

Family-School-Community (Dis)Engagement: An Indigenous Community's Fight for Educational Equity and Cultural Reclamation in a New England School District

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Boston College Lynch School of Education
Department of Teacher Education, Special Education,
and Curriculum and Instruction
Curriculum and Instruction Doctoral Program

FAMILY-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY (DIS)ENGAGEMENT: AN INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITY'S FIGHT FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND CULTURAL
RECLAMATION IN A NEW ENGLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dissertation by
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Abstract

Family-School-Community (Dis)Engagement: An Indigenous Community's Fight for Educational Equity and Cultural Reclamation in a New England School District

Shanéé Adrienne Washington

Dr. Lauri Johnson, Chair

This exploratory case study examined family-school-community engagement in a small New England school district and town that is home to a federally recognized Indigenous Tribe that has inhabited the area for 12,000 years and whose children represent the largest group of racially minoritized students in the public schools. Using Indigenous protocols and methodologies that included relational accountability, individual semi-structured conversations, talking circles, and participant observation, this study explored the ways that Indigenous families and community members as well as district educators conceptualized and practiced family-school-community engagement and whether or not their conceptualizations and practices were aligned and culturally sustaining/revitalizing. Family-school-community engagement has been touted in research literature as a remedy to the problem of low achievement that prevails in many schools serving minoritized students, including Indigenous students. However, a more pertinent reason to study this topic is due to “ongoing legacies of colonization, ethnocide, and linguicide” committed against Indigenous families and their children by colonial governments and their educational institutions (Brayboy, 2005; Grande, 2015; McCarty & Lee, 2014, p. 103). This study was thus conducted and data were analyzed using a decolonizing lens and

culturally responsive leadership (Johnson, 2014), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2014), and culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy (McCarty & Lee, 2014) as theoretical frameworks. Findings revealed distinctions in the priorities and engagement practices of educators versus Tribal members. While educators conceptualized and reported to practice an open-door model of engagement in which families have a plethora of opportunities to get involved in the schools, Indigenous parents and community leaders engaged as ardent advocates for the equitable treatment of their children and for the expansion of language and culture-based programming for tribal students in educational spaces within and outside of the public-school system. Also, Educators and Tribal members alike acknowledged that district staff lack cultural awareness and sensitivity and needed to be better educated. These findings and others offer important implications for local Indigenous communities and school districts serving Indigenous families.

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Chapter One

I don't think for the most part that our [school] district, not just our district, actually society in general, is coming from a strength-based [perspective of Indigenous families], like our families have survived for this long on little support or financial backgrounds...you know, being constantly told that "you're less than," and not as important, and unworthy. And, you know, that's strength, that's amazing that you're still walking around and can hold your head up.

(Shirley, Indigenous parent)

A lot of the [Indigenous] parents did not have a positive experience in school and a lot of that trickles down to...residential schools, the trauma that was experienced. So, a lot of our parents think negatively of education, especially mainstream education, that maybe it doesn't meet the needs of all of our families in the way that they were raised or would have their children raised or the education that they feel is important. So, I think we see some of that as well, and we probably will for many generations, because it [residential boarding schools] was a traumatic experience for many families and that trauma gets passed down.

(Shelly, White parent with Indigenous children)

Sometimes the policies that make students safe [locked doors and school buildings] don't encourage parent participation or involvement in the school.

(Shirley, Indigenous parent)

Introduction

These quotes reflect the voices of two Indigenous parent leaders from a school board located in Northwestern Ontario who I interviewed in October 2016. These parents were sought out and interviewed to privilege the voices of families in the district, a perspective that was missing from interviews and focus groups conducted by a Boston College research team in May 2016. Several leaders in the district described Indigenous parents using deficit terminology, explicating the school's role as "parenting parents" and serving as "pseudo-parents" for Indigenous students. To assuage my discomfort with the deficit-based discourse about Indigenous families by some district employees, I conducted additional interviews with Indigenous parents to gain their perspective on the topic of family-school engagement.

One of the parents articulated a desire-based perspective of Indigenous families, praising their strength, resiliency, and survival amidst institutional structures to eradicate their Indigeneity (Tuck, 2009). In her brief statement, she provided a fuller and more desirous representation of Indigenous families, one that garners longing and respect instead of pity (Tuck, 2009). The other parent inverted her gaze from a focus on Indigenous families as damaged subjects to a critique of schools as institutions of oppression and places with values and practices that differ from those held by Indigenous families (Tuck & Yang, 2014). Together, their voices reveal inhibitors to family involvement in schools, including physical barriers such as locked doors; a mistrust of schools and their staff by Indigenous families due to historical trauma experienced in mainstream education, particularly residential boarding schools; and beliefs about the purpose and role of schools by Indigenous families that may be vastly different from

those held by school employees. What opportunities are lost when the voices of families and communities are missing from conversations about family-school-community engagement or when their perspectives are not sought or considered in the development of policies and practices that are intended to engage them and their children?

This present study, which was inspired by the research described above, foregrounded the voices of Indigenous families and community members in discussions about family-school-community engagement and sought to understand whether or not the conceptualizations and practices of teachers and administrators in a New England school district were aligned with and culturally responsive to and/or sustaining/revitalizing of the priorities of the Indigenous families and community members that they serve.

Family and community engagement with/in (with or in) schools is promoted in the literature as essential to the social and academic flourishing of students (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Driscoll & Goldring, 2005; Henderson et al., 2007; Jeynes, 2005, 2007; Ruffin-Adams & Wilson, 2012; Lareau, 1996; Nieto, 2004). When schools and families fail to work together to support the learning and development of students, student success in school is hampered (Driscoll & Goldring, 2005). Indigenous families typically have “dramatically” low levels of involvement in schools (Dehyle, 1992; Friedel, 1999; Robinson-Zanartu & Majel-Dixon, 1996), and their children have the lowest graduation rates and lowest levels of academic achievement of any other racially minoritized student group (Coladarci, 1983; Dehyle, 1992; Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010; Tunison, 2013). Moreover, Indigenous families and community members are underrepresented in the literature on family-school-community engagement (Bardhoshi, Duncan, & Schweinle, 2016; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Kaomea, 2012; Pewewardy & Fitzpatrick, 2009).

These statistics provide one rationale for the significance of this study. However, I argue in this chapter that a more important reason to pursue this topic relates to the why or the causes of the statistics mentioned above.

This chapter continues with a description of the research purpose and questions followed by a brief review of literature on the topic of family-school-community engagement in racially minoritized communities and Indigenous contexts while also building an argument or rationale for the study. Next, a discussion of the potential significance of the study is shared, including how it differs from previous research. Lastly, I conclude the chapter by locating myself in the research and explaining what brought me to this work and why I persisted.

Purpose and Research Questions

This exploratory case study examined the ways that Indigenous families and community members as well as district educators conceptualized and practiced family-school-community engagement and whether or not their conceptualizations and practices were aligned and culturally sustaining/revitalizing. This research aimed to achieve the following goals: (1) to understand Native parents' and community members' priorities concerning the education of their children; (2) to explore the ways that they were (or were not) engaging or partnering with district educators and for what purposes; (3) to determine district educators' conceptualizations and practices concerning family-school-community engagement and what these reveal about their priorities; (4) to ascertain whether or not there is alignment between the priorities and practices of Native parents, Native community members, and district educators; and (5) to see if there is evidence of

culturally sustaining and/or revitalizing family-school-community engagement or partnership practices.

This research explored the following interrelated research questions:

1. How do Indigenous family and community members conceptualize family and community engagement or partnerships with/in schools, and in what ways have Indigenous family and community members engaged and/or partnered with district schools and their staff in the past and present?
 - a. What are Indigenous family and community members' educational priorities for their children?
2. What are district teachers' and administrators' conceptualizations of and practices concerning family-school-community engagement or partnerships in general and particularly as it relates to Indigenous families and community members?
 - a. In what ways have they engaged and/or partnered with Indigenous families and community members in the past and present and what does this reveal about their priorities?
3. In what ways, if at all, are district teachers' and administrators' priorities and practices aligned with and accountable to the priorities and expectations of Native families and community members?
 - a. Are family-school-community engagement and/or partnership practices in the district culturally sustaining/revitalizing? If so, how?

An exploratory, qualitative case study (Cresswell, 2002; Hartley 2004; Yin, 1981) of a small school district in New England with the largest percentage of Indigenous students in the state sought to answer these questions. The school district, Wampum

Public Schools (a pseudonym), which comprises three schools and roughly 1,500 students, is located on the un-ceded or stolen land of the Wampanoag people, a federally recognized Indigenous nation who have lived in the area for over 12,000 years (baird, 2017; Tavares Avant, 2001). Wampum (a pseudonym for the town) is one of the few remaining Wampanoag communities out of the original 69 that once comprised New England (baird, 2017; Tavares Avant, 2001).

The study included multiple data collection methods: participant observation, document analysis, individual semi-structured conversations and interviews, and talking circles with Indigenous parents and district teachers. Purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling was used to identify teachers, administrators, family, and community members to participate in the individual, semi-structured conversations and interviews, and in the group talking circles. A decolonizing framework and a continuum of culturally responsive (Johnson, 2014), culturally sustaining (Paris & Alim, 2014), and culturally sustaining/revitalizing (McCarty & Lee, 2014) pedagogies were used as theoretical lenses through which to explore the topic of this study and to analyze and interpret data. A detailed description of the theoretical framework and methodology for this study is provided in Chapters Three and Four.

Background and Rationale for the Study

Many scholars have argued that students succeed and school improvement occurs when schools, families, and communities work together to support the learning and development of students (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Driscoll & Goldring, 2005; Henderson et al., 2007; Jeynes, 2005, 2007; Ruffin-Adams & Wilson, 2012; Lareau, 1996; Nieto, 2004). A lack of family involvement is seen most prominently in schools

serving students of color and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Davies, 2002; Lareau, 1996, 2002, 2011). Research suggests that economically disadvantaged parents and parents of color often see schools as intimidating and unwelcoming places, and they have a difficult time trusting and building positive relationships with school officials due to personal experiences involving mistreatment or racial discrimination in schools (Rogers, Freelon & Terriquez, 2012; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). The negative experiences that many of these parents have encountered as K-12 students, contributes to their hesitancy to be involved in schools as parents. Furthermore, these parents often face resistance from teachers and administrators who perpetuate school cultures that are unwelcoming (Auerbach, 2007a, 2007b; Lott, 2001). Moreover, many of these parents face further resistance from educators because of their failure to comply with institutional or racialized scripts, informal and formal rules or expectations of engagement (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Milne, 2016).

Ishimaru and Takahashi (2017) expounded on the barriers created by institutional or racialized scripts, “Even when policies and structures aim to foster partnerships between families and schools, the dominant norms, expectations, and assumptions in schools can constrain the possibilities for families from marginalized communities to work with educators in exercising collective agency to disrupt these inequities” (p. 334). The racial and cultural differences that exist between a White teaching force that exceeds 80% and a student population in the US in which students of color are now the majority, further complicates the successful cultivation of healthy and productive partnerships

between families and teachers (Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017; Olivos, Jimenez-Castellanos, & Ochoa, 2011).

The past several decades have seen the cultivation of different conceptualizations and models of family-school-community engagement (which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two) intended to remedy the problem of low achievement prevalent in many racially and economically minoritized communities. Moreover, the more widely used “school-centric” frameworks, which entail school-based forms of engagement, are frequently applied in studies done on minoritized families and communities (mainly African American, Latinx, immigrant, and low income) and contribute to the unfair labeling of them as “problems,” “hard to reach,” or “disinterested in education” because of their apparent lack of involvement or because their forms of participation deviate from dominant scripts of what parental involvement entails (Kaomea, 2012; Ishimaru, 2017, Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017).

In the small but growing body of research on Indigenous families, verbal accusations tend to be slightly harsher. Indigenous families and communities are often described as “dysfunctional” and disinterested in education (Faircloth, 2011), and are frequently blamed for their children’s lack of educational success due to dramatically low levels of on-site involvement in schools (Dehyle, 1992; Friedel, 1999; Robinson-Zanartu & Majel-Dixon, 1996). As Kaomea (2012) duly noted, such indictments against Indigenous families are made with “virtually no recognition of the deep, colonial history that undergirds many of the ongoing challenges that Indigenous families and students have faced, and continue to face, in the contemporary (post)colonial society and educational system” (p. 1). Such accusations are made without acknowledgement that

colonialism is not finished business but persists in today's society and educational institutions and is a continuous process with the unwavering goal to erase the Indigenous identity and traditional knowledge (Kovach, 2009; Lomawaima, 1999; Patel, 2016; Smith, 2012).

The topic of family-school-community engagement may be more pertinent in schools serving Indigenous students and families, not only in light of dismal statistics regarding the achievement of Indigenous students, but perhaps more importantly due to the deep and enduring mistrust that Indigenous families and community members feel towards schools and their staff resulting from a history of dehumanizing acts committed against them and their children by colonial governments and their educational institutions. Twentieth century boarding schools and the "mission schools" that preceded them, serve as prime examples of a colonial project perpetrated against Indigenous families and their children and purposed to eradicate their languages, customs, and religions (Grande, 2015; Brayboy, 2005) directly violating the civil rights and status of Indigenous peoples as humans and as Tribal sovereigns with the inherent right to defend their children and determine the nature of their schooling (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). The Roman Catholic Church and later the Protestant Church were the first institutions in the US to replace traditional Aboriginal education with what they termed, "mission schools" with the expressed purpose to "civilize" and "Christianize" Indigenous children (EchoHawk, 1997). The Bureau of Indian Affairs later developed boarding schools with the same goal of eradicating Indigeneity and creating "civilized" US citizens through Christian conversion (Lomawaima, 1999; Palladino, 1922). During the era of boarding schools, Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their homes and

communities and placed in schools where they were physically, sexually, and emotionally abused, and many, literally and figuratively, did not make it out of these institutions alive (Grande, 2015; Miller, 1996; Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2003). Boarding schools were a “deculturalization” project which sought to eradicate Indigenous languages and cultural identity while teaching allegiance to the US government, all with the misguided purpose to “kill the Indian and save the man” (Grande, 2015; p. 18; Brayboy, 2005).

Sadly, schools as deculturalization institutions are not a stain of the past to be looked upon with disdain, but an enduring colonial project that continues in contemporary society. Grande (2015) articulated the persistence of colonialism in today’s educational system,

Formal education within the closed walls of schools continues to be a forceful weapon used by dominant powers to create boundaries to control and mold the minds of youth and adults, to eradicate or weaken their Indigenous identity, and to assimilate them into mainstream society...The challenge in Indian education today is similar to those of years past, mainly to decolonize western education by taking control of schools with Indigenous traditional knowledge as the foundation for teaching and learning” (Grande, 2015, p. 36)

Agbo (2007) provided a similar description of modern schools as seen through the eyes of Indigenous families and community members from his study, asserting, “community people looked upon the school as a colonial symbol-an ivory tower...a fenced-in enclave, with quite different expectations from the home” (pp. 5-6). The juxtaposition of Indigenous families’ and community members’ cultural values and

expectations of educational systems compared to institutional priorities predicated on assimilationists and exclusionary practices creates a conundrum in which attempts to bridge the divide between family and community members and the institutional actors who lead and run the schools their children attend becomes a seemingly insurmountable task. Achieving the ideal of a decolonialized educational system which foregrounds Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing into student learning (Battiste, 2013; Monroe et al., 2013) is further exacerbated by the fact that over 90% of Indigenous students in the US attend public schools that are led and taught by a predominantly White staff (Clarren, 2017; Grande, 2015; Moran & Rampey, 2008; Tippeconnic & Faircloth, 2006). However, as McCarty and Lee (2014) rightly argued, “Regardless of whether schools operate on or off tribal lands, in the same way that schools are accountable to state and federal governments, so too are they accountable to the Native American Nations whose children they serve” (p. 102). McCarty and Lee (2014) believe that this accountability can be achieved through investments in culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy, a theoretical framework that is used in the exploration of this dissertation topic and will be explained in Chapter Three.

This research is significant, not merely because of the low achievement and engagement rates of Native students and families respectively, but more so because of the need to decolonize education so that schools become a site of linguistic and cultural renewal and survival for Native students and their families. It is my hope that this research will serve as an important contribution to scholarship on the topic of family-school-community engagement.

Potential Study Significance

McCarty and Lee (2014) contend that schools must be accountable to the Native Nations who are represented in their buildings, and this includes the children as well as their families and community members. Unfortunately, as was argued in previous sections, schools and their staff have a long legacy of not being accountable to Indigenous families and communities. This study is significant because it considers the ways that district educators are accountable to Native families and community members.

Indigenous families and communities are an underrepresented population in the literature on family-school-community engagement or partnerships (Bardhoshi et al., 2016; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Kaomea, 2012; Pewewardy & Fitzpatrick, 2009), and most of the current research that does exist on this topic fails to examine the ways that educational systems are or are not accountable to the Native families and community members. Moreover, few studies on this topic were conducted by researchers in ways that were culturally “answerable” to the Native participants or representatives in the research (Patel, 2016).

In the small but growing body of research on the topic of family-school-community engagement in Indigenous contexts, researchers have investigated Indigenous families’ roles or involvement in schools (Agbo, 2007; Kaomea, 2012); teachers’ and parents’ perceptions of family-school relations (Agbo, 2007); Indigenous family and/or community members’ experiences in or perceptions of their child(ren)’s schooling or school(s) (Ishiharar-Brito, 2013; Madden, Higgins, & Korteweg, 2013; Mander, 2015); the impact of demographic factors or spatial features on parent involvement (Bardhoshi et al., 2016; Lea, Wegner, McRae-Williams, Chenhall, & Holmes, 2011; Milne, 2016);

program offerings and/or family school relations in a Native-centric or Native program school (Friedel, 1999; McWilliams, Maldonado-Mancebo, Szczepaniak, & Jones, 2011); and the impact of family-school or community-school partnerships on student outcomes (Ngai, & Koehn, 2016; Tunison, 2013). While some studies have centered the voices and opinions of Indigenous family and community members regarding family-school and/or community-school engagement (Bond, 2010; Kaomea, 2012; Madden et al., 2013), most of these studies were mainly “school-centric” and focused on perceptions, practices, and outcomes of engagement in mainstream schools. Moreover, none of the studies investigated this topic through the lens of culturally sustaining/revitalizing practices. This research and a few additional studies are discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

This dissertation deviates from previous family-school-community engagement research particularly as it relates to Indigenous families and communities in several ways. First, it heeds the recommendation of Indigenous scholars and other scholars of color to shift the research gaze from Indigenous people as oppressed subjects to oppressive and colonizing institutions, policies, and practices through system-focused research (DuBois, 1898; Patel, 2016; Tuck & Yang, 2014). Second, this study examines whether or not institutional actors adopt an “inward gaze” or “gaze inward” (Paris & Alim, 2014) by considering personal and organizational practices that may be perpetuating ongoing legacies of colonial education (Roth, 2017; McCarty & Lee, 2014) or that may not align with or support the priorities or expectations of Native families and community members.

Previous studies have not focused on participants’ conceptualizations as a starting point for understanding family-school or community-school relations or engagement practices, nor have they foregrounded, privileged, or normalized Indigenous ways of

knowing, being, and doing as a foundation or framework for examining family-school-community engagement or partnerships. This dissertation does both. Third, this study aimed to be answerable to Indigenous families and community members through a research design that used a decolonizing lens and three theoretical frameworks - culturally responsive leadership (Johnson, 2014); culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2014); and culturally sustaining /revitalizing pedagogy (McCarty & Lee, 2014) – presented as a continuum (see Chapter Three), which have not been used in previous studies on this topic.

Finally, research about Indigenous Peoples has historically served to perpetuate the “politics of colonial control” due to culturally inappropriate and culturally insensitive research designs and methodologies (Cochran et al., 2008; Koster, Baccur, & Lemelin, 2012). Through the continual practice of gazing inward (Paris & Alim, 2014), I strived to be liberated from the stronghold that Western scientific research has had on my own psyche and research habits and to embrace and engage in decolonizing research practices. This study thus privileged decolonizing research approaches through the utilization of Indigenous protocols and research methodologies, which will be discussed in Chapters Two and Four. It is my hope that this dissertation will serve as a significant contribution to family-school-community engagement or partnership research in general, and specifically as it relates to Indigenous communities.

Why This? Why Me? Why Here? Why Now?

