges and Universities.

Background/Literature Review

Before we present our Culturally Responsive Student support model, we will review the literature on persistence, retention, and student support in higher education. While a growing body of research, literature, and funding opportunities has focused on researching college access, persistence, and retention strategies for students of color entering postsecondary education, American Indian student populations are generally missing from the conversation (Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, & Solyom, 2012). In addition, very little current research identifies culturally responsive student supports specific to American Indian college students pursuing their postsecondary opportunities. During the transition to postsecondary education, American Indian students face navigational, academic, and social-emotional challenges. Much of the prior research on American Indian student success has focused on academic preparation. However, the "psychological-social barriers and lack of institutional support encountered by many minority students" may be equally important (Ovink & Veazey, 2011, p. 371). Research suggests that beyond the challenges many at-risk/first-generation college students face, those who are most at risk of non-completion or completing a semester are those students who experience feelings of not fitting in, rejection, and those who may not be able to adjust to the common academic challenges that come with college (O'Keefe, 2013).

Specific challenges exist for American Indian students entering post-secondary educational opportunities. Early research has found that when American Indian students pursuing higher education were surveyed, they noted the “lack of adequate academic preparation in high school as a top obstacle to college completion” (Gilbert, 2000, p. 4). Furthermore, once in college, American Indian college students are also more likely to take remedial coursework while being the least likely to graduate from college (Mosholder & Goslin, 2013). As a result of Mosholder & Goslin’s (2013) research, several factors arose that promoted American Indian persistence: skill development, peer support, and appropriate role models. This suggests that American Indian success is tied to tutoring, peer support, modeling relevant skills for growth, and having role models who are American Indian.

Mounting evidence points to the need for academic and psychosocial support for underrepresented minority students (Keith et al., 2016). Many American Indian students are first-generation college students with limited knowledge of the higher education system and navigational skills needed to meet the rigorous requirements of postsecondary institutions (Flynn et al., 2012). Beyond academic and psychosocial support, there is longstanding research that suggests the higher education system currently promotes ways of teaching and learning that are distinctly different from the traditional ways of being, teaching, and style of learning that is typically presented and learned by many American Indian students (Swisher, 1990). Lastly, the support services Institutions of Higher Education provide must be personalized and culturally responsive to meet the demands of the changing landscape of students pursuing higher education.

Tutoring

Dvorak (2001) states, “tutoring is an active learning process with tutors functioning as facilitators and role models” (p. 35). Tutoring has roots back to the Greeks, Romans, and the Middle Ages (Dvorak, p. 34). Harvard provided tutoring to its students in Latin in 1630 because

all instruction was in Latin. During the 19th and 20th centuries, more and more underprepared and first-generation college students attend college. As a result, and in an attempt to retain college students, many colleges have developed learning centers and sought to support struggling college students through tutoring.

Research suggests that tutoring helps students achieve higher grades, increases course passing and completion rates, and assists with short-term retention rates (Hendrikson, 2005). Furthermore, Laskey & Hetzel (2011) found that tutoring positively influences retention and college success for at-risk students. Strayhorn, Bie, and Dorime-Williams' (2016) study found that tutoring improved at-risk students' persistence, increased retention and graduation rates, and demonstrated an increase in student success across all individual classes than students who received tutoring. American Indian students who may enter postsecondary education academically unprepared (Gilbert, 2000) would benefit from remedial and academic support, which includes tutoring. Additionally, tutoring can provide valuable support for American Indian students as tutees provide support and scaffold student understanding of the specified content knowledge. More importantly, tutees must model and guide explicit thinking and reflection skills as they seek to meet the learning needs of each student. The use of understanding individual learning styles and personalized tutoring specific to students' needs "makes learning personalized...and a feeling of respect for their cultural background" (Pewewardy, C., 2002, p. 41) and ultimately provides motivation and encouragement for learners to succeed. Tutoring is not to be mistaken with mentoring in that tutoring provides academic support that guides and reinforces students' attainment of new content and guides students to think more critically about their learning.