Before concluding this chapter, I pause to engage in the act of self-location or locating myself in the research (Aveling, 2013; Koster et al., 2012; Wilson, 2008). Self-location is an Indigenous protocol that requires me, as the researcher, to share and explain

myself as a way of being accountable to my relationships with research participants, the research itself, and those who will read it (Wilson, 2008). In order for others to understand my work, they must first know a lot more about me (Wilson, 2008).

In her groundbreaking work, *Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability*, Leigh Patel (2016) asks researchers to consider where a research question comes from by taking the time to humbly pause and answer the questions: Why me?; Why this?; Why now?; and Why here? I use these questions as a structure for locating myself in the research and as a way of explaining who I am, what brought me to this work, and why I have persisted in it. My decision to explore the topic of family-school-community engagement in Indigenous serving schools was fueled by my past experiences and interests as a classroom teacher and a combination of two experiences that occurred at a pivotal time in my academic journey as a Ph.D. student at Boston College.

Why this?

Prior to entering the doctoral program at Boston College, I served for 14 years as a primary and secondary teacher in urban classrooms that were comprised of racially, ethnically, linguistically, and economically minoritized students. My tenure as a teacher working in contexts in which my students, year after year, struggled to meet social and academic requirements and expectations, coupled with my experiences as a mother struggling to ensure the success of my two daughters in school, taught me the essential role of parents in the social and academic development of students. I began my doctoral work at Boston College with an interest in studying family-school-community engagement or partnerships in schools serving historically marginalized students.

In May 2016, I had the privilege of visiting a school district located in Northwestern Ontario which has an Indigenous student population that exceeds 50%. I was there as a researcher from Boston College with Dr. Andy Hargreaves and Mark D'Angelo (another doctoral student) to study the district's implementation of a program (in three of the district's primary schools) focused on fostering student wellbeing through the teaching of self-regulation strategies and the provision of support structures to facilitate students' ability to function in school. Nearly all of the students that comprised the classrooms in which this program existed were Indigenous. Through interviews, focus groups, and observations, we learned that the district has instituted curricula and programs to affirm the identities of Indigenous students and to support their wellbeing. However, conversations with multiple educators revealed damage-centered perspectives of students' families and communities. Several educators shared that Indigenous students in the district have very high needs resulting from "poverty, neglect, and violence" and come from family environments in which "parents don't know how to parent." Several educators spoke with apathy about the high unemployment rates, lack of education, and extreme poverty that is characteristic of Indigenous families in the district and reiterated that the schools are having to "parent parents" and serve as "pseudo parents" to students. This deficit depiction of Indigenous parents deeply bothered me and compelled me to conduct follow-up interviews in the district in October 2016 to elicit the parent perspective.

While the above experiences contributed to my initial interest in exploring the topic of family-school-community engagement in Indigenous contexts, my course work during the fall semester of 2016 solidified my desire to study this topic for my

dissertation. At the time of the October interviews, I was taking the classes *Family and Community Engagement*, *Participatory Action Research* (PAR), and *Critical Race Theory*. While the *Family and Community Engagement* class, a course taught by Dr. Martin Scanlan, reaffirmed beliefs that I held (as a teacher and parent before entering the Ph.D. program) about the important role of parents in the social and academic flourishing of students, the PAR and *Critical Race Theory* courses, taught by Drs. Brinton Lykes and Leigh Patel, respectively, introduced me to Indigenous epistemologies and decolonizing methodologies that spoke to the core of my being as an African American woman with Indigenous roots (I am the proud granddaughter of a Black Native woman). Learning about Indigenous ways of thinking about and doing research felt like a homecoming for me, reminiscent of being in church and shouting “Amen” in agreement. Furthermore, learning in *Critical Race Theory* that settler colonialism, a form of colonization in which outsiders claim and settle permanently on land inhabited by Indigenous Peoples (Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014), continues in contemporary America, ignited my desire to participate in “decolonial praxis” and the act of dismantling “colonial logics” in educational research involving Indigenous peoples (Patel, 2016, p. 94). Settler colonialism persists through land and knowledge claims (claiming ownership over “new to them” land and knowledge and stealing other’s intellectual property), attempts to erase and replace Indigeneity (“via assimilation and cultural strangling”), and through slavery (rendering black and brown bodies as chattel or property, “landless and estranged from their homelands,” stripped of their humanity) (Patel, 2016; Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 812)

The above experiences, and the arguments provided in previous sections that speak to the significance of family-school-community engagement in Indigenous

contexts were the inspiration for my decision to study this topic and the research questions that are explored in this dissertation. What follows is an explanation of “why me,” “why here” (the research context or place) and “why now.”

Why Me?

I have asked myself over and over and continue to ask, “Who am I (why me?) to engage in this work with a focus on Indigenous families and communities?” As an African American woman, educator, and researcher, I recognize that I am an outsider, seeking to engage in research with Indigenous communities who have historically been violated by non-Indigenous researchers who have mainly been extractive and exploitative in their research motives and methods. I also know that some Indigenous scholars have argued that only Indigenous researchers should carry out research on, with and/or for Indigenous Peoples. So, the question of, “Why me?” is one that I grapple with continuously, and though I might always feel unqualified to engage in this important work, I persist for the following reasons.

First, though, I do not identify as Native, mainly because of the low percentage of Native blood running through my veins, the fact that I was not raised as a Native person, and due to the shaming that goes on in the Black community and society in general whenever a Black person claims Native ancestry, I am the proud granddaughter of a Black Native woman who turned 99 on May 4, 2019. I grew up hearing and knowing that my grandmother and her siblings were part Native and in recent years learned that their grandmother was a full Native woman. So, this family history is one of the reasons I persist in this work.

Second, as an African American, I recognize that as Black and Indigenous Peoples we are connected in the settler colonial triad of the settler, Native, and slave (Tuck, Guess, & Sultan, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2012). And though our ascribed positioning within the settler colonial triad was/is different, and life experiences have not been the same, my life trajectory has also been deeply touched by settler-colonialism. I am a member of a racialized community with its own ongoing history of violence and violation perpetrated by the project of settler colonialism and which contributes to my affinity to decolonizing praxis.

Next, as a researcher operating from a decolonizing lens, I have no interest in contributing to the enduring legacy of violation and exploitation of Indigenous Peoples at the hands of researchers. Unlike other non-Indigenous, mainly White, researchers who have done research on, with, and/or for Indigenous peoples, I do not come from a position of “white privilege,” and I am not interested in promoting or perpetuating whiteness or white Western methodologies as normative or appropriate methodologies in research involving Indigenous peoples. My identity as a Black person who has an entangled history with Indigenous peoples in the harm done to us by settler colonialism, and my affinity towards Indigenous protocols and methodologies, drives my resolve to engage in research that foregrounds Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing.

Last, but not least, as a mother of two African American daughters and a former teacher of ethnically and linguistically diverse students in urban underperforming public schools, the topic of family-school-community engagement is deeply personal to me because I know, from experience, how important it is to our children’s ability to thrive in pre-K-12 institutions of education and beyond. Now as an equity and justice minded

teacher educator, I have a firm interest in preparing teachers and leaders to be effective educators of all students and especially those who have historically and are currently experiencing marginalization due to race, ethnicity, language, culture, class, and sexuality. I want teachers and leaders to understand the importance of partnering with families and communities in this work and to teach them how to cultivate and sustain such partnerships. As a former K-12 teacher and now postsecondary teacher educator, I have and continue to advocate for all students and families including Native students and families.

Why here and why now?

Wampum Public Schools was selected as the site of this dissertation because of its proximity and due to the enduring presence and survivance (Tuck, 2009; Vizenor, 1994, 1998) of the Wampum Wampanoag Tribe, who though no longer the majority of the schools' or town's population, represent the largest group of students of color in the district and a significant proportion of the district's population when compared to other districts locally and nationally. Wampanoag students and families in WPS have a well-documented history with colonial education, and continue to struggle for survivance in a town and district that has not stopped the project of land claim and attempts to erase and replace Indigeneity (A detailed description of town and district history will be shared in Chapter Four).

Through a preliminary review of policy documents and mission statements from WPS, and as a result of an initial meeting with the district superintendent and school leaders prior to officially beginning research in the district, it became evident that family and community engagement, particularly as it pertained to Indigenous families, had

recently become a district priority. In fact, at the outset of this study, the district and the Tribe were in the process of forming a partnership to improve community-school relations and to infuse more tribal history, language, and culture into the curriculum and extracurricular activities as a way of expanding the cultural knowledge and awareness of all educators and students in the district. This history, the enduring presence of the Wampanoag nation in the town of Wampum (which dates back 12,000 years), and the newly formed partnership between the tribe and school district all contributed to my selection of the district at this present time.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed four broad goals. First, a strong case was made for the study of family-school-community engagement in Indigenous contexts or schools serving Indigenous students. Second, the focus and purpose of the study was shared along with a brief description of the research design and methodology. Third, I explained the ways in which this study deviates from previous research on the topic; thereby, explicating the study's significance. Lastly, I located myself in the research by sharing my positionality, explaining the origin of my research questions, and my reason for engaging in this work.

The next chapter includes a critical review of relevant literature. The goal of Chapter Two is to provide an in-depth review of relevant literature to show what has previously been done with regards to this topic, to identify gaps in the research, and to inform the theoretical frameworks and research methodology used in this dissertation.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

A bus would come round to take our children to school in the morning and would bring them back after school. I knew they went to school but I didn't know exactly what they were doing there. They'll be there, behind the fence, until it's time for them again to come home.

(Aboriginal Elder)

When there was no bus, we dropped the kids off at the gate. There will be one or two teachers waiting for them. We never went inside the fence except there was something wrong with your kid, then the principal will invite you to the office.

(Aboriginal parent)

The only time we saw our children during school time was at recess when they played within the fence. Sometimes I would like to speak to my children during recess time but teachers would not allow them to cross the fence. They are all over the place guarding the fence, and since I know that they don't want us to speak to the children, I don't want to offend them. Teachers know their job, and we should leave them free to train our children.

(Aboriginal community member)

I find the apparent apathy in the community towards education and providing recreational opportunities for the children and the lack of parental involvement the most frustrating aspects of the job. It appears that if the non-Native people in the community did not do things for the kids, nothing would get done. There appears to be a general expectation of the community that the teachers can do everything where the kids are involved.

(Euro-Canadian teacher)

(As cited in Agbo, 2007, p. 6)

Introduction

The view from the fence looks different depending on one's social location and perspective. A person on the outside looking in may have very different views of what is or should be going on inside the fence from insiders who are looking out. The first three

quotes represent the voices of Indigenous parent and community members, and the last, that of a Euro-Canadian teacher from a study conducted in a small fly-in reservation in Northwestern Ontario. The study was an investigation of the views and perspectives of Euro-Canadian teachers and First Nations parents and community members regarding community-school relations. The quotes represent a juxtaposition of views or perspectives of those outside the fence looking in (parents and community members) versus the perspective of those from within the fence looking out (educators). As the collection of quotes from a First Nations parent and community members reveal, while there are some slight variations, they shared similar views of the school as a colonial symbol with values and expectations that differed drastically from those held by Indigenous family and community members (Agbo, 2007). In contrast, the sole teacher voice here, who was representative of the other Euro-Canadian teachers in the project, accused First Nations parents and community members of disinterest and non-participation in their children's lives and schooling while portraying the non-Native, all White educators as concerned caretakers of Native students.

Agbo's (2007) research represents one out of 16 family-school or family-school-community engagement studies specific to Indigenous contexts that are reviewed later in this chapter. It is the study that is most closely aligned with my own dissertation research. However, whereas Canada served as the location of Agbo's study, my study takes place in a US district. Moreover, while Agbo investigated the views of teachers and First Nations parents and community members concerning community-school relations, my study explores the conceptualizations and practices of educators (teachers and administrators) and Indigenous families and community leaders pertaining to family-

school-community engagement or partnerships. My study also differs from Agbo in that it explores the ways in which the engagement priorities and practices of educators are (or are not) accountable and responsive to what Indigenous parents and community members want and prioritize. Furthermore, in Agbo's interpretation of how First Nations parents and community members viewed contemporary schools, there appeared to be no understanding or recognition on the part of educators of the impact of settler colonialism and colonial education on Indigenous Peoples and how such experiences may have shaped these parents' and community members' perceptions of and interactions with the school and its staff. Like many educational scholars with a decolonizing lens, I enter this work with an understanding of the ongoing project of settler colonialism and colonial education and believe that it is essential that any research involving Indigenous communities must invert the gaze to critique educational institutions through the lens of leadership practices and pedagogies that are not only responsive to the needs of Indigenous families and community members, but also revitalizing and sustaining of their ways of knowing, being, and doing.

This chapter continues with an examination of literature by Indigenous scholars, scholars of color, and writers of Indigenous scholarship on appropriate ways to engage in research on, with, and/or for Indigenous communities. Next, the chapter reviews mainstream literature on the topic of family-school-community engagement or partnerships followed by family-school-community engagement or partnership literature specific to Indigenous families and community members. This chapter concludes with a summary of the research on family-school-community engagement or partnerships in Indigenous contexts and implications for this dissertation.

Review of Literature

This review of literature comprises three bodies of research: (1) Literature on appropriate ways of engaging in research in Indigenous communities; (2) General family-school-community engagement literature which defines and/or provides family-school-community models or frameworks; and (3) Literature about family-school-community engagement or partnerships in Indigenous serving districts or schools.

Indigenous Research Protocols and Methodology

In her canonical work, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith described research as “probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary” (2012, p. 1) due to Western, colonizing methods of extracting, exploiting, and claiming ownership over Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Indigenous scholars and non-Indigenous contributors and supporters of Indigenous scholarship have thus argued that any research conducted in, on, with, and/or for Indigenous communities must follow an Indigenous paradigm and critical cultural protocols to ensure culturally appropriate approaches that place the interests, experiences, and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples at the center of research methodologies (Aveling, 2013; Cochran et al., 2008; Koster et al., 2012; Kovach, 2009; Patel, 2016; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Scholars acknowledge that Indigenous ways of knowing and being vary and are context specific; however, they have noted underlying principles that are common to all Indigenous paradigms. These commonalities include: the belief and understanding that knowledge is relational and shared with all creation and that researchers are only interpreters, not owners of knowledge; that there are Indigenous ways of knowing and thinking about research processes that should be honored; that

research goals should be determined in respectful and ethical ways; and that Indigenous perspectives should inform and be infused in research designs and methodologies (Koster et al., 2012; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Thus, appropriate protocols include maintaining relationality, relational accountability, honesty, humility, generosity, patience, and what Weber-Pillwax (2001) terms the 3 R's – respect, reciprocity, and responsibility - throughout the research process (Aveling, 2013; Koster et al., 2012; Wilson, 2008). In other words, any research involving Indigenous communities “should respect the community by informing them, seeking their permission, and returning research results” (Koster et al., 2012, p. 208).

Relationality and Relational Accountability

In his book on Indigenous research methods, Wilson (2008) argues that relationality and relational accountability are shared aspects of an Indigenous paradigm that can be achieved through “choice of research topic, methods of data collection, form of analysis and presentation of information” (p. 7). Relationality refers to Indigenous people's relational way of being and their relationships with each other, the land, the cosmos, and ideas. For Indigenous people, their identity is “grounded in their relationship with the land, with their ancestors who have returned to the land and with future generations who will come into being on the land” (Wilson, 2008, p. 80). As it pertains to research, relationality requires self-location by the researcher, a concept that will be discussed more fully later. Wilson and other Indigenous scholars believe that researchers must state who they are and their positionality in relation to the research topic and research participants in order for their work to be understood.

Wilson (2001) defines relational accountability as being accountable and answering to all of one's relations while engaging in or doing research. Relational accountability requires a relational approach to research methodologies through the practices of respect (asking permission throughout the research process and only proceeding when access has been granted), reciprocity (research that benefits both the researcher and the community), and responsibility (remaining honest about the purpose of the research, how it will be used, and sharing the results in meaningful ways) (Louis, 2007; Wilson, 2008). Wilson argues that researchers have a responsibility, indeed an obligation in the research relationship, to be accountable in their relations and to ensure respectful and reciprocal relationships with research participants. Building on Wilson's (2008) concept of relational accountability, Patel (2016) calls for "answerability" in educational research and research relations, which is the notion of serving as stewards, not owners, over ideas, learning, knowledge, and context. Answerability, though very much concerned with relational accountability, also involves the work of dismantling research practices in which the researcher sees and treats others, the land, and knowledge as property.

Self-Location

Self-location is another commonality among Indigenous paradigms. It is the tradition of members locating themselves at the beginning of meetings and/or at the outset of research as a means of identifying who they are and their connection to the larger community (Aveling, 2013; Koster et al., 2012; Wilson, 2008). The act of locating themselves at the onset, exposes the identity of researchers, serves as a necessary prerequisite for participants and those privy to the research to better understand the nature

of the researcher's work, and signals the existence of different ways of knowing and gaining knowledge (Koster et al., 2012; Wilson, 2008). When this knowledge is grounded in Western paradigms, irrespective of methods used, "researchers and their expertise traditionally have been portrayed as objective and disembodied and thus privileged over those they study" which often leads to unethical research practices and "serves to perpetuate the denigration of certain cultures" (Koster et al., 2012, p. 196). In Indigenous research, relationality and relational accountability are essential, and it is believed that researchers cannot be accountable to their relationships with others, things, and ideas if they are pretending to be objective (Wilson, 2008). By locating themselves in the research and identifying their connection to Indigenous communities, researchers take a necessary first step in decolonizing research by moving away from settler logics and moving towards Indigenous knowledge systems which include Indigenous paradigms and methodologies (Koster et al., 2012; Patel, 2016).

Additional features of Indigenous research that are common to many Indigenous researchers include: (a) privileging the voices of Indigenous peoples, (b) utilizing collaborative research approaches that benefit indigenous peoples, (c) research designs which have a clear decolonizing aim, (d) using Indigenous methods such as narratives and storytelling, and (e) research that gives back to the community (Aveling, 2013; Brayboy, 2005; Koster et al., 2012; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008).

Participatory Research

Community-based participatory research (CBPR), an approach that engages community members as full and equal partners in all phases of the research process (Holkup et al., 2004), has been identified by Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers

alike as being well aligned with Indigenous research paradigms and a preferred methodology in research involving Indigenous peoples (Bond, 2010; Castleden et al., 2010; Fletcher, 2003; Koster et al., 2012). Similar to Indigenous research paradigms, CBPR is based on the foundational principles of respect, relationships, responsibility, and reciprocity (Louis, 2007). Koster, Baccar, and Lemelin (2012) promote CBPR as an ethical alternative to traditional Western methods which have served as a mechanism for the continued colonization of Indigenous Peoples by conducting research on, not with or for, Indigenous communities. As a result of their reflexive analysis, they advise researchers to

continue to move away from traditional methods that perpetuate the conventional ways of working on Indigenous communities to methods that involve working with and for them, based on an ethic that respects and values the community as a full partner in the co-creation of the research question and process, and shares in the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge. (p. 208)

Decolonizing Research

Historically, research has been done on, rather than with or for Indigenous communities, by non-Indigenous researchers who have used Western methodologies to extract the stories and experiences of Native Peoples and to exploit them through undesirable and damaging portrayals of them for the gratification of the academy. In response and resistance to the colonizing practices of Western research paradigms, Tuck & Yang (2014) have called for the adoption of pedagogies of refusal, refusal to engage in damage-centered research, a pathologizing approach which defines and depicts communities as broken, damaged, and ruined (Tuck, 2009). Pedagogies of refusal are

refusals to serve up the painful stories of dispossessed peoples on a silver platter for the ravenous satisfaction of the settler colonial academy (Tuck & Yang, 2014). Refusal is a code that is concerned with not selling “sexier,” more fetishized, damage-centered stories of pain and humiliation for the shame of the community and the benefit of the academy (Tuck & Yang, 2014). It is refusing classificatory codes that make objects out of living subjects, and it requires the redirecting of the research gaze from the oppressed to the oppressor and from the study of people to the study of oppressive and colonizing institutions, policies, and research practices (Patel, 2016; Tuck & Yang, 2014). Similar to Tuck and Yang’s conception of redirecting the gaze, Aveling (2013), a White female, feminist researcher, spoke about the importance of turning the gaze around from a focus on the differences or shortcomings perceived in the “other” to a focus on decentering and deconstructing “the normativity of whiteness in order to invert the gaze from ‘the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers, from the serving to the served’” (p. 207 citing Morrison, 1991, p. 90). These poignant points speak of the essentiality of a reflective reflexive approach to research in Indigenous communities as a means of engaging in research that is truly decolonizing.

The recommendations of Indigenous scholars and non-Indigenous writers and supporters of Indigenous scholarship on appropriate ways to engage in the decolonizing work of dismantling deleterious colonizing research practices while embracing and infusing Indigenous protocols and methodologies in research with and for Indigenous communities outlined in this section serves to inform both the theoretical frameworks and research protocols and methodologies that will be used in this dissertation. This body of literature also serves to inform the critical review of literature on family-school-

community engagement in Indigenous contexts that will be discussed later in this chapter. The next section provides an overview of popular definitions and conceptualizations of and frameworks for family and community engagement or partnerships in or with schools.

Family-School-Community Engagement Definitions and Frameworks

Defining Involvement, Engagement, and Participation

Involvement, engagement, and partnership represent an evolution of terms used to conceptualize family and community members' relationships with educators and schools. Though the three terms are sometimes used interchangeably, they have distinct meanings with the latter two being more closely aligned. Parent involvement in schools includes: (1) direct behaviors such as parents' communication with school officials and their participation in or attendance at school activities and events such as parent-teacher conferences, parent-teacher association meetings, fundraisers, etc., and (2) indirect behaviors such as supporting learning at home and engaging children in conversations about educational expectations at home (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Shumow & Miller, 2001).

Dennis Shirley (1997) was one of the first to articulate the difference between parental involvement and parental engagement.

Parental involvement - as practiced in most schools and reflected in the research literature - avoids issues of power and assigns parents a passive role in the maintenance of school culture. Parental engagement designates parents as citizens in the fullest sense - change agents who can transform urban schools and neighborhoods. (p. 74)

Elaborating on and perhaps challenging Shirley's distinction between involvement versus engagement, Ishimaru (2017) conceptualized "traditional parent involvement" as "a deficit-based approach that privileges normative school-centric behaviors" and family engagement as "efforts to reach out and better integrate nondominant parents and families into existing systems" (p. 3). Here, Ishimaru portrays the term parent engagement as a slightly improved model of or upgrade from parent involvement but with the same goal of assimilating families into preexisting models or scripts that solely promote school-centric behaviors based on White, middleclass values. Shirley's conception of engagement is more in line with educational scholars' articulation of partnerships.

Partnership, the latest term used to describe a model of family-school-community engagement that educators should be striving for, is defined as a cooperative relationship in which families, community members, and school employees have shared responsibilities, shared power, and with mutual benefits (Auerbach, 2012; Caracciolo, 2008). Expanding on the importance of partnerships versus traditional forms of involvement, Ngai and Koehn (2016) argue that providing parents with opportunities to volunteer, chaperone fieldtrips, or participate in fundraising for the school is not sufficient. Families and community members must be engaged in "equal partnerships" that are mutually beneficial (Caracciolo, 2008, p. 228) fostered by opportunities to dialogue and deliberate about substantive issues that are important to both school staff and students' families (Ngai & Koehn, 2016). When partnerships are authentic and equal, they result in increased "social and cultural capital" among teachers and families

and improve “cross-cultural understanding” because they decrease “power inequities” (Freeman, 2010, p. 195).

Defining Families and Communities

In 2013, the US Department of Education, in their Family Engagement Framework, promoted the widespread use of the term families in place of parents. Families is a more expansive and inclusive term that recognizes the important role of siblings, extended family members, and multi-generational caregivers in children’s lives (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). The framework prioritizes “building the ‘dual capacity’ of both families and educators to collaborate in supporting student learning” (Ishimaru, 2017, p. 5), promoting an authentic partnership. However, similar to Shirley’s (1997) critique about the limitations of parental involvement, Ishimaru (2017) extended and critiqued the US Department of Education’s Family Engagement Framework for its failure to “center family engagement in the pursuit of systemic and institutional change for educational equity, or explicitly address the power, race, class, language, citizenship status” while also noting that the framework “continues to privilege school-based forms of engagement” (p. 5).

Community, defined in this dissertation as a group of people who share a place, culture, and feeling of belonging, represents an extended network, beyond family members, that are recognized as significant contributors to the success of students (Epstein, 1995). Joyce Epstein is perhaps the best-known scholar in family, school, and community engagement literature. Epstein believes that schools, families, and communities are three significant spheres of influence whose goals, missions, and responsibilities must overlap to ensure the success of students (Epstein, 1995). In her

analysis of the roles of these three important spheres of influence, Epstein described the school's responsibility as creating family-like schools, the parent's role as creating school-like families, and the community's job as creating family-like settings, services, and events (1995).

Family-School-Community Engagement Frameworks

Epstein's six types of involvement. There are various family-engagement models or frameworks that have been created to capture the complexity of different types of family-school-community engagement patterns or practices within schools. Epstein's (1995) six types or levels of involvement (i.e. parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community) is a widely-used framework that offers a variety of ways in which parents can engage with schools. However, Epstein's model has been criticized for promoting individualistic and school-centric approaches to parent involvement presenting "a restricted vision of partnership centered on the school's agenda" (Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013, p. 149; Warren, Hong, Rubin, & Uy, 2009). Others have critiqued the model for its failure to address issues of power prevalent in schools in which parents are positioned as passive and powerless (Auerbach, 2007a; Barton et al., 2004; Fine, 1993). Furthermore, Epstein makes no mention of the relevance or influence of the intersection of race, class, and other identity classifiers which impact the experiences of families from nondominant backgrounds (Baquedano-López et al., 2013).

Continuum of partnership models and their application to racially and economically minoritized families. While Epstein's framework depicts categories of involvement that are individualistic, generic, and school-centric in nature, Auerbach

(2012) and Henderson et al. (2007) present a continuum of engagement or partnership models which range from closed door policies and practices in which schools are perceived as an oasis within troubled communities buffering students from community influences, to “authentic” partnerships in which families and community members have a valued voice and validated vote in decisions which impact student learning. Both Auerbach’s (2012) and Henderson et al.’s (2007) partnership frameworks include four levels of partnership, presented as a hierarchy. Auerbach’s (2012) partnership-leadership continuum includes: (1) leadership for preventing partnerships; (2) leadership for nominal partnerships; (3) leadership for traditional partnerships; and (4) leadership for authentic partnerships. Similarly, Henderson et al. (2007) portray family-school partnerships as four types of schools with increasing levels of engagement: (1) fortress schools; (2) come-if-we-call schools; (3) open-door schools; and (4) partnership schools.

Family and community engagement literature on economically and racially minoritized families typically place them in “fortress schools” and “come-if-we-call schools” (Henderson et al., 2007) or school contexts that Auerbach (2012) terms “leadership for preventing partnership” and “leadership for traditional partnership” (similar to Epstein’s six levels of involvement model). Fennimore (2017) described such approaches to parent involvement as “hegemonic” and “school-controlled,” “biased toward the White middle-class culture and dismissive of the strengths and potential contributions of nondominant families” (p. 160). Unfortunately, for racially and economically minoritized families, engagement entails negotiating institutional or “racialized scripts” (Ishimaru, 2014, 2017; Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017) or what Weaver (2007) terms “the culture of schooling,” which disadvantage and disenfranchise them

from the outset. The majority of the ways economically and racially minoritized families are expected to engage in schools fall within “dominant scripts of school-centric parent involvement” (Ishimaru, 2014, p. 10). Ishimaru (2014) noted,

the dominant parent *involvement* script favors arrangements in which schools may value parents as supporters of student learning, particularly at home, but parents do not have opportunities for meaningful *engagement* in partnering with educators to improve teaching and learning in the school. (p. 13)

Ishimaru’s characterization coincides with findings from the Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001) study in which low income parents of color learned to see themselves as “supporters, helpers, and fundraisers” rather than “decision makers, partners and collaborators” (p. 87).

Community organizing and parent activism frameworks. Community organizing to cultivate agency, leadership skills, and increased participation rates of historically marginalized parents and community members has been seen as a promising approach to challenge and change hegemonic, school-controlled scripts and to foster educational equity (Ishimaru, 2014; Shirley, 1997; Warren et al., 2009). Community organizing is a response to structural inequities in family, school, and community relations, and serves to challenge dominant, institutional scripts that disenfranchise and disempower racially and economically minoritized families and communities. Parent activism, yet another approach or framework, whether overseen by community organizations or parent-initiated, also serves to challenge and transform dominant, hegemonic scripts (Dyrness, 2011; Fennimore, 2017). However, parent activism, like more passive approaches to family engagement, must negotiate institutional scripts

(Ishimaru, 2014). As Fennimore (2017), citing Dyrness (2011) noted, “When the voices of nondominant parents are raised, their ‘critique is censored, silenced, or condemned’ (Dyrness, p. 36)” (p. 167).

The above definitions, conceptualizations, and models or frameworks for thinking about family-school-community engagement or partnerships are cited here as a way of defining some of the terms and concepts that are used throughout this dissertation. The information in this section is also considered in the development of the theoretical framework for this dissertation. However, the definitions and frameworks presented here are not intended to serve as a conceptual lens through which to investigate the topic of family-school-community engagement in Indigenous contexts, nor are they intended to usurp Indigenous knowledge or beliefs regarding family-school-community engagement or partnerships. Instead, the above definitions, conceptualizations, and frameworks will serve as a starting point for thinking about and exploring this topic with the understanding that Indigenous participants may challenge and supplant existing definitions and models. In light of and respect for Indigenous knowledge, values, and desires, it is possible that a different, Indigenous inspired and required conception of and framework for family-school-community engagement in Indigenous contexts may emerge. The next section offers a critical review of literature about family-school-community engagement in Indigenous serving schools and/or communities, paying close attention to the purpose or focus of the research, the methodologies used, and the ways in which findings in the research align with or deviate from widely accepted definitions and framework for engagement or partnerships.

Family-School-Community Engagement Literature in Indigenous Contexts

Indigenous families and communities are underrepresented in the literature on family and community engagement or partnerships in or with schools (Bardhoshi et al., 2016; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Kaomea, 2012; Pewewardy & Fitzpatrick, 2009). This section includes a comprehensive review of a small but growing body of literature on family-school-community engagement or partnerships focused on Indigenous families and communities. Given the limited number of studies on this topic within a US context, I chose to broaden this review to include studies from Australia and Canada, two settler colonies like the US, and a study from Latin America. The literature that comprises this section is by no means a comprehensive list but represents what was found using a combination of synonymous terms for “family school and/or community engagement” and “Indigenous Peoples” in the research databases Education Research Complete (EBSCO) and Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and through the reference sections of a few of the studies acquired in the database searches.

These studies are reviewed with the understanding that Indigenous Peoples around the world and within the same countries, while sharing similar worldviews and similar histories of racism, violence, and violation by their respective settler colonial and former colonial (in the case of Latin America) states, have distinct ways of knowing and being in the world that are context specific. The studies are thus reviewed with special attention to context and in light of the purpose or focus of the research, methodologies used, and research findings.

Purpose or Focus of Research

The studies that comprise this literature review were conducted in Indigenous serving schools or communities around the world, including the US, Canada, Australia, and Latin America. All of the studies focused on or were related to family-school and/or community relations, engagement, or partnerships with the majority of the studies conducted in urban contexts (see Table I).

The studies ranged from an exploration of Australian Aboriginal parents' lived experiences of having their children attend secondary boarding schools (Mander, 2015) to a poetic representation of Indigenous community voices and experiences of education in an urban school board in Canada (Madden et al., 2013). Studies also included examinations of the impact of family-school and/or community partnerships on student outcomes in urban school districts located in the US and Canada (Ngai, & Koehn, 2016; Tunison, 2013). One study highlighted an innovative All-Native-American preschool program located in an urban district in the US which collaborated with community Elders to incorporate Native-centric materials and activities into classrooms (McWilliams et al., 2011), while another explored the conditions of schooling for students and the role of Native parents in a Native program elementary school located in a Canadian urban setting (Friedel, 1999). In another study, the researcher investigated ways that key stakeholder groups (including students, families, and community members) conceptualize academic success and family engagement in an Inuit community in northern Quebec (Ives & Sinha, 2016). Ishiharar-Brito's (2013) study explored how two groups of rural, Indigenous Guatemalan parents perceived their children's schooling and its educational quality. The two participatory action research studies in this review focused on teachers' and

Aboriginal parents' views of community-school relations in a small fly-in reserve in Northwestern Ontario (Agbo, 2007) and the stories of Aboriginal Elders from a geographically remote island in Northwestern Australia regarding their history and their desire to improve the educational outcomes of their children by forming kin-based relationships with non-Aboriginal teachers (Bond, 2010). Lea, Wegner, McRae-Williams, Chenhall, and Holmes's (2011) study investigated how an Australian school's spatial features influenced and impacted the level of engagement of peri-urban Indigenous families and community members with schools and their staff. Two critical investigations of this topic used critical race theory and counterstories to legitimize the ways in which Native Hawaiian preschool families are supporting and complementing their children's schooling (Kaomea, 2012), and "cultural capital" theory (Lareau & Horvat, 1999) to investigate how race and class impact interactions between teachers and Indigenous parents in off-reserve schools in Canada (Milne, 2016). Kulago's (2016) US study, one of only two studies that was based solely on the voices of Indigenous students, aimed to understand how students define community so that supports could be cultivated to ensure their holistic development. The only non-empirical study sought to improve the educational outcomes of urban Native students in the US by providing culturally responsive research-based practices to help foster family-school relationships (Pewewardy & Fitzpatrick, 2009). The final study conducted by university-based researchers from a school counseling department in the US, examined demographic factors such as race and class as predictors of parent involvement and whether involvement predicted access to postsecondary education facilitators (Bardhoshi et al., 2016). See Table 1 for a summary of all of the studies.

Table 1: Summary of Studies of Family Engagement in Indigenous Contexts

Australian Studies	Purpose and/or Focus	Methodology	Findings
Bond, 2010	To share the stories of male and female Aboriginal Elders from a remote island in Australia about their history and desire to form productive kin-based relationships with visiting non-Aboriginal teachers in order to influence the curriculum and pedagogy delivered at the school	Longitudinal PAR study with Elders, action research interviews with 30 male and 12 female Aboriginal Elders, thematic analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Elders wanted teachers to connect socially and personally with the community and to take cultural competency classes before they arrive -Elders wanted the researcher to advocate for them to be employed as cultural consultants and advisors in the school -Past and present teachers have become adopted members of the community because of their caring, compassionate, and respectful attitudes towards students, parents, and community members and their willingness to consult and work with Elders
Lea, Wegner, McRae-Williams, Chenhall, & Holmes, 2011	Explored how a school's spatial features influence and impact the level of peri-urban Indigenous families and community members' engagement with schools and their staff	Ethnographic observations, interviews with 48 parents and 26 educators from 15 primary schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Educators believed that schools present cultural and physical barriers that hinder parent involvement -Educators did not suggest the need for parent participation in decision making -Indigenous families did not view schools as unwelcoming and did not see the need to come to school unless summoned.
Mander, 2015	Explored how Aboriginal parents from a remote community in Western Australia construct meaning and understanding about sending their children to	Phenomenological study, in-depth interviews with 11 participants using purposive sampling, thematic analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Parents desired to establish relationships with school staff, to interact with them in meaningful ways, and to participate in decisions regarding their child(ren)'s educational journey -Some felt they were being unjustly judged by school

	secondary boarding schools		<p>staff about their commitment to their child(ren)'s education because they were not always able to attend school events.</p> <p>-Parents placed great importance on securing the best possible secondary education for their children to ensure upward mobility (access to college and other opportunities)</p>
Canadian Studies	Purpose and/or Focus	Methodology	Findings
Agbo, 2007	Investigated teachers and Aboriginal parents' views of community-school relations in a small fly-in reserve in Northwestern Ontario	Participatory research, interviews with 58 Indigenous community members and 8 Euro-Canadian teachers, discussion groups and meetings	<p>- Community members viewed schools as a colonial symbol/a fenced-in enclave and expressed the need for more effective communication and greater understanding between community people and school staff</p> <p>-Parents did not feel obligated to be involved in their children's schooling</p> <p>-School staff blamed parents for lack of communication and involvement</p>
Friedel, 1999	Examined the conditions of schooling for Indigenous students and the role of Native parents in a Native program elementary school (located in an urban setting)	Document analysis, participant observation taking descriptive and reflective notes, member checking	<p>-The school offered Native parents token participation (volunteering and participation in parental advisory group (PAG) without decision making power)</p> <p>-Non-native administrators and teachers had negative perceptions of and response to Native parents</p> <p>-Native parents resisted by not attending PAG meetings at the end of the school year</p>

Ives & Sinha, 2016	Explored ways that Indigenous parents and families, Elders, secondary school students, educators, and Inuit school-leavers conceptualize academic success and family engagement in a secondary school system	Collaborative qualitative research using purposive and snowball sampling, interviews and focus groups with 29 Inuit and 6 non-Inuit participants, thematic content analysis	<p>-Students noted the important role of parents, extended family, and friendship networks in motivating them to stay in school while also sharing that their parents are disengaged from the educational process</p> <p>-Parents desired more engagement with school but did not know how to engage. They also complained that teachers only contact them with bad news.</p> <p>-Teachers desired more involvement from parents but did not know how to facilitate engagement. Some blamed parents for their lack of participation while others blamed residential boarding schools.</p>
Madden, Higgins, & Korteweg, 2013	Explored the use of poetic transcription as a decolonizing method for centering Indigenous community voices and experiences of education in an urban school board	5 sharing circles with Indigenous Advisory Committee, Elders, parents, and Indigenous cultural support workers	-Indigenous Community members viewed schools as unwelcoming and places where they experience racism; teachers as unqualified to teach Indigenous knowledge; school structures and curriculum as barriers to the integration of Indigenous knowledges; and the need for non-Indigenous teachers and administrators to examine their Eurocentrism and complicity in racism
Milne, 2016	Examined how race and class impact interactions between teachers and Indigenous parents in off-reserve schools from four school	In-depth interviews with 50 Indigenous and non-indigenous parents and educators	-The legacy of racial discrimination against Indigenous peoples in school affected family-school relations among middle-class and lower-class parents in different ways

	boards using cultural capital theory and moments of inclusion/exclusion as a conceptual framework		<p>-Lower class parents were less engaged and less successful in developing strong family-school relationships</p> <p>-Middle class parents had greater success engaging in schools, accessing resources and advocating for their children</p>
Tunison, 2013	Examined the extent to which family-school and/or community partnerships influence the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students in an urban context	Surveyed 107 teachers and administrators, semi-structured interviews with five school and district educators and leaders, group interviews with students, document analysis	<p>-Aboriginal families have a widespread suspicion of the white man's educational system which inhibits the educational success of Aboriginal students</p> <p>-Most teachers were unaware of and/or made limited use of the curriculum resources created by partnership participants</p> <p>-The partnership took place mainly at a macro level and struggled trying to recruit parents for membership on the councils</p>
Latin American Studies	Purpose and/or Focus	Methodology	Findings
Ishihara-Brito, 2013	Compared two groups of rural, Indigenous Guatemalan parents' expectations of and attitudes toward their children's schooling and its educational quality	Semi-structured and in-depth interviews with 63 informants and 43 families (representing 1 st -3 rd grade parents & 4 th -6 th grade parents)	<p>-Parents felt that their children's improved access to school signified an accomplishment in itself (attributed to their limited experiences with formal education)</p> <p>-Had low expectations of and aspirations for their children's educational performance (also attributed to their limited education)</p>
USA Studies	Purpose and/or Focus	Methodology	Findings

Bardhoshi, Duncan, & Schweinle, 2016	Examined demographic factors as predictors of involvement among Native and non-native parents and whether involvement predicted access to postsecondary education facilitators	Surveyed 482 parents (37.3% American Indian) from 37 schools that were implementing a college access program	-Parents' education level was a significant predictor of access to a postsecondary education facilitator -American Indian parents and higher income parents reported more involvement than white parents
Kaomea, 2012	Aimed to foreground the ways in which Native Hawaiian preschool families are supporting and complementing their children's schooling through narrative counterstories	Participant observations, surveys, and follow-up interviews with 16 Native Hawaiian preschool families (though this study focuses on just two families)	-Indigenous parents want their children to be successful and have different values and definition of success -Indigenous parents are resilient and persevere to support their children's academic success despite limited time and resources -Indigenous parents rely on extended family (which sometimes includes teachers and other parents) for support
Kulago, 2016	Aimed to understand how Indigenous youth define community in order to establish effective community and school partnerships to support the holistic development of Indigenous youths	Semi-structured interviews and talking circles with Indigenous youth, data analysis and interpretation done collaboratively in talking circles	-Indigenous youth gave mainstream definitions of community during individual interviews; however, during the talking circles, youths' perspectives changed through reflection on the reality of their daily experiences in the greater community. Collective responses expressed what they wished community could be (respectful and trusting relationships between youth and the older generation, and among youth in the community)

McWilliams, Maldonado-Mancebo, Szczepaniak, & Jones, 2011	Reviewed an innovative all-Native-American preschool program (located in an urban district) that incorporates Native-centric materials and activities into classrooms with input from community Elders	No method section; Interviews were likely used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Many opportunities for families to participate (monthly parent-child interaction, districtwide Native family nights, volunteering, annual harvest celebration and powwow) -Program staff worked with community Elders to incorporate Native-centric materials in classrooms -School connects families with social service and community resources
Ngai, & Koehn, 2016	Examined the learning outcomes from a program focused on fostering curricular partnerships among middle-school teachers and Native families in an urban school district involved in implementing the Indian Education for All Act	Pre and post program surveys given to more than 600 middle school students (15% Native students)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Students of teachers who participated in an online course and partnered with Native families had more positive attitudes about Native people - Students of teachers who only partnered with Native families had more positive attitudes about Native people - Students of teachers who did not participate in an online course and did not partner with Native families had higher content-based knowledge gains but more negative attitudes towards Native people
Pewewardy, & Fitzpatrick, 2009	To improve the educational outcomes of Native students with disabilities by providing culturally responsive research-based practices to help foster family-school relationships	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Native communities have different views of disabilities than Western conceptualizations -Schools need to have a family centered approach to working with American Indian families

These various inquiries related to family-school and/or community relations, engagement, or partnerships specifically focused on Indigenous families and communities, were explored using a variety of research designs and methodologies and resulted in findings that both aligned with and deviated from more mainstream investigations of this topic in other contexts and among different racialized groups. Findings from some of the studies also challenged widely accepted beliefs about what constitutes family and community engagement in schools and generic models outlining appropriate forms or levels of engagement. While themes across findings will not be discussed until the end of this section, concise summaries of the findings are provided in Table 1.