Mentoring

Mentoring is when a senior person provides a junior person with information, advice, and emotional support (Lev, Kolasso, & Bakken, 2010). According to Chelberg & Bosman (2020), mentoring can help students overcome challenges and barriers by guiding “them to better understand the role of value, self-efficacy, and environmental factors underlying their potential and likelihood of student success” (p. 1). Cropper (2000) traces mentoring to African and Ethiopian roots, finding an Ethiopian word “jegna,” meaning mentor (p. 4). In the Menominee language, we have words like *nātamowekow* (helps someone) or *kaehkenohamowaew* (teaches him or her). In addition, mentors, elders, and wise, trusted family members in American Indian communities have always provided guidance shared through oral history and teachings. Beliefs and understandings provide guidance in helping American Indians understand who they are and how to live (Lee, 2013). Mentoring provides a supportive space for American Indian students to learn navigational skills on navigating the challenges of higher education while building on student self-efficacy and confidence in successfully navigating post-secondary educational opportunities and successfully connecting with their communities and families.

Peer mentoring is reciprocal and supportive, as Clark and Andrews (2009) noted in their peer mentoring and peer tutoring review. Peer mentoring is also personal, although mentors need more experience and understanding of higher education's academic skills and requirements. Research has suggested that mentoring is essential as a pedagogical approach in addressing critical components needed for academic success and is significant to student motivation, learning, and confidence in degree attainment by creating a supportive environment (Jackson et al., 2003). Mosholder et al. (2016) research established that American Indian mentoring of other American Indian students increased student persistence. In addition, focus students noted that their preference for peer mentoring occurs naturally and informally rather than with a formal mentoring

approach (Moshoholder et al., 2016). These findings support the value peer mentoring brings to the American Indian mentee and their preferences in the mentoring relationship.

At Leech Lake Tribal College, peer mentoring has served several purposes and helped fill the Learning Center's mission. The Learning Center encourages student learners to be more inclusive of their classmates by looking beyond their own goals and building a support network necessary for non-traditional learners to succeed (LeClaire, 2010). In addition, they believe students who commit to peer mentoring and supporting fellow students give students essential leadership skills and demonstrate a commitment to the seven Anishinaabe values of humility, truth, courage, honesty, respect, love, and wisdom.

Faculty mentoring early in a student's academic career can provide a strong foundation to build and expand on student success and increase navigational skills. Chelberg and Bosman's (2020) research suggests changes in students' confidence and self-efficacy due to their participation in faculty mentoring for a semester. Results indicated that study participants "recognized whom they could turn to for support and increased confidence in communicating with peers and instructors" (Chelberg & Bosman, 2020, p. 10). Lastly, the benefits of faculty mentoring enrich students' learning experiences, providing access to a relational connection that provides important navigational skills and encouragement needed for success.

Student Resources and Support of Culture

Student resources and support provided to American Indian students should be focused on providing specific and individualized assistance that meets the needs of all students. There is not one resource that will meet the needs of all students. However, colleges and universities must be prepared to "create special social networks to support American Indian students and their families in order to make the necessary connections with the university environment" (Harrington &

Harrington, 2012, p. 44). Additionally, Harrington & Harrington (2012) find that best practices for retention of American Indian students are done by valuing the influence that family and community have on American Indian students and creating flexible policies that permit students to preserve their tribal and family connections.

Gilbert (2000) reported that oftentimes American Indian students attending mainstream institutions experience social norms that are different from those that they have learned in their home community. Boyer (1997) indicated that the transition to college for many American Indian students could be a disorienting experience. Being separated from home, American Indian students experience the discomfort of unfamiliar values and expectations. Some university officials seemed to attribute academic programs and camps (i.e., bridge programs, orientations, etc.) as a persistence factor related to American Indian students' persistence throughout their college experience (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). More specifically, they believed individualized advising and meeting special cultural needs strengthened students' responsibility and desire to continue and persist throughout graduation.