Research Designs and Methods Used

Though all of the studies in this critical review were conducted in Indigenous contexts and explored the topic of family-school-community engagement or partnerships, the overwhelming majority did not observe or utilize Indigenous research protocols and/or methodologies. Agbo (2007), Bond (2010), Ives & Sinha (2016), Kaomea (2012), Kulago (2016), and Madden, Higgins, and Korteweg (2013) were the only studies that had research designs or used research methods that aligned with Indigenous methodologies and/or protocols (see Tables 1 & 2). The remaining studies used Western research designs that involved traditional research methodologies such as interviews, focus groups, participant or ethnographic observations, surveys, and document analysis (see Table 2). Furthermore, while the US studies represented a variety of research designs (conceptual and empirical qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods), the Latin American and Australian studies were all qualitative and the Canadian studies were either

qualitative or mixed methods. These differences in research designs are a reflection of the different questions around family and community engagement that researchers in different jurisdictions were seeking to answer as well as the research paradigms that informed them. For example, half of the US studies, one conceptual (Pewewardy, & Fitzpatrick, 2009) and two quantitative (Bardhoshi et al., 2016; Ngai, & Koehn, 2016), and the sole mixed methods Canadian study (Tunison, 2013), were clearly aligned with positivism, seeking to predict involvement patterns based on demographic factors or to discover the relationship between family-school and/or community partnerships and the learning outcomes of students through the use of surveys, in all but the conceptual study. In contrast, most of the qualitative studies represented interpretive or critical designs which aimed to understand teachers' and/or family and community members' view of family-school relations, families' perceptions of and/or experiences in their child(ren)'s schooling, and the role of Indigenous families in schools. These studies used structured, semi-structured, and/or in-depth interviews, focus groups or talking circles, participant observation and other qualitative methods to explore research topics or questions.

Another distinction among the jurisdictions was the fact that more Canadian studies used research methods that aligned with Indigenous protocols or methodologies. What follows is a review of the studies in light of their observance of or failure to adhere to Indigenous protocols and methodologies such as: researchers locating themselves in the research; privileging the voices of Indigenous people; using Indigenous methods (a collaborative research design that involves Indigenous parents and/or community members in various phases of the research and with clear benefits for the community); and having a decolonizing aim. This section concludes with a reporting of the key

findings and the extent to which they align with findings from the broader body of research and existing models or frameworks of family-school-community engagement or partnerships.

Table 2: Research Methods in Studies of Family Engagement in Indigenous Contexts

Studies	Study Type	Participant or Ethnographic Observation	Focus Group or Sharing Circles/ Counter narratives	Interviews, Surveys, and/or Document Analysis	Member Checking/ Collaborative Analysis
Agbo, 2007 (CA)	PAR	X	Focus Group	Interviews	X
Bardhoshi, Duncan, & Schweinle, 2016 (US)	Quantitative			Survey	
Bond, 2010 (AU)	PAR			Interviews	X
Kaomea, 2012 (US)	Mixed Methods	X	Counter-Stories	Interviews, Survey	
Kulago, 2016 (US)	Qualitative		Talking Circles	Interviews	X
Friedel, 1999 (CA)	Qualitative	X		Document Analysis	X
Ishiharar-Brito, 2013 (LA)	Qualitative			Interviews	
Ives & Sinha, 2016 (CA)	Qualitative Collaborative		Focus Group	Interviews	
Lea, Wegner, McRae-Williams, Chenhall, & Holmes, 2011 (AU)	Qualitative	X		Interviews	
Madden, Higgins, & Korteweg, 2013 (CA)	Qualitative/ Indigenous		Sharing Circles & Poetic Transcript		
Mander, 2015 (AU)	Phenomenological Study			Interviews	

McWilliams et al., 2011 (US)	Qualitative			Interviews	
Milne, 2016 (CA)	Qualitative			Interviews	
Ngai, & Koehn, 2016 (US)	Quantitative			Survey	
Pewewardy, & Fitzpatrick, 2009 (US)	Conceptual				
Tunison, 2013 (CA)	Mixed Methods			Interviews, Survey, Document Analysis	

The majority of the studies were conducted on Indigenous communities, instead of with and/or for them, and with no clearly outlined benefits to the community. Bond (2010) and Friedel (1999) were the only researchers to explicitly state that they were invited by community members (Aboriginal Elders and parents respectively) to conduct the research, and Agbo (2007) was the only study to outline how the findings were used by research participants (First Nation parents and Euro-Canadian teachers) to engage in action projects which benefited the community. Most of the studies were conducted by non-Indigenous, university-based researchers, and less than half of the researchers identified or located themselves in their research by stating their positionality, relationship (or lack thereof) to the community, and/or their motives for engaging in the research (Agbo, 2007; Bond, 2010; Friedel, 1999; Kaomea, 2012; Madden et al., 2013; McWilliams et al., 2011). Though critical scholars of Indigenous research have admonished against the use of traditional methods in research on Indigenous communities (Koster et al., 2012; Wilson, 2008) calling Western scientific methods the

“mechanism of colonization” (Aveling 2013), most of the studies in this review continued the project of colonization through their utilization of traditional Western research data collection and data analysis methods (see Table 2). Less than half of the studies were conscientious about utilizing Indigenous research methods (Agbo, 2007; Bond, 2010; Ives & Sinha, 2016; Kaomea, 2012; Kulago; and Madden et al., 2013) which include: (1) researchers self-locating themselves in the research; (2) privileging the voice of the community; (3) “developing and adhering to a research process that is collaboratively created;” (4) establishing clear goals that benefit the community; (5) using Indigenous methods that encourage narratives or storytelling; and (6) research designs with a clear decolonizing aim (Aveling, 2013; Brayboy, 2005; Koster et al., 2012; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008).

Self-location. It is telling that the only studies in which the researchers located themselves were the three studies conducted by Indigenous researchers (Bond, 2010; Friedel, 1999; Kulago, 2016), the study that included and was co-authored by an Indigenous educator (McWilliams et al., 2011), and two studies that contained elements and evidence of Indigenous research paradigms and participatory research methods (Agbo, 2007; Madden et al., 2013). Friedel (1999) located herself as an Aboriginal researcher who was invited by Aboriginal parents at a Native program elementary school to work with them in exploring the conditions of their children’s school and the role of parents in the school. Similarly, Bond (2010) was asked by grannies (female Elders) and male Elders to listen to their stories and to help them regain their position in schools as teachers, cultural consultants, and advisors. Through participatory action research, Bond hoped to position Elders as “active agents, insistent that teachers act as edu-carers to

ensure the community's young people's survival in the face of worsening anomie" (p. 40).

From the outset of her article, Kulago (2016) identified herself as an Indigenous Diné woman whose research focused on the Diné philosophy K'é, which means family or community (which are one and the same in Diné culture) in English and perfectly depicts the community from which she (the author) comes. In the McWilliams et al. (2011) article about an innovative All-Native-American preschool program, brief biographies of the four co-authors, including the Native-American director, were provided on the first page of the article. Madden et al. (2013) identified themselves as "white, Euro-Canadian university-based researchers" who, "guided by sharing circles conducted with Indigenous Elders, families, teachers, and support workers," presented "community voices and experiences of Indigenous education in an urban school board through poetic transcription" (p. 213). Lastly, Agbo (2007) located himself as a university researcher who collaborated with First Nation community members and Euro-Canadian teachers to determine which issues of schooling to investigate, what question to explore, how to collect data, and how they would organize and use the data to meet the community's priorities. The act of locating themselves exposed the researchers' positionality or place from which their voices emanated, positioning them in a place of accountability or answerability. This act represents a turning away from Western paradigms which admonish against self-exposure and self-disclosure because such acts promote subjectivity in research. In self-locating themselves, these researchers honored Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies.

Privileging Indigenous perspectives. More than half of the studies privileged the voice of Indigenous parents and/or community members (Agbo, 2007; Bardhoshi et al., 2016; Bond, 2010; Ishihara-Brito, 2013; Ives & Sinha, 2016; Kaomea, 2012; Kulago, 2016; Lea et al., 2011; Madden et al., 2013; Mander, 2015; Milne, 2016). In these studies, Indigenous parents, families, and/or Elders and community members were interviewed, surveyed, or engaged in focus groups or sharing/talking circles to capture their voices and experiences. The voices and perspectives of Indigenous parents and community members were used to inform action projects between parents and teachers in Agbo's (2007) study; as implications for practice and policy changes in the schools for high school counselors in Bardhoshi, Duncan, and Schweinle's (2016) study; to tell counterstories to "legitimize what Indigenous families are already doing to support their children's education" and to make policy recommendations (Kaomea, 2012, p. 3); and to create a poetic transcription as a mean of presenting and centering the voices and experiences of community members in Madden et al. (2013) study. Poetic transcription is a method that weaves multiple participants' experiences and stories into one, to privilege/center their voices and stories.

Collaborative design. Agbo (2007), Bond (2010), and Ives and Sinha (2016) were the only studies with collaborative research designs. Agbo (2007) and Ives and Sinha (2016) were PAR studies that involved Indigenous Elders, family and/or community members as partners in the research. For example, in Ives and Sinha's (2016) study, all interview and focus group protocols were co-developed by the researchers with Indigenous secondary students and an advisory committee comprised of community members and government representatives. Also, in Agbo's (2007) study, research

participants participated in all phases of the research process, including its design. Agbo collaborated with community members and teachers to determine the topic of investigation, research questions, and method of collecting, organizing and using the data according to community priorities, effectively placing the interests, experiences, and knowledge of Indigenous parents at the center of research methodologies. Additionally, research results benefited the community in practical ways. At the conclusion of his study, the voices/views and suggestions of Indigenous parents and Euro-Canadian teachers were used to inform the action projects they engaged in to improve community-school relations, including: monthly parent-teacher events and visits to each other's homes; parents as occasional teachers and story tellers in the classrooms; and a school-community newspaper.

Similarly, Bond (2010), Kulago (2016), and Madden et al. (2013) deviated from traditional Western methods of conducting research and/or presenting research findings. Like Agbo (2007), Bond (2010) engaged in a PAR study with community Elders, including them in the development of the design and implementation of the research. However, Bond deviated from other researchers in this review, choosing to “demystify university research” by presenting the research (both her Ph.D. thesis and the article which comes from her doctoral work) in “culturally appropriate ways” using “language that is easily understood” by “Indigenous people worldwide” and that is “yarning (or storytelling) and narrative” (p. 41).

Storytelling through sharing/talking circles and counterstories. Kulago (2016) used talking circles, an Indigenous tradition that will be described in detail in Chapter Four, not solely as a means of collecting, analyzing, or interpreting data, but also

as a way of building relationships among the student participants in her study and to get them to provide alternative perspectives and realities. Kulago asked her student participants to take photographs or create drawings of their community that were used as prompts to break the ice and facilitate conversations during individual interviews. Talking circles were also used in the study to collaboratively analyze and interpret the research data. Madden et al. (2013) also used sharing (talking) circles in their study. The researchers participated in sharing circles comprised of Indigenous Elders, families, teachers, and support workers which were video recorded and used as data sources. Madden et al. (2013) used transcripts of the videos to create poetic transcriptions. Unlike conventional Western ways of sharing findings, the poetic transcription in Madden et al.'s (2013) study spoke as the research findings. Poetic transcriptions represent an artistic and culturally appropriate method of sharing findings that is well aligned with Indigenous traditions of storytelling.

Also, recognizing the oral tradition of Indigenous peoples, Kaomea (2012) used “counterstorytelling” as a research method and narrative counterstories to report research results. Counterstories are a method used in critical race theory that tell the stories of those on the margins of society, the experiences of those whose stories often go untold (Kaomea, 2012). Counterstories challenge and displace majoritarian stories and the pernicious narratives and beliefs they propagate about minoritized or historically marginalized populations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Decolonizing aim. Another key feature of Indigenous research that was missing in most of the studies was a clear decolonizing aim through tactics of refusal and resistance (Tuck & Yang, 2014). However, in Agbo's (2007), Bond's (2010), Kaomea's

(2012), Kulago's (2016), and Madden et al.'s (2013) studies, there was evidence of a decolonizing focus. Though there was no explicit language revealing a decolonizing research aim in Agbo's (2007) study, his participatory research approach represented a pedagogy of refusal to conventional Western methods and resulted in actions to dismantle structures in the small fly-in reserve school that prevented First Nation parents and Euro-Canadian teachers from engaging in authentic and collaborative relationships. Agbo turned the gaze from pathologizing the Aboriginal parents in his study to examining "the structures and processes that shape and constrain parent-teacher collaboration" in the remote reserve (p. 3). As a result, the study concluded with parents and teachers mobilizing for school improvement. Similarly, the use of counterstorytelling, critical race theory, and TribalCrit in Kaomea's (2012) study to "challenge the dominant narrative of 'disinterested' and 'uninvolved' Native Hawaiian parents" (p. 4) effectively served as a tactic of resistance and refusal and resulted in a recasting of Native Hawaiian families as "dedicated and hardworking" and "steadfast in their commitment to successfully raising their young children amidst a complex combination of (post)colonial hardships and tribulations" (p. 4).

Both Bond (2010) and Kulago (2016) engaged in pedagogies of refusal by valuing and uplifting Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing through a collaborative approach to research that involved participants as partners and active agents in all steps of the research process. Kulago resisted positivist and postpositivist methodologies from Western science, which are often used to validate colonizing knowledge about Indigenous Peoples. Instead she "sought knowledge and philosophies from the Diné in order to contribute to Indigenous educational theories that functioned through a Diné

paradigm” and “employed a philosophy to create a framework that comes from the Diné” (pp. 5-6). Similarly, Bond (2010) who believes that Elders are the holders and instigators of Indigenous knowledge, agrees with Smith (1999) that Elders should “‘decolonize research methodologies’ by initiating all Indigenous knowledge research education projects in their community” (pp. 40-41). Using critical social theory, which supports the agency of people and their capacity to accomplish social change, Bond positioned the Elders in her study as knowledgeable and active social agents, the “mob” that should be listened to and sought regularly for guidance regarding culturally appropriate curriculum and pedagogy for their children.

Madden et al. (2013) was the only study with an explicitly stated decolonizing aim, using varied iterations of the term throughout their article. They invited readers at the outset of their article and again in its final sentence, to “reflexively/reflectively engage in rich meaning-making that is embodied and w/holistic” (p. 237) in order to “re/member areas of the education system that need to be targeted for decolonization in working towards educational partnerships with Indigenous communities” (p. 215). Through presentations of poetic transcriptions, they hoped to depict the ways whiteness and Eurocentrism pervade and shape the experiences of Indigenous People in an urban center. They heeded Tuck and Yang’s (2014) admonition to redirect the gaze from a focus on Indigenous Peoples to the institutions and structures that oppress them. By “turning the gaze around” to critique the ways in which whiteness and Eurocentrism impact the experiences of Indigenous peoples, they acted to “decenter and deconstruct the normativity of whiteness” (Morrison, 1991, p. 90). Additionally, they refused Western

methods of representing research findings and instead used a method that resonates with Indigenous traditions of storytelling.

Poetic transcription was explored as a mechanism for “decolonizing academic representations by centering Indigenous community members’ stories and making the process by which the stories were recorded and shared more contextual, transparent, and relational” (Madden et al., 2013, p. 215). However, the act of weaving the multiple voices and experiences of community members into one collective “third voice” or “first person plural” is inconsistent with Indigenous oral traditions which do not take speakers’ words out of context. Well aware of this discrepancy, the researchers explained their intent, “We share these poetic re/presentations not as clear, stable, authentic voices, but rather a re/telling and re/membering of stories as we heard them, lived them, and were gifted with them” (p. 227).

Findings: Cross Cutting Themes

Findings from the studies were mixed, with some supporting and others conflicting with widely accepted beliefs about Indigenous families’ and community members’ apathy towards education, their types and levels of involvement in schools, and their relationships with school staff. Overall, both teachers and families wished for stronger family-school relations and for greater family and/or community involvement in the schools. However, in a few studies, parents had no interest in engaging with school staff or playing an active role in schools unless summoned. Findings also revealed critical barriers to engagement or partnership between schools and families, including: differences in cultural beliefs and expectations of success; legacies of racial discrimination; unfriendly and unwelcoming schools and staff; and outright suspicion of

the educational system which was perceived as Eurocentric, promoting the White man's culture and values.

Indigenous parent perspective. Family and community voices were privileged in most of the studies. Indigenous parents and Elders in some of the studies desired to have positive relationships with school staff, to be involved in schools, and/or to be counted as partners in decision making (Bond, 2010; Bardhoshi et al., 2016; Friedel, 1999; Ives & Sinha, 2016; Kaomea, 2012; Mander, 2015; Tunison, 2013). In other studies, parents did not see the need or wish to engage in schools and with teachers unless called upon to do so (Agbo, 2007; Lea et al., 2011). Many Indigenous Elders and community members wanted cultural knowledge and traditions to be included in the curriculum and pedagogical practices (Bond, 2010; Madden et al., 2013; Ngai & Koehn, 2016; Tunison, 2013). In a few studies Elders and community members expressed concern that the mainly White, non-Indigenous educators who taught their children lacked the cultural knowledge, competence, and respect to effectively teach their children (Agbo, 2007; Bond, 2010; Madden et al., 2013). In these studies, Elders and community members suggested cultural competence training for teachers and emphasized the importance of White, non-Indigenous teachers immersing themselves in the community and, in some cases, working with intentionality to become adopted members of the community, in order to gain knowledge of and respect for the culture so that they could become more effective teachers.

Teacher perspective. The studies that interviewed teachers (mainly White) found that many of them longed for more parent participation (Agbo, 2007; Ives & Sinha, 2016; Lea et al., 2011; McWilliams et al., 2011); however, in some cases, the researchers

described teachers' interpretation of engagement or their preferred types of engagement from parents as "token" forms of participation that did not involve parents as partners in decision making (Bond, 2010; Friedel, 1999; Lea et al., 2011; Mander, 2015).

Furthermore, teachers sometimes blamed parents for their lack of involvement in schools, some with no awareness or acknowledgement of the history of schools as colonizing institutions for Natives or of the contemporary barriers that discouraged parents from getting involved in schools or engaging with staff (Agbo, 2007; Ives & Sinha, 2016).

Barriers to engagement or partnerships. Madden et al.'s (2013) poetic transcriptions revealed interesting findings about Indigenous family and community members' perceptions of their children's teachers and administrators, offering insight into factors that inhibit Indigenous family and community members' ability or desire to engage or participate in schools or with their staff. They found that Indigenous community members were concerned that non-Indigenous teachers were ill-equipped to effectively teach Indigenous content because they lack the lived experience and inherited knowledge of being Indigenous. Furthermore, they disapproved of the practice of forcing Indigenous knowledge into colonized classrooms in which non-Indigenous teachers are positioned as "experts" and amid "Eurocentric structural constraints" which limit the ability of community members to share Indigenous knowledges (p. 232). Community members were also adamant that non-Indigenous teachers and administrators must acknowledge their own inherited Eurocentrism and complicity in racism in order to serve as allies.

In Agbo's (2007) study, community members viewed the school as a "colonial symbol" and a fenced-in enclave with expectations that are different from what

Indigenous children are taught at home. Similarly, in Bond's (2010) study, Elders wished for White teachers to take cultural competency courses before arriving in the community and wanted them to connect socially and personally with the community, develop respectful attitudes towards students and members of the community, and to consult Elders regularly. These findings highlight cultural dissonance as a huge impediment to family and community engagement in or with schools, aligning with the broader body of literature on family and community engagement in or with schools as it relates to communities of color.

In addition to physical (fences) and cultural (beliefs, values, and experiences) barriers to family and community engagement in or with schools, in many of the studies, parents and community members described schools as unwelcoming places in which they and their children experienced racism at the hands of White teachers and administrators who possessed deficit views of them and their communities (Friedel, 1999; Madden et al., 2013; Milne, 2016; Tunison, 2013). Additionally, schools were described as places dominated by whiteness and the "white man's educational system" (Friedel, 1999; Kaomea, 2012; Madden et al., 2013; Milne, 2016; Tunison, 2013, p. 565). Tunison (2013) attributed a widespread suspicion of the Eurocentric educational program delivery structure and system by Indigenous parents as the greatest barrier to the educational success of Indigenous students. Similarly, Milne (2016) noted that "the legacies of racial discrimination in schooling directly impact patterns of interactions between Indigenous families and schools" (p. 283). In other cases, Indigenous families simply did not feel obligated or see the need to get involved in their child's schooling or visit unless summoned (Agbo, 2007; Lea et al., 2007). These families were complicit or were

conditioned to believe that teachers should be left alone to do their job of educating Indigenous students.

Types and level of family and community engagement. When family and community engagement was present in the literature, it was more traditional in nature or “token” forms of participation including volunteering, serving on school councils or committees, serving as guest speakers, chaperoning field trips, helping students with homework, fundraising, and participating in school and districtwide events and celebrations (Friedel, 1999; Ishihara-Brito, 2013; McWilliams et al., 2011; Ngai & Koehn, 2016), aligning with Epstein’s (1995) six types of involvement framework. In Friedel’s (1999) study, Aboriginal parents of a Native program elementary school in which a community-based approach to curricular and service delivery was a mandate, found that there was “token participation” in the province required parental advisory group (PAG), evident in the fact that parents were denied decision-making power. Non-Native teachers and administrators in Friedel’s study had negative perceptions of Native families and utilized a “come-if-we-call” approach to family engagement (Henderson et al., 2007). In response to the “cultural hegemony” or culture of domination which characterized the school, the Aboriginal parents decided to resist by disengaging and discontinuing their participation in PAG, a decision that Friedel feared would not result in social change because it lacked clarity of purpose (p. 153).

In contrast, the innovative All-Native-American preschool in McWilliams et al.’s (2011) study, was portrayed as an “open-door school” and “partnership school” (Henderson et al., 2007) in which families and community members were given many opportunities to interface with school staff and participate in decision making.

Indigenous families in the school experienced leadership for traditional and authentic partnerships (Auerbach, 2012). They were offered numerous opportunities to engage in the school, including: monthly parent-child interaction activities; attending district-wide Native family nights; assisting with the community garden; volunteering; and participation in annual harvest celebrations and powwows. Furthermore, program staff collaborated with Elders and community members to create and incorporate “high-quality” Native-centric material in the educational program and to design culturally conscious extracurricular activities for families.

The McWilliams et al.’s (2011) study, in contrast to Friedel’s (1999) and many of the other studies in this review, exemplified a family-school-community partnership in which families and community members were cited as having an authentic voice and validated vote in decision making. However, though the McWilliams et al.’s (2011) study included a Native American researcher (Maldonado-Mancebo), a program model which promoted school-community partnerships, and testimonials from program staff about the success of the program, no Indigenous parents or community members were interviewed to share their viewpoints on the All-Native-American preschool. The absence of parent and community voice in the study leaves claims of partnership unchallenged as well as unsupported by the very group that is best suited to substantiate such claims. Furthermore, the extent of the partnership is unclear. For example, did school/program staff and families have equal status and/or an equal say in curriculum choices and extracurricular activities? Ngai and Koehn (2016) were less ambiguous in their conceptualization of partnerships. Their study, which focused on a program aimed at fostering curricular partnerships among middle-school teachers and Native families,

presented parent-teacher partnerships as uneven or missing altogether within and across schools. These findings caused Ngai and Koehn (2016) to conclude their article with a call for mutually beneficial and true partnerships among the school educators and Indigenous family and community members in their study.

Bardhoshi et al. (2016) and Milne (2016) were the only studies that explicitly addressed the different levels of involvement based on race and social class. Bardhoshi et al. found that the education level of parents was a significant predictor of parent involvement and access to a postsecondary education facilitator. For example, American Indian parents and upper income parents reported more involvement than non-Native and lower income parents. Furthermore, upper income parents reported have significantly higher access to a postsecondary education facilitator than lower income parents. Similar to Bardhoshi et al.'s findings, Milne's (2016) study, which used Lareau and Weininger's (2003) cultural capital theory and Lareau and Horvat's (1999) moments of inclusion and moments of exclusions as a conceptual framework to examine the ways in which class and race shape interactions between teachers and Indigenous parents, found that middle class families "demonstrate a high degree of sophistication when confronting educators, accessing resources, and advocating for their children," whereas low income families "were less engaged with their children's schooling and less successful in developing strong home-school relationships" (p. 284). These findings align with the broader body of research on family-school and community engagement about the impact of social class on relations and interactions between school staff and families.

Though not as explicit as Bardhoshi et al. (2016) or Milne (2016) about social class influences on the level of Indigenous families' engagement in schools, Ishihara-

Brito (2013), in her study of rural Guatemalan parents with limited education, found that they perceived their children's improved access to schools as an accomplishment in itself while possessing "low expectations of and aspirations for their children's academic performance" (p. 187). Ishihara-Brito attributed such findings to the low educational level of parents. In contrast, the parents in Mander's (2015) study, who represented a wider range of socioeconomic circumstances, placed great value in education and the boarding school their children attended. They believed that the sacrifice of sending their children far away to boarding school would allow their children to acquire the knowledge and skills to "achieve positive social mobility" via access to college and other opportunities (p. 176).

Counterstories of Indigenous families and communities. Kaomea's (2012) study, which sought to challenge and dismantle dominant narratives of Indigenous families as "disinterested" and "uninvolved" through counterstories, presented a new narrative of Indigenous parents as caring and desirous to see their children succeed. Kaomea also portrayed the Indigenous parents in her study as resilient in the reality of limited time and resources and steadfast in the support that they offer their children to ensure their academic success. Another interesting finding from Kaomea's study was the reliance of parents on extended family, which they conceptualized as blood relatives as well as teachers and other parents, for support. For example, in the study, one of the parents lived far away from extended family (blood relatives) and thus relied on teachers, who her child called aunties, and other parents to fill in and provide support to her child when she was unable to attend school events.

While Kaomea (2012) used counterstories to challenge and change deficit narratives of Indigenous families, Bond (2010) used a counter-communication to share her research in language that could be easily understood by Indigenous People worldwide, thus answering her call to accountability and answerability to the Indigenous community she was asked to serve. Findings from her collaborative study found interested and involved Elders who insisted that teachers be “edu-carers,” educators who are caring, compassionate, and have respectful attitudes towards Indigenous students, parents, and communities. These two studies, like Madden et al.’s (2013), show the power of culturally appropriate research methods and modes of presenting findings in producing more accurate portrayals of Indigenous families and community members and their beliefs.

Conclusion and Implications

In sum, the studies that comprise this review were concerned with teachers’ and/or parents’ perceptions of existing family-school relations; Indigenous family and/or community members’ experiences of education; Indigenous families’ roles or involvement in schools; the impact of demographic factors or spatial features on parent involvement; centering the voice of Indigenous family and community members; evaluating Native-centric or native program schools; and the extent to which family-school or community-school partnerships influence student outcomes. All but the McWilliams et al.’s (2011) study revealed weak or poor relations between Indigenous families and school staff, negative schooling experiences by Indigenous families, or negative encounters with school staff. Many of the studies found traditional, school-centric or school-based expectations for and forms of family-school-community

engagement or partnerships. More progressive or empowering forms of engagement such as community organizing and parent activism were missing from the literature.

Demographic factors and spatial features were revealed to have uneven impacts on families' experiences of and involvement in schools. The impact of family-school or community-school partnerships on student outcomes were inconclusive due to a lack of or uneven "partnerships" between families and school staff or because student outcomes were not investigated in the actual study though it was listed as a research focus.

Inhibitors to family-school-community engagement included families' perceptions of schools as unfriendly and unwelcoming places or as sites of racism and the "white man's educational system." Cultural dissonance or different values and beliefs about success and involvement between school staff and Indigenous family and community members served as yet another barrier.

With regards to methodology, most of the studies did not use Indigenous protocols or methods as a means of investigation. The few studies that followed Indigenous protocols and used Indigenous methodologies provided the greatest insight into Indigenous family and community members' experiences in schools and their perspectives of and responses to family and community engagement practices enacted by school employees because these studies centered and privileged the voices of Indigenous family and community members. Moreover, studies that used Indigenous protocols and/or methodology, presented counternarratives of Indigenous families, portraying them as caring, concerned, and engaged.

None of the studies explicitly examined the ways that educators, parents, and community members conceptualized family-school-community engagement; whether or

not conceptualizations aligned with their actual practices; or what these revealed about their priorities. Moreover, none of the studies used culturally responsive, culturally sustaining, and/or culturally sustaining/revitalizing frameworks to examine priorities and practices or to explore the alignment or mis-alignment between educators' priorities and practices and those of Indigenous parents and community members. This current study serves as an important contribution to the existing body of family-school-community engagement literature specific to Indigenous families and communities through its focus on these aforementioned topics and areas. Furthermore, this study refused to listen to Indigenous families and communities through existing frames of school-based or school centric models of engagement or to judge their levels of involvement based on conformity to existing models. In this way, I aimed to decenter White normative knowledge and behaviors which dominate existing models and result in portrayals of Indigenous families and communities, as well as other families and communities of color, as deficient, disengaged, and disinterested in education. This study foregrounded, privileged, and normalized Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing by presenting Indigenous parents' and community members' perspectives and practices first and unconstrained by existing models, and then using their responses to critique the conceptualizations and practices of educators. This study also heeded Tuck and Yang's (2014) and other scholars' recommendations to move away from Western methodologies and towards Indigenous protocols and methodologies in research involving Indigenous Peoples. A detailed description of the research design and methodology is presented in Chapter Four. The next chapter provides an explanation of the theoretical frameworks that were used in this dissertation as informed by this literature review.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

Formal education within the closed walls of schools continues to be a forceful weapon used by dominant powers to create boundaries to control and mold the minds of youth and adults, to eradicate or weaken their Indigenous identity, and to assimilate them into mainstream society...The challenge in Indian education today is similar to those of years past, mainly to decolonize western education by taking control of schools with Indigenous traditional knowledge as the foundation for teaching and learning.

(Grande, 2015, p. 36)

Introduction

As Grande (2015) notes in her quote above, colonial education, which Lomawaima (1999) conceptualized as having four main goals (to civilize, Christianize, subordinate, and control Native people), persists in contemporary schools and must be dismantled through the decolonization of Western education through aggressive moves to make Indigenous traditional knowledge “the foundation of teaching and learning” (Grande, 2015, p. 36). According to Lomawaima (1999), Colonial education sought to (1) civilize Indigenous peoples through (2) Christian conversion with the aim of erasing and replacing their Indigenous identity. Colonial education demanded (3) subordination through land and knowledge claims, the resettlement of Indigenous communities, and the forceful removal of Indigenous children from their homes and communities into educational institutions where (4) pedagogical methods of control were used to dominate and acculturate Indigenous students.

In mainstream literature, family and community engagement in schools and with school staff is promoted as a viable solution to the problem of low achievement in

schools, particularly those that serve historically marginalized students, and is thus a popular topic in educational research. However, as shown throughout this dissertation, undoing the damage caused by colonial education is (or should be) a more pertinent goal of family-school-community engagement or partnerships in Indigenous contexts. One of the major findings from the literature on family-school-community engagement specific to Indigenous contexts that emanated from the voices of Indigenous families and community members, was the need to decolonize education through the dismantling of beliefs and structures that inhibit family and community engagement or partnerships and that prohibit the inclusion of Indigenous voices, knowledge, and values within schools and classrooms. The voices of Indigenous family and community members in various studies proclaimed and, in some cases, complained that contemporary schools and their staff: (1) had negative perceptions of Indigenous families and communities (Friedel, 1999; Mander, 2015); (2) fenced or shut them out of involvement, participation, and/or decision making in their child(ren)'s education or schooling (Agbo, 2007; Bond, 2010; Friedel, 1999; Mander, 2015); and (3) promoted values and expectations that conflicted with those held by Indigenous family and community members (Agbo, 2007; Madden et al., 2013; Tunison, 2013). Together these findings reveal deficit-based perspectives of Indigenous families by school staff and attempts to erase and replace their Indigenous identity.

The valuing and validation of Indigenous knowledge and ways of being is vital to the attainment of a decolonized educational system and necessitates an approach to family-school-community engagement that is community-driven and/or involves parents, community members, and community Elders as partners, instructors, and/or mentors in

schools and with or for school leaders, educators, and students. In many of the studies about family-school-community engagement in Indigenous contexts, Indigenous parents, community members, and/or Elders wanted a voice in decision making (Bond, 2010; Bardhoshi et al., 2016; Friedel, 1999; Ives & Sinha, 2016; Kaomea, 2012; Mander, 2015; Tunison, 2013) and wished to see cultural knowledge and traditions included in the curriculum and pedagogical practices (Bond, 2010; Madden et al., 2013; Ngai & Koehn, 2016; Tunison, 2013). In Bond's (2010) study, male and female Indigenous Elders felt that it was essential for White teachers to take cultural competency classes before entering the community to teach their children. They also saw their role as the holders of Indigenous knowledge and desired to reclaim their position as cultural consultants and advisors in the schools their children attended. Likewise, in Madden et al.'s (2013) study, Indigenous community members viewed non-Indigenous teachers as ill-equipped to teach their children, strongly opposed the positioning and treatment of these teachers as experts, felt that the teachers needed to acknowledge and reflect on their inherited Eurocentrism and complicity in racism before they could become allies, and disagreed with attempts to force Indigenous knowledge into colonized classrooms. The above examples support the need for a decolonizing aim and culturally sustaining/revitalizing practices in family-school-community engagement or partnership models involving Indigenous families and community members.

Asset pedagogies such as culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995), third space (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994) and culturally responsive (Cazden & Leggett, 1976; Gay 2010) have been theorized and to some extent, practiced, in educational spaces for decades and refer to pedagogical practices enacted by educators that infuse the cultures, languages,

community knowledge and practices of historically marginalized and minoritized students into curriculum and instruction. These frameworks are premised on the belief that such practices will foster minoritized students' ability to flourish in schools and beyond while also providing them with access to the dominant (White, middle class) culture and language. These frameworks position educators as potential enactors or facilitators of asset pedagogies and students as the beneficiaries. What is not explicitly stated or missing altogether from these frameworks is the application of asset pedagogies to minoritized families and community members. Moreover, the role of minoritized families and communities in schools' efforts to affirm students' identities is excluded in these approaches. These pedagogies and newer frameworks like Paris and Alim's (2014, 2017) culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) are beginning to be applied to the topic of family-school-community engagement or partnerships. This dissertation recognizes that attempts to reverse the negative effects of colonial education through asset pedagogies, must involve families and community members at a substantial level. Additionally, educators' practices and pedagogies must be culturally responsive to the needs of Indigenous families and community members (not just students), while also working to support the revitalization and sustaining of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing.

As noted in the previous chapter, family-school-community engagement involves two sides (the school and home/community) with the typical goal or structure being to get families and community members involved in schools' efforts to ensure students' academic and social success or to support students' learning at home. Even when the term partnership is used, it rarely represents an authentic partnership because the

educators typically have more power or authority in the relationship. Educators are typically the ones determining the rules of engagement which are often school centric, school-based, and grounded in White, middle class values and norms that require minoritized families to navigate institutional scripts. Culturally responsive leadership (CRL) and culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogies (CSRP) differ from previous pedagogies in that families and/or communities are explicitly mentioned or centered in the frameworks. Furthermore, CSRP is specific to Indigenous peoples and positions Indigenous communities as holders and determiners of their own destiny. Culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy shifts asymmetrical power relations in schools, changing how we see asset pedagogies and who should have a principal role in and responsibility for carrying them out. This dissertation used these newer asset pedagogies as theoretical frameworks combined with a decolonizing framework as a way of investigating, interrogating, critiquing, and placing the priorities and practices of educators regarding family-school-community engagement or partnerships while also determining if or how Indigenous families and community members fit within these frameworks.

What is culturally responsive leadership, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy and why were they used as theoretical frameworks for this dissertation? What is the connection between these theories and a decolonizing framework? How does (or should) CRL, CSP, and CSRP relate to the topic of family-school-community engagement or partnerships in Indigenous contexts? What is the role of educators in CSRP (a theory by and for Indigenous communities)? What do these theories look like in practice? These are some of the questions that are answered in this chapter.

The selection of CRL, CSP, and CSRP as theoretical frameworks for this dissertation assumes or presumes that the following must be true about Indigenous families and community members in the district and about district teachers and administrators.

1. That Indigenous families and community members want to revitalize and sustain their culture;
2. That Indigenous families and community members see educators as participants in the revitalization and sustaining of their language and culture.
3. That Indigenous families and community members believe in partnering with schools and their staff to ensure the revitalization and sustaining of their culture and language.
4. That district teachers and administrators are culturally responsive or moving towards culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogies in their engagement with Indigenous families and community members and in their priorities and practices regarding family-school-community engagement.

Prior to officially beginning research in Wampum and the Wampum Public Schools, I reviewed local news editorials which revealed that Indigenous community members were critical of and outspoken about the public school system and what they perceived to be a lack of effort on the part of its leaders to engage Indigenous families and community members and to value their knowledge, strengths, and potential contributions. In response, during an initial meeting with district and school administrators in the spring of 2017 to gain permission to conduct this study in their district, they admitted to a history of failure in engaging Indigenous families and shared

that improving relations between the schools and these families is a district priority. Moreover, during the year in which this study was conducted, a partnership between district and tribal leaders was formed and began meeting quarterly to discuss and implement plans to expand the cultural knowledge and awareness of all WPS students and educators regarding Wampanoag history and culture, and to discuss progress towards achieving these goals. Arguably, from the perspective of Tribal leaders, the partnership, which is now in its second year, and its goals, though not explicitly stated, have a decolonizing focus which aims to reverse or interrupt the effects of colonial education that has characterized the schools and experiences of Native students and their families in the district. Moreover, the mission of the partnership reveals the need for policies and practices on the part of district and school staff that are not only responsive to the desires and demands of Indigenous families and community members but that also seeks to support them in their efforts to revitalize and sustain their culture and all that it embodies. This partnership provides some validation for the assumptions on which this dissertation is based. Exploring this topic through a decolonizing framework and culturally responsive, culturally sustaining, and culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogies thus seems appropriate for the reasons highlighted in this paragraph as well as the following historical and contemporary factors:

1. Because of the ongoing project of colonial education to erase and replace the Indigenous identity.
2. Because of the status of Indigenous people as tribal and educational sovereigns and their right to determine the nature of their child(ren)'s schooling.