Culture and Extended Family Structure and Support

Successful American Indian college students with a strong cultural identity and a solid connection to their cultural ties are likelier to persist in their postsecondary endeavors (Alberta, 2001). Windchief & Joseph (2015) state that "the dominant narrative in educational curriculum limits student development...and is described in a historical context" (p. 274). This proves to be problematic for American Indian students pursuing higher education because they cannot see their ancestral histories and culture presented in mainstream educational media. Windchief & Joseph (2017) believe the only solution to this complicated system is to include Indigenous perspectives in all aspects of education. Providing an educational curriculum from an Indigenous lens

“highlights the reality of how Indigenous students’ experiences often conflict with mainstream curriculums” (p. 274) and empowers American Indian students to understand better their culture and history as well as clear up any misconceptions non-Native students might have about American Indians.

Beyond the importance of understanding American Indian culture, of equal importance is understanding that the learning styles and cognitive processes of American Indian students differ from those of other cultures. According to Morgan (2009), American Indian students view the world differently and respond to teaching strategies differently than their non-Native counterparts due to cultural values and early socialization experiences. Understanding these differences, values, and learning styles specific to American Indians is critical when providing a culturally responsive classroom positive student experience. Identifying learning styles specific to field-dependence/field independence, reflectivity/impulsivity, perceptual strengths, and cooperation vs. competition are a few classifications to be considered when considering the integration of understanding American Indian culture into one’s classroom.

Lastly, extending the family structure within the college culture “enhances the student’s sense of belonging and leads to higher retention rates” (HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002, p. 29). HeavyRunner and DeCelles (2002) developed a Family Education Model based on three beliefs that situated the student’s family as an integral part of an American Indian College student’s success and persistence in college. These three assumptions included (1) the TCU acting as a liaison for critical community support, (2) TCUs enlisting the student’s family’s support as a means of supporting their TCU student, and (3) the TCU engaging the family in the life of the college community (HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002). When the entire family is engaged and feels a sense of belonging to the college community, they are more likely to engage in activities and ultimately

support the efforts of their loved ones. As a result of engaging family members in the livelihood of the TCU, this transfer over to the support of the TCU student and the likelihood of increased persistence and ultimately successful completion of their education. Guillory (2009) also suggests that maintaining strong family and community connections between the American Indian student provides for a “major source of kinship leading to increased persistence” (p. 18) which is beneficial for student success and completion.

Personal Connections/Belongingness and Social Celebrations

Belongingness, or the sense of belonging, is a vital facet of students’ success in college. Strayhorn (2019) states that belonging “can affect a student’s degree of academic adjustment, achievement, and aspirations” (p. 3) and believes that belonging varies based on a student’s identity (i.e. race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.). Entering post-secondary education can be a scary proposition and requires students to form a connection and a feeling of belonging to their chosen institution to want to persist and continue. An understanding of belonging varies from student to student and across 2-year and 4-year institutions; however, for minority and first-generation students, there is a lower sense of belonging than their peers at 4-year institutions, while the opposite is true at 2-year schools (Gopalan & Brady, 2019). In addition, at 4-year schools, “belonging predicts better persistence, engagement, and mental health” (Gopalan & Brady, 2019, p. 2) demonstrating a solid need to better understand and measure the factors related to college students’ success and implement a plan for engaging students more.

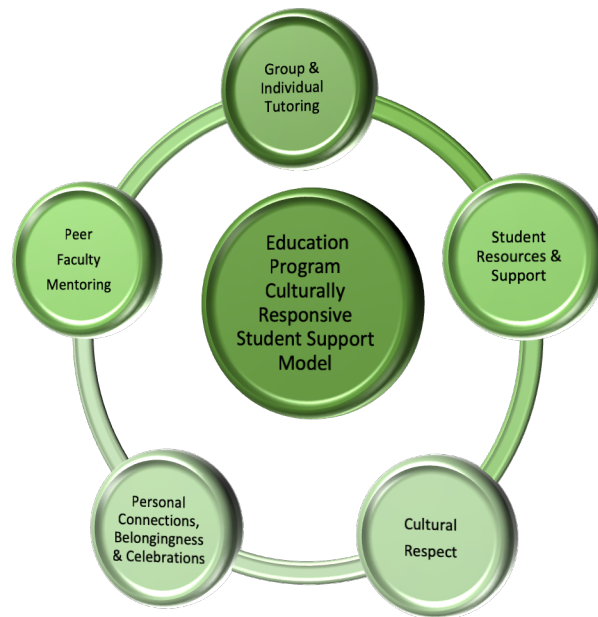
Guillory & Wolverton (2008) found social and personal connections, social support, and social events essential for schools retention of American Indian students attending predominantly white institutions. Furthermore, Guillory and Wolverton (2008) state that “a supportive institutional environment; and constructive interactions with faculty, staff, and students” impact