3. Because 90% of Indigenous students in the US are being educated in public school systems that are run by non-Indigenous administrators and teachers.

Taken together, these factors reveal the need for Indigenous families and community members to interact and work with school staff to ensure that their child(ren) are able to flourish in contemporary schools and to support the survival of their language and culture.

Theoretical Framework

The literature on family-school-community engagement in Indigenous contexts offered a range of perspectives and behaviors within and across the two sides (school staff and Indigenous family and community members). I thus present a robust and comprehensive theoretical framework comprised of a range of culturally appropriate asset pedagogies applied to family-school-community engagement while also including a traditional model to account for the differences in conceptualizations and practices among participants. What follows is a description of the various frameworks, presented as a continuum, and an explanation of and case for a decolonizing aim and how it aligns with moves towards culturally sustaining/revitalizing practices.

Figure 1 depicts the theoretical frameworks on a continuum with CSRP positioned as the family-school-community engagement or partnerships model for schools serving Indigenous students with the greatest potential of achieving a decolonizing aim or of decolonizing contemporary schools.

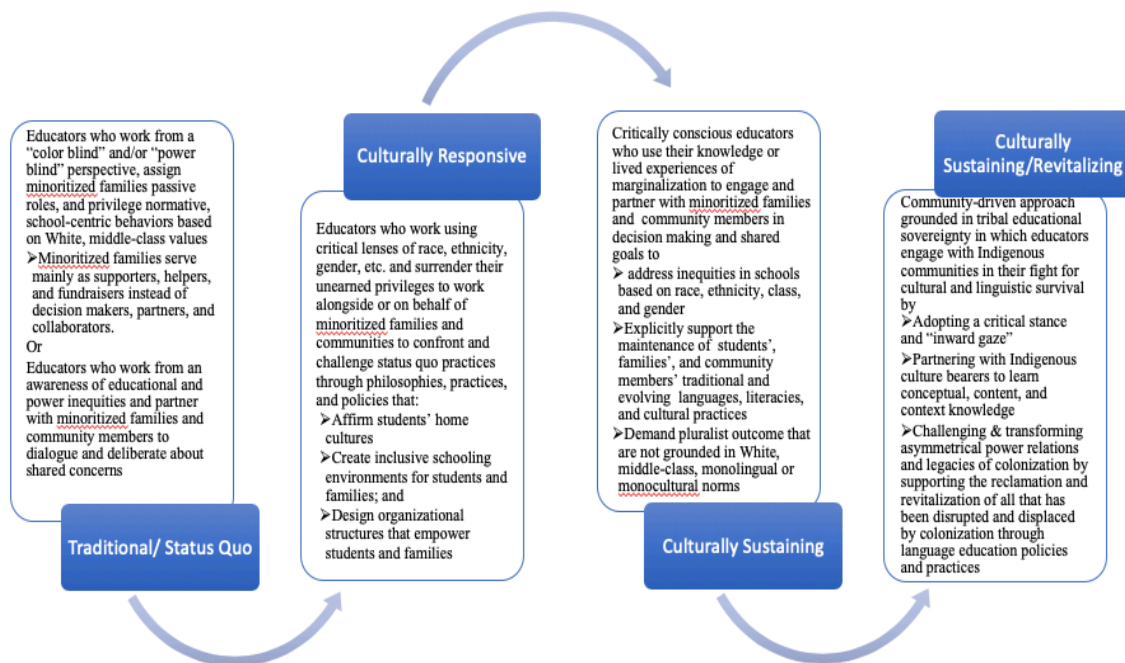


Figure 1. A Continuum Towards Culturally Sustaining/Revitalizing Family-School-Community Engagement/Partnership Practices

Traditional/Status Quo

Traditional or status quo forms of family-school-community engagement include deficit-based approaches that are school-centric, school-controlled, based in White, middle-class norms, and require minoritized families to conform to existing structures and racialized scripts or rules for engagement. In this model of engagement, minoritized families are assigned passive roles in which they serve mainly as supporters, helpers, and fundraisers. Also found within traditional forms of engagement are partnership models in which minoritized families are treated as partners, included in decision making, and have shared responsibilities with mutual benefits. Furthermore, families and community members engage in collaborative and cooperative relationships with educators about issues that concern both sides. For a more detailed description of traditional models of

family-school-community engagement, see the section in Chapter Two labelled “Family-School-Community Engagement/Partnership Definitions and Framework.”

Culturally Responsive

Culturally responsive leadership (Johnson, 2014) builds on the notion of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and describes “leadership philosophies, practices, and policies that create inclusive schooling environments for students and families from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds” (Johnson, 2014, p. 148). It also encapsulates organizational structures that are created at the school and district level as a means of empowering ethnically diverse students and their families. It includes such practices as setting high expectations for and supporting student achievement; affirming students’ home cultures by incorporating their histories, values, and cultural knowledge in the school curriculum; empowering ethnically, culturally, and economically diverse students and families; and acting as social activists while working to develop the critical consciousness of educators and students “to challenge inequities in the larger society,” (Johnson, 2007; 2014, p.148).

Similar to Johnson’s conceptualization of CRL, Santamaría and Santamaría (2016) described culturally responsive educational leaders as those who subscribe to educational ideologies focused on increasing student achievement and decreasing dropout rates while also critically recognizing educational inequities as detrimental to the “local and global greater good” (p. 3). These leaders, who Santamaría and Santamaría portray as being privileged members of dominant societies,

deliberately choose to withhold or set aside their unearned privileges and entitlements to work alongside or on the behalf of underserved communities of

teachers, learners, and families...lead with a sense of responsibility and purpose in using their access, knowledge, education and spheres of influences to ‘level’ the educational playing field (p. 3).

Also, according to Santamaría and Santamaría, these leaders take deliberate and purposeful steps to confront and interrupt “status quo power and dominance” by “practicing leadership through critical lenses of race, ethnicity, gender and/or difference” (p. 3). By withholding or setting aside their unearned privileges and entitlements and taking purposeful steps to confront and interrupt “status quo power and dominance,” these White educators make space for minoritized families and their children to step into positions of power, empowering themselves as opposed to being empowered by leaders (Ruiz, 1991). Both Johnson’s (2007, 2014) and Santamaría and Santamaría’s (2016) articulations of CRL provide a path forward in disrupting and overturning the residual effects and enduring presence of colonial education.

Culturally Sustaining

Culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) aims to sustain the cultural and linguistic competence of youth and their communities in both traditional and evolving ways (Paris & Alim, 2014). Described by Ladson-Billings (2014) as a remix to her original theory (1995), CSP is premised on the argument that conceptions such as “relevance” and “responsiveness” lack the dynamism to ensure maintenance or continuity in students’ “repertoires of practice” (Paris, 2012, p. 95). Paris and Alim (2017) critiqued culturally relevant pedagogy and other “asset pedagogies” (i.e. funds of knowledge and third space) for their shortcomings in explicitly supporting the maintenance of the languages, literacies, and cultures of culturally and linguistically diverse students and families, and

for their failure to critique problematic elements that are expressed in some cultural practices. Furthermore, they critiqued previous asset pedagogies for their exclusive focus on longstanding practices without recognition of the “shifting and changing practice of students and their communities” (p. 8). In the concluding section of their chapter, Paris and Alim (2017) reiterated the goals of CSP,

CSP must extend the previous visions of asset pedagogies by demanding explicitly pluralist outcomes that are not centered on White middle-class, monolingual/ monocultural norms and notions of educational achievement - and that call out the imposition of these norms as harmful to and discriminatory against many of our communities. CSP must also resist static, unidirectional notions of culture and race that center only on longstanding cultural practices of communities without also attending to continual shifts and cultural reworkings. Finally, CSP must be willing to seriously contend with the sometimes problematic aspects of our communities, even as we celebrate our progressive, social justice-oriented movements and approaches. (p. 12)

Inspired by Paris and Alim’s conception of CSP, Santamaría and Santamaría (2016) extend CSP to leadership and explicitly state the role of families and community members in the framework. Santamaría and Santamaría conceptualized culturally sustaining leaders as those from historically underserved backgrounds, those who have “experienced and overcome personal, societal, and institutional inequities in the past and present” (p. 4). Though not typically “members of dominant societies,” the few that are, often choose to adopt the lenses of the minoritized populations they serve (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2016, p. 4). According to Santamaría and Santamaría, culturally sustaining

leaders are critically conscious and place issues of social justice and equity at the forefront of their practice. Santamaría and Santamaría (2016) shared the following characteristics of culturally sustaining leaders:

1. Actively engage and partner with teachers, families, community members, and students to confront and challenge inequitable practices in education that relate to race, ethnicity, gender, and class;
2. “Work directly with community members, inviting and bringing them into the school to participate and engage in the schooling process; thus honoring the community as their constituents;” (p. 4)
3. Include staff, teachers, and parents in decision-making and the establishment of shared goals.

Culturally sustaining pedagogy or leadership as conceived by Paris and Alim (2014, 2017) and Santamaría and Santamaría (2017) respectively, though possessing some similarities to CRL, represents a more evolved and progressive model than that of CRL. In both approaches, educators operate through critical perspectives on race, ethnicity, class, and gender and work in partnership with culturally and linguistically diverse families and community members. However, while CRL seeks to merely affirm students’ identities and to redesign organizational structures to create schooling environments that are inclusive and empowering for minoritized students and their families, CSP aims to ensure the survival of the languages and cultures of culturally and linguistically diverse students’ and their families by supporting and sustaining their longstanding and shifting languages, literacies, and cultural practices. Moreover, CSP does not strive for inclusion in, but transformation of schooling environments that have

historically perpetuated White, middle-class, monolingual and monocultural norms. Culturally sustaining pedagogies thus represent a better approach to cultivating family-school-community engagement or partnerships with Indigenous communities and to decolonize education.

Culturally Sustaining/Revitalizing

Building on Paris's (2012) and Paris and Alim's (2014, 2017) conception of culturally sustaining pedagogy, CSRP is an approach that is specifically "designed to address the sociohistorical and contemporary contexts of Native American schooling" (McCarty & Lee, 2014, p. 103). While CSP is an appropriate framework for many communities of color, it does not fully account for the unique experiences and position of Indigenous peoples in settler-colonial states. Though Indigenous people face many of the same challenges as other minoritized groups, their experiences "have been and are profoundly shaped by a unique relationship with the federal government," and their status as Tribal sovereigns (Lee & McCarty, 2017, p. 61). Tribal sovereignty is the right of Indigenous people to self-government, self-education, and self-determination, including "the right to linguistic and cultural expression according to local languages and norms" (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002, p. 284). Citing Brayboy (2005), Lee and McCarty (2017) argue that "Indigenous peoples' desire for Tribal sovereignty are interlaced with ongoing legacies of colonization, ethnicide and linguicide" (p. 62). They thus contend for pedagogies in schools serving Indigenous students that are not just sustaining, but revitalizing, given the fact that "colonial schooling has been the crucible in which" contested desires for tribal sovereignty "have been molded, impacting Native peoples in

ways that have separated their identities from their languages, lands, and worldviews” (p. 62).

Culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy recognizes the unique status of Native Peoples as those with Tribal and educational sovereignty, and the need for pedagogies that are both sustaining and revitalizing in Indigenous contexts. As an expression of educational sovereignty, a status in which Native communities have control over their language and cultural reclamation projects enacted in institutions of education and other spaces (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; McCarty & Lee, 2014; Moll & Ruiz, 2005), CSRP comprises three components: (1) confronting asymmetrical power relations and transforming legacies of colonization; (2) reclaiming and revitalizing all that has been disrupted and displaced by colonization (language, culture, religion, etc.); and (3) community-based accountability (McCarty & Lee, 2014).

Though CSRP is a framework by and for Indigenous peoples that is community-based and community-driven, educators are included in the work to revitalize and sustain Indigenous languages and cultures. Citing McCarty and Lee (2014), Jester (2017) described CSRP as an “education approach grounded in tribal education sovereignty that engages with Indigenous communities in their fight for ‘cultural and linguistic survival’” (p. 129). In his article titled “Preparing Culturally Sustaining/Revitalizing Educators,” Jester (2017) noted that the current crisis and assault on Indigenous languages and cultural practices serves as a graphic representation of asymmetrical power relations and “legacies of colonization that need to be transformed, reclaimed, and revitalized” (p. 142). Reporting on findings and implications from his qualitative study of the cross-cultural experiences of 60 preservice interns serving in schools located in Alaskan Native

villages, Jester (2017) proposed steps that educators could take to address asymmetrical power relations and legacies of colonization and to support Indigenous communities in the revitalization of their languages and culture, including:

1. Sharing power with Indigenous families and community members and reducing hierarchies;
2. Challenging the typical structures and rules of engagement in schools;
3. Supporting the inclusions of Indigenous language and culture in curriculum and instruction;
4. Having Indigenous parents serve as instructors and mentors for teachers, and
5. Learning the language of the Indigenous community where they serve.

Jester also emphasized the importance of educators having “conceptual and content knowledge that will allow them to view current educational practices in light of colonization and Indigenous Peoples’ inherent right to self-determination” through required readings (p. 142).

Whereas Jester’s work entailed preparing mainly White preservice teachers (over 90%) to be culturally sustaining/revitalizing educators, Vinlove (2017) engaged in similar work with a combination of Alaska Native (1/3 of the cohort) and non-Native pre-service teachers but with a greater focus on cultivating culturally sustaining practices in the Alaska Native teachers. Vinlove believed that in order to support and sustain both the heritage or traditional knowledge and evolving/living, community-based practices of Indigenous students and their communities, educators must gather this information at the local level and from the communities themselves. It is not something that can be simply provided in a prepackaged or premade curriculum or book. Vinlove thus agrees with

Jester that educators must have content and context knowledge; however, they differ slightly in their articulations of how this knowledge should (or could) be obtained (books vs. community members).

A final empirical example that explicates the role of educators in CSRP emphasized the need for educators to adopt an “inward gaze” to “examine current practices and seek out pedagogies that support Indigenous education” (Roth, 2017, p. 170). Roth (2017) believed that the “unexamined practices by Western teachers can unknowingly perpetuate ‘ongoing legacies of colonization, ethnocide, and linguicide’” (Roth, p. 169 citing McCarty & Lee, 2014, p. 103). Therefore, Roth argued that teachers must first examine their own worldviews and unlearn what they think they know about school in order to be culturally sustaining in their practices. Furthermore, like Vinlove (2017), Roth advocated for “Indigenous culture bearers” from the community to partner with educators in and out of the classroom” (p. 181) as a way of building their knowledge and capacity to work with Indigenous students and their families.

As noted, CRL is a framework for leaders who operate through critical lenses to foster inclusive and empowering school environments for minoritized students and their families, and CSP has been used as a framework for critically conscious leaders and educators to support and sustain the languages and cultures of linguistically and culturally diverse students and their families while also transforming existing school structures and practices based in White, middle-class values and norms. In contrast, CSRP “serves the needs of Indigenous communities as defined by those communities” and positions Indigenous peoples as directors and determiners of their own destiny (McCarty & Lee, 2014, p. 103). Like CSP, CSRP represents a dynamic framework that is not about

inclusion in, but transformation of the enduring effects of colonial education. However, CSRP goes further than CSP in its focus on revitalizing along with sustaining to ensure the longevity of the Indigenous identity and way of life. Culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy represents the best approach for disrupting colonial education and achieving a family-school-community engagement or partnership model most closely aligned with the beliefs, values, and desires of Indigenous families and community members as expressed in the research literature.

Conclusion

In this chapter, culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014, 2017) and culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy (McCarty & Lee, 2014, 2017) have been presented as approaches with the potential of decolonizing education in schools serving Indigenous students. According to Coulter and Jimenez-Silva (2017), quests towards CSP and CSRP are obstructed by “overtly restrictive education and language policies” and “inherently racist and colonial aspects of schools” or “endemic and institutional racism” (p. 12, 14). They argue that CSP and CSRP practices can only be achieved when all aspects of the educational system are decolonized, including policies, curricula, and educators. However, they have identified several overarching characteristics of CSP and CSRP that make it possible to re/claim and decolonize the educational system. First, both approaches require that a critical stance be taken against “White, middle class mainstream norms” (p. 14) that persist in schools. Second, citing McCarty and Lee (2014), Coulter and Jimenez-Silva argue that efforts “must be community-driven – local cultural communities must be the driving force in articulating the ways in which ways of knowing, epistemologies, languages, and traditions will

manifest in the classroom” (2017, p. 14). In their opinion, “community members have a huge stake in classrooms – their children! – and therefore must be the center of decision-making at all levels” (p. 15). The last overarching characteristic is that CSP and CRSP require a “gaze inward” (Paris & Alim, 2014), or the act of “indigenizing/decolonizing/identifying” oneself “within culturally sustaining and revitalizing processes” (p. 15). Elaborating on the notion of “gazing inward” and speaking from an Indigenous perspective, John-Shields (2017) citing Dei (2011), explicated the “importance of decolonizing yourself to find yourself and to include your way of being into your work/education” (p. 124). Applying the practice of gazing inward to Western teachers, Roth emphasized the importance of White teachers taking the time to closely examine their practices to become aware of ways that they may be perpetuating “ongoing legacies of colonization, ethnocide and linguicide” and to identify ways that they can support Indigenous education (Roth, 2017 citing McCarty & Lee, 2014, p. 103).

Having established that the primary purpose of family-school-community engagement in Indigenous contexts should be to decolonize education, culturally sustaining and culturally sustaining/revitalizing beliefs and practices by school-based institutional actors are essential to achieving this goal. Teachers and administrators must adopt critical stances towards the White, middle-class norms that dominate schools; believe in and actively support Indigenous families and community members having a dominant role and say in all matters that concern their child(ren)’s education; and practice the important discipline of gazing inwards. The literature reviewed in this dissertation suggests that the practices of most educators are more in line with traditional or status quo and culturally responsive frameworks.

The next chapter provides a detailed description of the decolonizing methodology and Indigenous protocols that are used in this dissertation. The chapter also introduces the context and participants of this study.

Chapter Four: Methodology

In conducting research, the explicitness of our choices and the beliefs that influence them sends a purposeful message about who we are as researchers. (Kovach, 200, p. 42)

Rather than chasing aims of objectivity, we encourage researchers to take up a stance of objection, one that will interrogate power and privilege, and trace the legacies and enactment of settler colonialism in everyday life....refusing the god-gaze of the objective knower, refusing to draw conclusions about communities—choosing to write instead about power in the form of institutions, policy, and research itself.

(Tuck & Yang, 2014, pp. 814 & 815)

Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behaviours 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 a language that can be understood...ensuring that research reaches the people who have helped make it. (Smith, 2012, p. 16)

Introduction

The above quotes by Indigenous scholars offer several pertinent points about Indigenous research methodologies that are adhered to in this dissertation. First, research choices are not disembodied from the researcher. Research questions, choices in research design, methodology, and methods emanate from the beliefs and worldview of the researcher. Agreeing with the Indigenous protocols of subjectivity and relationality which entails self-location in research at the outset, I shared my positionality and the origin of my research questions in the concluding section of the first chapter of this

dissertation. Second, Tuck and Yang (2014) argued, “objectivity” is code for power (p. 812) and should be objected. Tuck and Yang call for pedagogies of refusal, refusing to play the part of an “objective knower” and instead suggest engaging in system-focused research which interrogates power and privilege. Inspired by Tuck and Yang’s call for pedagogies of refusal in qualitative research, this chapter provides a rationale for this approach to research that is used in this dissertation. Next, cultural protocols are an integral part of Indigenous methodologies and should be made explicit throughout the research. The Indigenous cultural protocols of relationality and relational accountability, a decolonizing research design enacted through pedagogies of refusal, and the use of Indigenous methods such as talking circles and individual (semi)un-structured conversations were utilized in this dissertation and will be discussed in this chapter. Last and not least, the final quote emphasizes the importance of cultural protocols in the dissemination of the research, ensuring that the research culminates in a presentation or representation of findings and is returned to research participants in language that is accessible or easily understood. This last step ensures relational accountability and is thus an aim of this research.

The first three chapters introduced the research focus and purpose, provided a rationale for the study, offered a review and analysis of relevant literature, and described the theoretical frameworks that are used in this dissertation. The review of literature in Chapter Two served to identify gaps in previous studies, provided evidence for this study’s significance, inspired the research questions that were explored in this present study, supported the theoretical frameworks, and informed the methodology that was used to carry out this study and answer the research questions. This chapter provides a

detailed description of the methodology that was used to explore the research topic (family-school-community engagement in and a district serving Indigenous students and families) and the aforementioned research questions:

1. How do Indigenous family and community members conceptualize family and community engagement or partnerships with/in schools, and in what ways have Indigenous family and community members engaged and/or partnered with district schools and their staff in the past and present?
 - a. What are Indigenous family and community members' educational priorities for their children?
2. What are district teachers' and administrators' conceptualizations of and practices concerning family-school-community engagement or partnerships in general and particularly as it relates to Indigenous families and community members?
 - a. In what ways have they engaged and/or partnered with Indigenous families and community members in the past and present and what does this reveal about their priorities?
3. In what ways, if at all, are district teachers' and administrators' priorities and practices aligned with and accountable to the priorities and expectations of Native families and community members?
 - a. Are family-school-community engagement and/or partnership practices in the district culturally sustaining/revitalizing? If so, how?

This chapter begins with a discussion of the research design and a rationale for the research approaches. Second, I introduce the context, participants, and participant

selection procedure along with a discussion of my insider/outsider status. I next discuss data collection and data analysis methods. Lastly, I describe the context or place of this study, including town and school history which held significant and personal meaning for members of the Wampanoag Tribe that participated in this study and which district educators identified as a barrier to engagement.

Study Design and Methodological Approach

This dissertation is a qualitative, exploratory case study (Cresswell, 2002; Hartley 2004; Yin, 1981) of family-school-community engagement and partnerships in a small New England school district. A case study has been an ideal design for exploring this topic because it has allowed for a holistic and in-depth understanding of the contemporary phenomenon (conceptualizations and practices pertaining to family and community engagement with/in schools) within its context (a school district and town that are home to a federally recognized Tribe) (Cresswell, 2002; Hartley 2004; Yin, 1981). Furthermore, case studies are, by design, exploratory and serve to “provide an analysis of the context and processes which illuminate the theoretical issue being studied” (Hartley, 2004, p. 323). A case study methodology has allowed me to engage in an in-depth exploration of my topic and acquire a deep understanding of the phenomenon and context using a decolonizing lens and culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogies as a theoretical framework while identifying implications for the local context.

This case study was conducted using various data sources and data collection methods including Indigenous methodologies and protocols. More traditional methods included document analysis, participant observation, and individual semi-structured interviews. Moreover, I utilized Indigenous methodologies such as talking circles and

individual-semi-structured conversations. Indigenous protocols entailed a relational approach to research that included relationality - locating myself in the research at the outset, and practicing relational accountability throughout every stage of the research. Lastly, I explored this topic using a decolonizing lens and the theoretical frameworks - culturally responsive leadership (Johnson, 2014), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2014), and culturally sustaining/ revitalizing pedagogy (McCarty & Lee, 2014) - with the goal of engaging in research that is “answerable” or accountable to the participants, their context, knowledge circulated within that context, and our collective learning which will hopefully lead to transformation (Patel, 2016).

Rationale for Research Approach

Western scientific research must be critiqued and resisted as a “mechanism of colonization,” particularly as it relates to Indigenous peoples (Aveling, 2013). Indigenous scholars and non-Indigenous writers and supporters of Indigenous scholarship have called for the decolonization of research, pedagogies of refusal, relationality, relational accountability, answerability, and a consideration of Indigenous ways of knowing in the cultivation of research topics and methodologies in research done on, with, and for Indigenous communities (Aveling, 2013; Cochran et al., 2008; Koster et al., 2012; Patel, 2016; Tuck & Yang, 2014; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Some research scholars believe that for Indigenous research to be truly decolonizing, it must be carried out by Indigenous researchers (Aveling, 2013), deviate from dominant Western paradigms, and utilize Indigenous paradigms and methodologies (Aveling, 2013; Cochran et al., 2008; Koster et al., 2012; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Non-Indigenous researchers, particularly those of European descent, have ways of being,

knowing and doing that “emanate from a position of white privilege, and are always and already historically and culturally specific” (Aveling, 2013, p. 210). The propensity of researchers to use Western “ways of knowing” to interpret Indigenous knowledge serves to preserve colonial practices through the exploitation and misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples (Cochran et al., 2008; Koster et al., 2012). Western paradigms perpetuate the myth that Indigenous peoples are “problems” to be solved or passive “objects” in need of assistance from outside experts (Cochran et al., 2008). Furthermore, methodology influences research outcomes, which in turn may inform policy and practices. It is thus essential that Indigenous research methodologies be used to ascertain and interpret Indigenous knowledge and perspectives as a means of improving policy and practice within Indigenous contexts (Kovach, 2009).

Context

Wampum Public Schools in the town of Wampum, both pseudonyms, served as the context of this study. As noted in Chapter One, Wampum is home to the Wampum Wampanoag Tribe, who currently include 2,600 enrolled citizens, are the original inhabitants of the land and have lived and practiced their culture in the area for over 12,000 years. Wampum Public Schools has three schools, one lower elementary school, one upper elementary school, and a combined middle/high school. The district comprises 1,500 students, 22% of whom are students of color who, ordered from largest to smallest in terms of student population, identify as Native American, mixed raced, Latinx, African American, and Asian. Native students represent the largest group of students of color at 6.5%. Furthermore, WPS has the largest percentage of Native students than any other district in the state. This percentage is significant and non-typical of US school districts

in which Native students are usually not present or represent an insignificant minority. Nationally, Indigenous students account for roughly 1% of the total public-school enrollment (Clarren, 2017; Freeman & Fox, 2005). Lastly, though students of color comprise 22% of the student population in Wampum Public Schools, staff of color represent less than 1%. There is one Wampanoag administrator in the district and one Wampanoag paraprofessional.

Participants

In total there were 30 people who were participants in this study: 13 Indigenous parents and community members, two affiliates of the Tribe, and 15 White educators. The 15 family and community members were comprised of: six parents with children in the Wampum Public Schools, seven community members, a community Clan Mother, and a former Tribal chief. Most of the community members were also leaders in the town who work for the Tribal government in various roles, and/or the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project (WLRP) (which will be discussed at the end of this chapter), and/or the school district. Among the 13 Indigenous participants, ten are Wampanoag, one is Nipmuc and Cherokee, one is Lakota Sioux, and one is Tuscarora and Ayden. Most of the Native participants are biracial. The majority identified as Native and Black as a result of having a parent who is African American, Cape Verdean, or from one of the Caribbean islands. Intermarrying with people of African ancestry was common among Northeastern tribes, including the Wampanoag, due to ports, maritime trade, and whaling in New England which brought Natives and Africans together (Cooper, 2014).

The two affiliates of the Tribe are a biracial (Jamaican and White) woman who works for WLRP, is married to a Wampanoag man and has two Wampanoag children; and a White man who previously served as a high school teacher in a nearby town and was hired by the Tribe to work in the Indian Education program at the middle/high school in Wampum. The Indian Education Program and WLRP will be described in detail at the end of this chapter and in the findings chapters that follow.

On the District side, nine White teachers participated in the study and included five lower elementary school teachers, two upper elementary school teachers, and two teachers from the middle/high school. There were also six White administrators who served as participants in this study, two district level administrators and four building administrators (at least one from each building).

Brief biographies or autobiographies and, in most cases, a combination of biographical and autobiographical descriptions of each participant are included at the beginning of the findings chapters for the Tribe and district educators. Tables 3 and 4 provide a snapshot of all of the participants and their racial and cultural background and their status or role in the district and/or town.

Table 3: Indigenous Family and Community Members

Participants	Racial/Cultural Background			Parents		Community Members		
	Native	Black	White	Child/ren in WPS	Child/ren in other Schools	Tribe	WLRP	School District
Absolom Attiquin	Wamp.	X		X				
Andrew	Tuscarora and Ayden	X				X		
Athena	Wamp.	X		X				
Camille	Wamp.		X					X
Clan Mother JoAnne	Wamp.					X		
Clara	Wamp.	X						
Danielle	Lakota						X	
Debby	Wamp.			X		X		
Elder Eddie	Wamp.					X		
Joseph			X			X		
Leto	Wamp.	X		X				X
Michelle	Nipmuc & Cherokee	X		X				
Nathalie	Wamp.		X		X		X	
Nora	Wamp		X		X			
Trena		X	X	X			X	

Table 4: District Teachers and Administrators

Participants	Ties to Wampum			Administrator	Teacher		
	Resident	Attended WPS	Children attend/ed WPS		Lower Elem. School	Upper Elem. School	Middle/High School
Allie						X	
Barbara	X		X		X		
Charlie							X
Elizabeth				X			
Ester	X		X	X			
Jacob				X			
James				X			
Jennifer					X		
Jessica	X	X			X		
Kathy	X		X		X		
Kimberly	X					X	
Luke				X			
Robyn	X		X				
Roxanne	X		X		X		
Thelma	X						X

Context and Participant Selection

Purposive, convenience and snowball sampling were used to identify the school district and to recruit Indigenous family and community members as well as teachers and administrators. Purposive sampling helped to ensure an information rich context and

participants (Patton, 1990), and, fortunately, the information rich context happened to be in a convenient location in order to fulfill my priority of engaging in research that is relational, accountable, and answerable. Information rich participants were considered and selected as those who fit the following descriptions:

1. Were Indigenous parents who had children in WPS and/or Indigenous community members who were familiar with, had previously worked with, or who were currently working with/in the public schools
2. Were district or school administrators and teachers
3. Could contribute to conversations about past and present practices in the district and/or schools pertaining to family-school-community engagement in general and specifically relating to Indigenous families and communities.

Most of the educators were identified during my time as a participant observer in the district and most of the participants from the Native community were identified using snowball sampling.

Gaining Access through Informed Consent

In the second edition of her book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) stressed that negotiating entry into a community can be a daunting and time-consuming task. She notes that a common practice in many Indigenous communities is to approach Elders first and to recognize that consent must be constantly negotiated. She shared,

Consent is not so much given for a project or specific set of questions, but for a person, for their credibility. 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. (Smith, 2012, p. 137)

I was very fortunate and successful at the outset of this study and throughout the research process gaining entry in both Tribal and district spaces and with participants from both sides. Negotiating entry into the Tribal community and the School community was not a “daunting” or “time-consuming” task for me as Smith and several of my professors and colleagues warned that it might be.

In the process of preparing for this research and looking for a location that could serve as its context, Wampum and the Wampanoag Tribe were recommended by three of my dissertation committee members who knew and had worked with Nora, a graduate of my program and also a member of the Wampum Wampanoag Tribe. One of my committee members introduced me to Nora via email and shortly after, we had a conversation using Skype. I shared an early draft of my dissertation pre-proposal with Nora prior to our conversation via Skype. My goal for this initial conversation with Nora was to explain myself or locate myself in the research, to gain her permission to proceed, and to ask her to connect me with other Tribal leader or culture bearers, including Elders, to gain consent from the broader Tribal community. These connections were made at a later date; however, Nora immediately connected me to the district superintendent (via email) who she had previously worked with, a blessing that I was not expecting. The superintendent responded immediately and invited me to propose my study to district and school administrators at one of their monthly meetings.

I met with administrators in the spring of 2017 and they welcomed me to conduct my study in their district and schools. As noted in Chapters One and Three, during this

initial meeting with district and school administrators, they admitted to a history of failure in engaging Indigenous families and revealed that family and community engagement, particularly as it pertained to Indigenous families, had recently become a district priority. They not only accepted my proposal to conduct my dissertation research in their district, they also welcomed me to complete my practicum hours for principal licensure in their district (a certification I was working on at the time and needed to complete during the same year of data collection). I had not gone into the meeting planning to request permission to complete my practicum hours in the district. In fact, I had already met with another principal and was planning to complete my hours at her urban middle school closer to my home. However, during my meeting with WPS administrators, one of them asked if I planned to do activities with Native families to engage them. In response, I shared that I needed to complete 300 hours of leadership experiences for principal licensure and that I could potentially complete it in their district. This was met with approval and resulted in me serving as an intern in the lower elementary school. This role in the district was a blessing and allowed me to more easily engage in participant observation, something I had already planned to do, mainly in the lower elementary school, but also in the other two schools in the district through after school meetings and events.

As I shared at the beginning of this section and evident in the previous two paragraphs, negotiating entry into the Tribe and district communities was mainly a smooth process for me. I was blessed to have individuals, including committee members and Nora, who could vouch for my character at the outset of the study which was helpful gaining initial entry into the Tribe and school district communities. Moreover, my

decision to spend seven months in the district as a participant observer before conducting individual semi-structured conversations and interviews allowed me to develop relationships with many of the participants and/or for them to develop familiarity with me. These participants, in turn, recommended other participants and, in most cases, introduced me to them or alerted them that I would be reaching out to ask them to participate. I suspect that participants who recommended and connected me to others also vouched for me. I say this because every person, whether from the Tribal community or the school district community, that I asked to participate, said, “yes.” Only one participant from the school district community later declined to participate after realizing that my focus was Native families and community members. Moreover, I had several conversations over the phone with a potential Native participant who wanted to participate but we were never able to find a convenient time to meet for a face-to-face individual semi-structured conversation, which was part of my methodology and how I determined to engage in all conversations and interviews.

There was only one case in which negotiating entry was difficult and time-consuming and that was with Elder Eddy who I called on many occasions and either got his voicemail or him pretending to be his brother and claiming that “Eddy” was out of town. After several months of this, he eventually called me back (as himself) after listening to one of my voice messages which apparently peaked his interest. After a few more phone calls and playing phone tag, we were finally able to set a day and time to meet at his home for a few hours where he gave me a history lesson about Wampum and the Wampanoag Tribe. So, persistence was another factor that allowed me to gain entry.

Yet another factor that may have contributed to me being able to gain easy entrance and acceptance into the Tribal community was the fact that many Wampanoag Tribal members and the Native people from other Tribes who live in Wampum, are mixed race or have Black ancestors. On several occasions in which I visited the Wampanoag Tribal government building, Tribal members asked if I was Wampanoag and said that I looked like I could be.

A final factor that allowed me to gain easy and quick access to both the Tribal community and the school district was the fact that neither had its own institutional review board (IRB). All Tribal members who participated in this study gave a verbal consent and signed informed consent forms. Also, because Boston College's IRB required it, I requested and the superintendent wrote a letter granting me permission to conduct this study in the school district. Moreover, all district educators who participated in this study signed informed consent forms. I both explained and gave all participants the opportunity to read through the informed consent form and to ask questions. The consent forms promised participants that their identity and that of the town and school district would be protected through the use of pseudonyms in the dissertation and any future publications. Participants were also informed that though every effort would be made to ensure their anonymity, this could not be guaranteed depending on their role in the district and the nature of talking circles. Lastly, out of respect for the Tribe and their legacy in the community, and in response to their request to be named, I chose to refer to them by their Nation name while trying my best to protect their specific Tribe and the school district by using the pseudonym "Wampum."

Examination of My Insider/Outsider Status

I recognize that my positionalities as an African American female, Ph.D. student and researcher, and educator who is not from the community, positioned me as an outsider in the town and district. Moreover, my decision to serve as an intern in one of the district schools to complete my practicum hours for principal licensure had the potential of further complicating my presence in the district in the eyes of Indigenous family and community members and educators alike. It was indeed risky to do so and could have resulted in educators and families alike not wanting to participate in my study.

Being connected to the academy through my role as a Ph.D. student and researcher, along with my role in the district as a principal intern could have potentially discouraged Indigenous families and community members from saying yes to my request for their participation in my research due to a history of victimization against Indigenous communities by non-Indigenous educators and school leaders, as well as researchers who have mainly been extractive and exploitative in their research motives and methods. My status as an intern and researcher in the school district also had the potential of educators in the district perceiving me as an outsider. At the same time, I recognized that my role as an intern in the district and as a former elementary and secondary teacher, which I made known in an email introduction to the WPS staff, could elevate me to the status of an insider in the eyes of educators.

I believe that my weekly presence in the district over the course of the school year, which included full days at the lower elementary school where I served my practicum hours and attendance at school, district, and community events and activities, helped to mitigate concerns about my research work and allowed me to gain the trust and

acceptance of educators and some Indigenous family and community members whom I later asked to participate in my study. In wanting to conduct research in “a good way” (Kovach, 2009) and engage in research which is answerable and gives back, I strove to remain accountable to all participants in my study, including the teachers and administrators. The relationships that I established and the commitments that I made with district and school staff through my internship compelled me to engage in research that not only benefited Indigenous families and communities, but also the local school district and their educators. So, Wilson’s (2008) call for relationality and relational accountability in Indigenous research methodology and methods was also applied to the institutional actors (teachers and administrators) in this study in an effort to be accountable and answerable to all of my relations.

I maintained relationality and relational accountability with participants from the Native community in the following ways.

1. Asking two Tribal Elders and two community leaders for permission to conduct my study in Wampur and with a focus on Indigenous families and communities.
2. Asking Tribal leaders for permission throughout the research process before continuing to the next stage.
3. Sharing my interview protocol with two Tribal Elders and two community leaders and asking for and implementing their feedback, including what should be changed, removed, and added.
4. Engaging in informal conversations with participants in person and via phone calls to develop relationships with them before formally asking them to participate in the study.

5. Using an object that symbolized how I see myself and where I am from to introduce myself to participants, and having them do the same, during our individual semi-structured conversations and interviews as a way of launching the conversations.
6. Giving each participant their interview transcript(s) and asking them to review it and to share any corrections and/or concerns.
7. Meeting with individual participants to share findings and get their feedback.
8. Sharing findings from a two-page handout with Native parents during a talking circle and asking for their responses, feedback, and any additional comments.

Similarly, I maintained relationality and relational accountability with educators in the following ways.

1. Asking district and school administrators for permission to conduct my study in their district and schools.
2. Asking administrators for permission throughout the research process before continuing to the next stage.
3. Engaging in informal conversations with educators to develop relationships with them before formally asking them to participate in the study.
4. Using an object that symbolized how I see myself and where I am from to introduce myself to participants, and having them do the same, during our individual semi-structured conversations and interviews as a way of launching the conversations.
5. Giving each participant their interview transcript(s) and asking them to review it and to share any corrections and/or concerns.

6. Sharing findings from a two-page handout with teachers during a talking circle and asking for their responses, feedback, and any additional comments.
7. Meeting with district and school administrators during one of their monthly meetings to share findings from an eight page report that I created for them.

The next section describes the data collection procedures and sources that were used for this dissertation. Table 5 depicts the data sources and data collection methods that were used to answer each research question.

Table 5: Data Sources and Research Questions

Research Questions	Data Sources/Data Collection Method
1. How do Indigenous family and community members conceptualize family and community engagement or partnerships with/in schools, and in what ways have Indigenous family and community members engaged and/or partnered with district schools and their staff in the past and present? What are Indigenous family and community members' educational priorities for their children?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual semi-structured interviews and conversations • Talking circle with parents • Participant observation fieldnotes of parent and partnership meetings • Documents analysis (meeting agendas, town reports, organizational websites, project abstracts)
2. What are district teachers' and administrators' conceptualizations of and practices concerning family-school-community engagement or partnerships in general and particularly as it relates to Indigenous families and community members? In what ways have they engaged and/or partnered with Indigenous families and community members in the past and present and what does this reveal about their priorities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual semi-structured interviews and conversations • Talking circle with teachers • Participant observation fieldnotes of parent and partnership meetings, back to school community picnic, and informal conversation with educators

3. In what ways, if at all, are district teachers' and administrators' priorities and practices aligned with and accountable to the priorities and expectations of Native families and community members? Are family-school-community engagement and/or partnership practices in the district culturally sustaining/revitalizing? If so, how?