student success (p. 61). Thompson, Johnson-Jennings, & Nitzarim's (2013) study on American Indian undergraduate students found that community connections related positively to intentions towards persisting and completing academic goals in higher education. Additionally, their research found that student self-efficacy or belief in self, social support, positive perceptions of the university, and campus support predicted American Indian academic persistence decisions.

Our experience and research working with American Indian students at a Tribal College has led us to believe there are several student supports critical to students' academic success, leading to higher persistence and retention rates. As a result, we propose a Culturally Responsive Student Support Model specific to the Teacher Education program at the College of Menominee Nation, a small tribal college in Northern Wisconsin.

Introduction to College of Menominee Nation's Proposed Model

The College of Menominee Nation's Education Program's Culturally Responsive Student Support Model is a multi-faceted approach to supporting education students. Many of our students are first-generation college students with limited knowledge and navigational skills required to succeed and navigate the complexities of higher education. We believe tutoring, mentoring, and personal connections provide a strong support network that builds on student motivation, confidence, and self-efficacy, leading to academic and student success. Although research might suggest a formalized approach to tutoring and mentoring to measure student confidence and efficacy changes, we believe it occurs organically within our coursework and program.



College of Menominee Nation's Teacher Education Programs Culturally Responsive Student Support Model

Group and Individual Tutoring

Although the teacher education department does not have a designated tutor to work with our students, CMN does have tutors available via student services to work with students on an as-needed basis. However, we have found that our students do not typically take advantage of these tutoring opportunities. We have observed that individuals within our program often emerge and provide invaluable tutoring services to students in specific education courses and all content areas. These informal tutoring groups occur throughout a semester and are usually initiated by students out of necessity for academic support. We believe that the natural emergence of tutors is due to leadership skills being taught and developed as a part of students' teacher education coursework. Often, instructors will ask an upper-level student to take a struggling student under their wings, show them the ropes, and provide support throughout the semester. In addition, our department is typically provided with one student worker through the Federal Work-Study (FWS) program. We

have been fortunate to hire an upper-level (bachelor) student in good academic standing who has begun to develop strong teaching skills. Our FWS student typically has the leadership and organization skills to orchestrate study groups amongst their classes.

As a result of this informal approach, students have taken the initiative to develop small study groups and often meet at different times throughout the week, either virtually or face-to-face. Social media has also been helpful as students establish “Facebook groups” to communicate and work through challenging classwork and homework. Using social media has also allowed instant communication and feedback, allowing for informal tutoring at all times of the day and night, which is central to our student’s success as students juggle the many demands of work and family.

In addition, this informal approach to tutoring aligns closely with our tribal college culture, as in Menominee and Native culture, there is a strong group orientation. Gilbert (2000) identified that American Indian children from group-oriented cultures oftentimes “develop a preference for working in groups over individual assignments” (p.7), which is an important element to take into consideration when providing tutoring assistance. This is evident as most of our students are generous with their time and knowledge and willingly work and informally provide assistance to their peers. Phillips (1972, 1983) and Reyes (1998) in their studies found peer tutoring and cooperative learning were beneficial to Native American students in their learning as it adds to their comfort level. Additionally, many American Indian students prefer cooperative learning strategies (Cajete, 1999) and as a result, we do not encourage competition, as most of our classes take a mastery approach to learning.

Another consideration is the language used in the tutoring groups. Many Menominee people speak American Indian English or Menominee Indian English (MIE) instead of standard English as noted by Malott, Waukau, Waukau-Villagomez (2009). Students in a tutoring group are able to interpret the assignment and lecture from Standard English into MIE. Asking questions is sometimes difficult for Menominee students (Malott, C.S., Waukau, L., Waukau-Villagomez, L., 2009). Students need lively discussions and feel free to interact in the classroom. Tutoring groups give CMN students the opportunity to do this. Tutors can provide the scaffolding to deal with the lack of academic preparation for their tutees without judgment and in a safe environment. Tutoring allows students to get to know each other and can affect the motivation and interest of tutees in a particular class. Peer tutoring provides the academic and social support our students need to find success in each class. As students learn new skills, study strategies, and make new friends, they build on their motivation to continue pursuing their degree while building on their self-efficacy as students.

Peer, Faculty, and Elder Mentoring

Faculty and peer-to-peer mentoring has provided extra support to students as they navigate the challenges of higher education. Faculty mentoring has been available for students and consists of meeting with a faculty member every other week. This opportunity intends to allow for conversations around challenges and barriers impacting students' educational experiences. In addition, weekly goal setting is established, and discussions are around homework completion, time management, schedule setting, and other topics related to student success.

Peer-to-peer mentoring has occurred naturally as a result of our small class sizes and heavy emphasis on relationships and supporting one another. Students often communicate and mentor each other before and after class and encourage each other to succeed. Sometimes peer-to-peer

mentoring leads to tutoring; however, anecdotally, students have noted the importance of having a classmate who understands and someone they can reach out to for encouragement or to vent.

Lastly, we have an elder mentor in our program that is available to meet with teacher education students on an as-needed/monthly basis. Our elder mentor is from the community and uses the Medicine Wheel to support students as they learn to balance their physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional needs throughout the semester. In addition, CMN has an Indigenous Wellness Director who has coordinated with a local counselor to provide on-site and virtual sessions that help students navigate the semester and all aspects of work, home life, and college.

Student Resources and Support

The teacher education department is student-centered and seeks to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment. We have a suite of faculty offices and a work area where students are encouraged to come and work on homework, meet in small groups, and ask for assistance from a faculty member. We also have computers, printers, and copiers for students to access. Many of our students come to classes after working a full day, so we offer snacks they can grab to hold them over until they can make it home. A refrigerator and microwave are also available for students to refrigerate and heat their dinners as often students are here over the dinner hour. Understanding the needs of our students demonstrates our commitment to their academic success and provides students with a stronger connection to our program.

In addition to meeting students' basic needs (i.e., food and comfort), our program aims to meet our students' institutional and navigational needs. Additionally, program emails and calendar invites seek to inform students of institutional and program updates and provide a constant awareness of the happenings occurring at the College of Menominee Nation and within our program. CMN's Teacher Education Program has a private Facebook group that posts upcoming

events, recognizes students for their success, and provides encouragement and tips for completing coursework and, ultimately, the semester. As a result of ongoing student communication, we find students more likely to respond and reach out with questions regarding other programming needs.

Personal Connections, Belonging, and Celebrations

Students need to feel a sense of belonging, and all students, no matter their age or situation, need to feel a connection to their instructors, peers, and the institution. We model these practices as we know that our students learn best when strategies and skills are modeled. As a small program, we seek to know our students and their families. We greet by name every student who enters our classroom. We provide relationship-building opportunities that give students a place to belong and feel safe, which are very important in helping our students feel connected and cared for.

Students need to have concrete representation and recognition of their educational journeys. We have special end-of-semester celebrations to recognize students' accomplishments and provide critical navigational skills and directions for planning for future semesters. In addition, we gift graduating Associate level students "Future Teacher" t-shirts (with our logo) to recognize their chosen career path in anticipation that they are empowered to continue to the bachelor's level program. We also gift students graduating with a bachelor's degree a "Teacher" t-shirt (with our logo) to proudly wear their t-shirts in the workplace as a source of empowerment for the younger generation. We have also found that providing hoodies and sweaters gives students great pride in enrolling in college and pursuing their education. Additionally, when our students wear these college logos around the community and in the workplace, they are also modeling and empowering younger children to envision themselves going to college as well.

The teacher education department also has a faculty advising model that provides direct contact, advising, and makes connections with students each semester. We have personal degree

completion plans/audit sheets for each student. We update each semester and provide input on recommended classes and program requirements information. Our faculty adviser communicates with each student and gets to know student preferences and goals, which aids in the successful planning of future semesters and aids in student connection with our program and faculty members. Ongoing communication and feedback between faculty and students provide students with ongoing communication and a pathway for moving forward in attaining their educational goals. Lastly, communication through student audit sheets provides a platform for students to share/express concerns in an informal context without setting up a separate meeting time. As a result, small issues and/or questions can be answered promptly and conveniently.

Culture

The College of Menominee Nation's mission is to provide opportunities in higher education to its students. As an institution of higher learning chartered by the Menominee People, the college infuses this education with American Indian culture, preparing students for leadership, careers, and advanced studies in a multicultural world.

The philosophy of the Teacher Education Department is based on a constructivist philosophy. It seeks to prepare teachers as decision-makers to care, reflect, respect, take risks, and become collaborative participants in the pursuit of becoming professional teachers. The performance skills necessary for this endeavor are guided by the tribal clan structure that portrays the early social organization of the Menominee. Centuries ago, clans accepted responsibility for security, construction, hunting and gathering, law (governance), and freedom and justice so the community could survive and thrive. Those clans (pictured in the CMN logo below) are represented by the moose for security, the crane for construction, the wolf for hunting and gathering, the bear for law (governance), and the eagle for freedom and justice. For educational purposes, CMN's teacher

education program matches those clan functions with performance skills necessary for thriving in an educational community. Clan responsibilities for:

1. security means teachers obtaining a strong knowledge base for planning teaching and learning experiences to thrive;
2. construction refers to teachers building a safe environment that honors tribal “ways of knowing” and “learning together;”
3. hunting and gathering sees teachers as seeking problem-solving for learning situations – teachers guiding learners to seek information and search for reasoned arguments that explain life forces;
4. governance describes teachers as developing a governing or professional voice to communicate and collaborate;
5. freedom and justice challenges teachers to monitor their own beliefs that serve as barriers to social justice.

We seek to model and incorporate instructional strategies that meet the needs of our student population. For example, we know the oral tradition is an integral part of American Indian Culture, and is important to allow opportunities for oral presentations and oral assessments and assignments. Pewewardy (2002) suggests through a literature review which supports the argument that American Indians have a “field-dependence or global processing learning style” (p. 28). Field dependence references how “students learn, rather than what they learn: (Pewewardy, C., 2002. Pg. 28). Field-dependent learners are global and relational learners and often work well in teams, which helps students distinguish essential details from the information provided. Our education courses at CMN include group projects, hands-on learning, jigsaw text reading, and cooperative learning, providing positive learning opportunities for our students. Furthermore, our students

listen and learn from their instructors and peers and then establish their own meaning from what they have heard.

Conclusion

In our experience, the efficacy of this model has helped grow our teacher education program and has given students confidence and motivation to continue their education beyond the College of Menominee Nation. The components of our model build on students' need to belong and feel connected and gives them confidence in successfully focusing on and completing their academic goals. We have also found that the relationships and skills learned from this model transfer over to student graduates' first year of teaching. As a result, graduates continue to peer mentor and connect as they navigate the challenges of their first year of teaching.

This model is helpful for all programs struggling to connect with, retain, and graduate underrepresented and struggling student populations. Undergraduate students need to feel a sense of belonging and connection and want to know that they are cared for and an essential part of an institution's programming. Moving forward, CMN's Teacher Education Department plans to continue to conduct research and collect data to strengthen our Culturally Responsive Student Support Model further and make changes and adjustments if needed as a result of our data collection. Due to limited research and literature regarding culturally responsive student support for American Indian higher education students, we aim to strengthen our conceptual model for future use by other TCUs and institutions supporting American Indian students. Further implications for strengthening our model is for CMN and other Tribal Colleges collectively to use this model to evaluate their current supports and identify gaps in how they support American Indian students. Specifically, the Teacher Education Department continually strives to model methods for future teachers to use in their classrooms. The culturally responsive student supports

modeled for pre-service teachers become inherent to their work in their future classrooms and teaching practices to support young American Indian students.

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