- Individual semi-structured interviews and conversations
- Talking circles with parents and teachers
- Participant observation fieldnotes of partnership meetings

Data Sources and Collection Procedures

This exploratory case study adhered to Indigenous protocols and privileged Indigenous methodologies in data gathering. To honor the oral traditions of Indigenous peoples, narratives or stories served as essential sources of data gathered through semi-structured conversations and talking circles and are shared in long quotes and boxed in narratives, which are all direct quotes from the participants, throughout the findings chapters. Conversational methods have an open-ended structure that show respect for participants' stories (Kovach, 2009). Conversation and sharing or talking circles are an open-ended method that allows for more flexibility and free and open participation, deviating from traditional Western methods of interviews and focus groups which inhibit the free flow of conversation and are not apropos for fostering stories (Kovach, 2009). Kovach suggests the use of "unstructured conversations" or "unstructured interviews" as a method in research involving Indigenous people because it adheres to Indigenous ways of knowing and doing by allowing participants to share their stories or experiences on their own terms. However, I chose to use, what I call, semi-structured conversations which allowed flexibility while at the same time providing some structure to ensure that the overall goals of the research were met. Moreover, by using "semi-structured," I followed in the path of many Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars who have used semi-structured interviews as a data collection method in research on the topic of family-

school-community engagement in Indigenous contexts and in other research involving Indigenous participants. However, by using the term conversation and designing my semi-structured conversation protocols to include tangible (talking) objects and questions that are intended to encourage stories and a sharing of one's experiences, I was able to create an environment in which participants appeared more comfortable. In the process of conducting semi-structured conversations, I noticed that many of my Native participants naturally embraced and engaged freely in this conversational method, evident through our back and forth exchange that was guided, not dictated by my questions. On the other hand, most of the educators, despite my efforts to make our time together more relational and conversational through the use of artifacts or symbolic objects (representation of who they are and where they are from) that I asked them to bring and share (and through my own sharing of my symbolic object) and through the types of questions that were intended to garner stories and to elicit conversation, they naturally gravitated towards an interviewer and interviewee relationship. As a result, nearly half of the semi-structure conversations became semi-structured interviews, which required me to adjust my methodology to account for this.

While semi-structured conversations and interviews were carried out with individual participants, talking circles involved groups of participants. Talking circles involve people sitting in a circle and passing around a sacred object following the direction of the sun (Running Wolf & Rickard, 2003; Wilson, 2008). The holder of the object is encouraged to speak "from the heart" (Wilson & Wilson, 2000) uninterrupted, and "everyone has an equal chance to speak and be heard" (Wilson, 2008, p. 41). All participants have the opportunity to share their stories and are not restricted in the amount

of time that they have to share (Kovach, 2009; Running Wolf & Rickard, 2003; Wilson, 2008). Typically, a complete talking circle has four rounds (Wilson & Wilson, 2000), may involve food, and are often three times the length of focus groups (Kovach, 2009). The structure (circular format) and strict order (participant speak one at a time, in order, and uninterrupted) of talking circles positions all participants, including the facilitator, as equals, and ensures that every participant has the opportunity to speak and to do so freely. The structure and order of talking circles distinguishes them from focus groups which may or may not be conducted in a circle and which do not guarantee that all participants will have the opportunity to speak and to do so freely. Interestingly, teachers in this study embraced and followed more strictly the format of talking circles, while the Native parents who participated, started off following the order but eventually deviated and chimed in despite not having the talking object and despite it not being their turn.

Document analysis and participant observation served as initial sources of data. According to Wilson (2008), “traditional Indigenous research emphasizes learning by watching and doing” and “participant observation is a term used for this watching and doing in a scientific manner” (p. 40). Participant observation is an approach that aims to “gain a closeness or familiarity with a group, through taking part in their day-to-day activities over a long period of time” (Wilson, 2008, p. 40). Other scholars have defined participant observation as “the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study” (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 79) and the “process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting” (Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte, 1999, p. 91). The key to effective participant observation is establishing a rapport with

community members and being able to blend into the community in such a way that members will act naturally and speak freely (Bernard, 1994).

Document Analysis

I conducted document analyses, using decolonizing and culturally sustaining/revitalizing frameworks as a frame of analysis. I reviewed and analyzed school mission/vision statements; district and school documents describing family and community engagement policies and/or initiatives; relevant school parent teacher organization notes; notes from the district-Wampanoag Tribe partnership; notes from the Indian Education Parent Committee meeting; and local, state, and national news articles about the Tribe and school district. These were used to determine how schools in the district are promoting and practicing family and community engagement, whether or not Indigenous families and communities are explicitly named or considered in district and school policies, and families' perceptions of family and community engagement policies and practices.

Participant Observation

Participant observation entailed spending two to three days per week over the course of the 2017-2018 school year in the lower elementary school, where I served as an intern, observing and participating in various administrative activities. Additionally, during this same time frame, I attended afterschool events in the district one to two times per week. I took fieldnotes at the end of each day documenting things that were relevant to this dissertation and my research questions, including: (1) my experience negotiating entry/gaining access to conduct my study in the Tribal and district communities; (2) my observations of physical spaces and activities that were designed and/or planned to

facilitate interactions between staff and families and/or engage families and/or community members; (3) my observations of interactions between staff, families, and community members; (4) summaries of informal conversations that I had with various parents, community members, and staff throughout the district related to family and community engagement; and (5) observations of what was being promoted and advertised throughout the district in terms of flyers, murals, bulletin boards, and student work to understand the environment and factors that may encourage or inhibit family and community engagement. Also, during this time, I engaged in many informal conversations with school and district staff as well as Indigenous family and community members and recorded relevant details from these conversations to identify and keep track of individuals who identified themselves or named others as information rich individuals who might serve as participants for this study.

Semi-Structured Conversations and Interviews

I conducted over 40 individual semi-structured conversations and interviews with 15 Indigenous parents and community members and 15 district teachers and administrators. Semi-structured conversations and interviews were conducted between March and June of 2018. Most semi-structured conversations and interviews with district teachers and administrators took place in their classrooms or school or district offices. I met with one administrator at a local coffee shop. My conversations and interviews with Indigenous family and community members took place in various places including the Indian Education room at the middle/high school; offices in the Tribal government building, one of WLRP's office spaces; local restaurants; outdoors; and in a reserved room at the local Wampum library.

All participants were asked ahead of time to bring an object that represents who they are and/or where they are from. I also brought an object. The symbolic objects were used to launch the individual semi-structured conversations and interviews, as a way to introduce ourselves to one another, and to get participants to think about and connect their identity to a place or location, something that is particularly significant for Indigenous peoples.

As noted, I conducted individual semi-structured conversations with approximately 15 Indigenous family and community members. Questions from the semi-structured conversation/interview protocol focused on four domains: (1) background information that required participants to share who they are, where they are from, and their schooling experiences; (2) their educational priorities for their children; (3) their conceptualizations of family and community engagement in or with schools; and (4) how they have engaged in the schools and with district educators in the past and present. See Appendix A for the semi-structured conversation/interview protocol for Indigenous family and community members that includes the full list of questions.

Individual semi-structured conversations and interviews were conducted with 15 teachers and administrators. Questions from the semi-structured conversation/interview protocol for district teachers and administrators focused on three domains: (1) background information that required educators to share who they are, where they are from, and what brought them to the district; (2) their conceptualizations of family-school-community engagement in general and particularly as it concerns Indigenous family and community members; and (3) past and present family-school-community engagement

practices in the district. See Appendix B for the semi-structured conversation protocol for district and school staff that includes the full list of questions.

Talking Circles

Finally, I conducted a talking circle with four teachers in November 2018 and another talking circle with five Native parents in December 2018. The talking circle with teachers took place in Jessica's classroom while the talking circle with Indigenous parents took place in one of the office spaces rented by WLRP. As noted earlier, the talking circles served as a way for me to share findings, hear participants' feedback and responses, and collect additional data. See Appendix C for the Indigenous family and community members' talking circle protocol and Appendix D for the district and school staff talking circle protocol.

Data Analysis

Wilson (2008) noted in his book *Research is Ceremony* that "The method or style of analysis needs to complement the methods of data collection in order for the research to make any sense" (p. 119). As I shared in this chapter, I used Indigenous methodologies and protocols and decolonizing frameworks to carry out this research. I thus tried my best to find and use a data analysis method that would complement the way this research was conducted. Wilson's (2008) notion of intuitive logic was the closest method of analysis that complemented my data collection methods. However, because of the large amount of data that I collected and due to my own lack of knowledge of and experience in non Western ways of analyzing data, I was not comfortable or confident enough to use it as a stand-alone method of analysis. So, I followed the lead of some Indigenous scholars by using a mixed method approach to data analysis that included

Wilson's (2008) intuitive logic and a variation of Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis.

According to Wilson (2008), intuitive logic, unlike linear logic, does not break data down into smaller, more manageable parts and then "put it all back together in a logical order...to discover any rules or laws that may be applied to the whole" (p. 119). Intuitive logic entails "looking at an entire system of relationships as a whole" or "looking at the whole thing at once and coming up with your answers through analysis that way" (Wilson, 2008, p. 119). He argued that answers are "mostly innate within us" (p. 119). To provide practical understanding of what this might look like in practice, Wilson shared a story of Elders taking teachers to a physical place to experience a phenomenon (an ecosystem) for themselves so that they might come to the answer (or acquire a holistic understanding of the phenomenon) on their own.

One of the ways I practiced or exercised intuitive logic was by being present and a participant observer within the phenomenon (family-school-community engagement) that I was exploring and seeking to understand. Also through journaling I was able to record, relive, and remember what I saw, heard, and experienced. I kept a journal throughout the research process to record my observations, thoughts, reflections, questions, and evolving interpretations as "a tool for making meaning" and documenting "evidence of process and content" (Kovach, 2009, p. 50), and as a means of producing a "more robust description of the research context and analyses of research data" (Green, 2013, p. 157). Furthermore, the combination of document analysis, participant observation, individual semi-structured conversations and interviews, and talking circles helped provide a comprehensive and holistic understanding of family-school-community

engagement conceptualizations and practices in the school district. Engaging in, journaling about, and reflecting on these processes along with a rigorous review and reviewing of the data sources that each produced, all contributed to my wholistic understanding of the phenomenon of family-school-community engagement in Wampum and my ability to trust my intuition regarding what I saw as key themes emerging from the data.

As a result of my repeated and rigorous training in Western methodologies and ways of analyzing data, I unconsciously felt the need to validate the themes that I believed emerged from the data through my experiencing of, journaling about, and reading and rereading of the data using an intuitive logic approach to data analysis. So, I un/naturally used a variation of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis as a way of substantiating the themes that I uncovered through an intuitive logic process. Thematic analysis entails looking for patterns of meaning across a dataset that provide answers to the research question(s) being asked (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is deemed "an appropriate" analysis for questions that investigate people's experiences or the views and perceptions of participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke's (2006) recursive six-phase process includes: familiarization with the data; coding; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes, and write up.

For the purposes of this dissertation and out of respect for Indigenous knowledge systems, I began thematic analysis by re-immersing myself in the data through the process of listening and re-listening to audio recorded semi-structured conversations, interviews, and talking circles and by reading and rereading transcripts and my journal/field notes to become even more familiar with the data. During my

listening/reading and re-listening/rereading of the data, I listened and looked for and made note of broad patterns of meaning or themes within and across the data. Next, I reread the data again and reviewed the themes, checking to ensure that each theme accurately conveyed the message of each individual speaker and data source as well as the collective voice or message across speakers and data sources. In other words, I reviewed the themes to ensure that they were supported by the data. The next step in this recursive process entailed defining and naming the themes through a detailed analysis which involved determining the scope, focus, and story of each theme and selecting an informative name for each (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This entire process allowed me to identify the individual messages and holistic stories of each participant (and/or data source), connections across participants' responses (and/or data sources), and their relevance to my research questions and theoretical frameworks.

Thematic analysis allowed me to confirm earlier themes that I uncovered using intuitive logic while revealing additional themes that I had not noticed or uncovered by sticking to a purely wholistic form of analysis. Thematic analysis allowed me to more clearly see each participants' individual stories, perspectives, experiences, and priorities that helped me to determine the major, common and divergent themes within and across participant groups (Native parents, Native community leaders, teachers and administrators). The themes that are presented in the findings chapters of this dissertation emerged primarily from analysis of semi-structured conversations and interviews followed by the talking circles and supported by participant observation and document analysis. Also, in alignment with Indigenous methodologies, when appropriate and feasible, I used direct quotes from participants, which varied in length and format, to

support themes. Direct quotes that were typically longer and contained key components of a story (beginning, middle, and end) while serving as evidence of key themes were intentionally encased in a box throughout the findings chapters to make them stand out from the other data and with the intention of these stories serving as stand alone, essence capturing and comprehensive embodiments of key themes. In some cases, the quotes were consolidated through the removal of words, phrases, and sentences to reduce repetition, eliminate less relevant details, and to make the stories more concise and coherent. The majority of the quotes came from interviews and some from the two talking circles.

Finally, I used member checking (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994) throughout data analysis with the purpose of maintaining relational accountability or respectful and reciprocal relationships and as a way of “ensuring validity” of findings. Member checking is the practice of sharing data and conclusions with participants as a way of being accountable and checking to see if participants agree with how data was interpreted. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is supposed to ensure validity of findings. I used member checking during the talking circles with teachers and Native parents and during a formal meeting that I had with administrators in January 2019 to report back findings. I also did member checking with individual participants via email and face-to-face with a Clan Mother in her home.

This chapter opened with a description of the research design and a rationale for the research approach that was used in this dissertation. Next, I introduced the research context, participants, participant selection procedure, and discussed my insider/outsider status and how I was able to mitigate their potential effects. Thereafter, I provided a

detailed description of my data collection procedures and data analysis method. I now close this chapter with a detailed description of the context of this dissertation, describing town and school history as a way of centering place and providing a bridge to the findings chapters that follow.

Disrupting Coloniality by Centering Place

In Indigenous societies, including members of the community represented in this dissertation, the peoples' relationship to land is equally as sacred as their relationship with one another (Wilson, 2008). In fact, Indigenous, the most preferred term for Native or Aboriginal people around the world, means "born of the land" or "springs from the land" (Wilson, 2008). So, Indigenous people literally have a "grounded sense of identity" (Wilson, 2008, p. 88) and this was an evident truth for the members of the Indigenous Tribe that participated in this study. Citing Tuck and McKenzie (2015), Patel (2015) argues that all research is connected to place in geographic, chronological (though not linear), and spatial ways and that attending to context or place, is "one of the strongest ways that educational researchers can interrupt coloniality" and "its thirst for universal truths" (p. 61). I thus take the time to describe the context or place of this research and its participants as a means of disrupting coloniality and in recognition and honor of the importance of place in Indigenous societies in general, and specifically as it pertained to the Indigenous family and community members who participated in this study.

Wampum Town and School History

[this] is a town of the people of the First Light, the [Wampum] Wampanoags.

That was not accepted, and as a matter of fact, as I speak today, some of them

within their teaching, within the school system still don't believe it, and don't want to believe it. That's how deep-rooted racism is here in this town.

(Mother JoAnne, Transcript, 6.11.18)

This is the town in which the ancestors that met the actual, god damn Mayflower, still reside. We still practice our culture, still practice our prayer, and still practice our hunting and fishing and other cultural activities. You [educators] being here, and your school being here is in direct opposition of how I run my house and how I raise my children.

(Athena, Transcript, 5.10.18)

I begin this section with words from Clan Mother JoAnne and young mother Athena, two members of the Wampanoag tribe who participated in this study, as a way of reintroducing the participants and place of this exploratory study. Mother JoAnne and Athena ardently remind us that this is the town of the Wampum Wampanoags, the People of the First Light, the tribe that welcomed the Mayflower pilgrims. This lets us know that the tribe, not the settlers, are the original inhabitants of the area. Wampanoag people were there, on the land, long before the arrival of the pilgrims, and, as Athena reminds us, continue to live and practice their culture on the same land. The Wampanoag people have lived and practiced their culture in Wampum and surrounding areas for over 12,000 years (Baird, 2017; Tavares Avant, 2001).

Settler Colonialism and Colonial Education

Colonial education, which refers to the “reculturing and reeducation of American Indians by secular and religious institutions of colonizing nations” such as Spain, Great Britain, France, and the United States of America (Lomawaima, 1999, p. 2), began in

Wampum and surrounding areas in the mid 1600s, several decades after the arrival and permanent settlement of the first “Pilgrims” in 1620 (Vuilleumier, 1970). The initial goal of colonial education was to civilize (tenet 1) Indigenous peoples through Christian conversion (tenet 2) and to eradicate their self-government, self-determination, and self-education (Lomawaima, 1999). Colonial education in the area began with the arrival of John Eliot in the mid 17th century who came with the mission of civilizing and Christianizing Indigenous people (Lomawaima, 1999). Through his leadership, churches and schools were established in various towns in New England (including Wampum) after its Native residents had proven to be “fit subjects for baptism,” evident by both their transformation into civilized human beings and their conversion to Christianity (Vuilleumier, 1970, p. 51).

Subordination, which is another tenet of colonial education, was achieved through the resettlement (or forced transformation in the case of the Wampanoag) of Native communities into praying towns, towns for Native converts to Christianity, (Wampum was one such town) during the 17th and 18th century, and the resettlement of Native children into mission and residential boarding schools in the 18th and 19th century (Lomawaima, 1999). After the establishment of Wampum as a praying town in 1660 (Tavares Avant, 2001), Indian Education, the education of American Indian children by non-Indians (Lomawaima, 1999), received little to no support in Wampum from about the mid 18th century to the early 19th century (Vuilleumier, 1970). Prior to the 1830s many Native children in Wampum were put to work in the nearby homes of White people by overseers who did not believe they needed to be schooled (Tavares Avant, 2001). Though this changed in the 1830s with the building of two schools (Burns-Love, 1995;

Vuilleumier, 1970) Indian Education was less than ideal for Indigenous students.

Pedagogical methods used to instruct Wampanoag students in Wampum were very much in line with those described by Lomawaima (1999) and which encapsulated the fourth tenet of colonial education. According to Lomawaima (1999), Native people were/are perceived as having mental, moral, physical, and cultural deficiencies that required specific pedagogical methods for their education. These included a “military model of mass regimentation, authoritarian discipline, strict gender segregation, an emphasis on manual labor, avoidance of higher academic or professional training, rote memorization, and drill in desired physical and emotional habits” (p. 19). Many of these practices were typical of the experiences of Wampanoag children in Wampum during the second half of the 19th century and the turn of the 20th century.

In addition to local schools, Wampanoag children, along with other Indigenous children throughout the US, attended boarding schools, including the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, which was founded by Richard Henry Pratt, the person who coined the statement “Kill the Indian, and save the man,” in a speech delivered in 1892 (Waidner-Spahr Library Dickinson College, Archives & Special Collections, 2017; Weinstein-Farson, 1989). There were 11 documented Wampum Wampanoag students who attended the Carlisle Indian School (Waidner-Spahr Library Dickinson College, Archives & Special Collections, 2017). The school was modeled after a Native American prison for males at Fort Marion in Florida that was run by Pratt. Carlisle Indian School opened in 1879 with the mission of teaching Indigenous youth to be good US citizens through many of the pedagogical practices described by Lomawaima (1999)

(Waidner-Spahr Library Dickinson College, Archives & Special Collections, 2017; Weinstein-Farson, 1989).

During the first half of the 20th century, schooling for Wampanoag children in Wampum “left a lot to be desired” in the opinion of a local Wampanoag clan mother (Bingham, 2012, p. 52). There were no requirements for teachers in Wampum to be qualified, children had to travel to a neighboring town for high school, and the one school in Wampum failed to prepare students for success in high school due to a limited emphasis on academics (Bingham, 2012). In contrast to or perhaps in confirmation of Bingham’s opinion, another Wampanoag community member described school as “really fun” and a place where students learned English, mathematics, and engaged in fun, practical activities such as planting trees, burning caterpillars, and flying kites (Mills & Mann, 2006). In addition to concerns and contested opinions about the quality of education for Wampanoag students, from the beginning of “Indian education” in Wampum to present day, most of the teachers and administrators in the district have been and continue to be White women and men, respectively (Burns-Love, 1995; Mills & Mann, 2006; Vuilleumier, 1970). The exception was a beloved Wampanoag teacher who later became a principal and served in the district from 1937 until 1978 when he retired (Burns-Love, 1995). In 1989, a new elementary school in the district was built and named in his honor (Town Officers, 1990).

Land Suit and Fight for Federal Re-recognition

The second half of the 20th century saw some significant changes in both the town and schools in Wampum. Prior to the 1970s, Wampum was a town in which the majority of the residents were Wampanoag. They held all the town offices, were the majority of

the student population in the public schools (though still represented a significant minority of teachers and administrators in the district), and had relative freedom to navigate throughout the town and practice their Aboriginal Hunting and Fishing Rights. Aboriginal Hunting and Fishing Rights permit Natives to hunt and fish whenever and wherever they wish on the land in which they have practiced these rights for thousands of years (Athena, Transcript, 5.10.18). However, this began to change beginning in the 1960s when a large influx of non-Native, mainly White people and land developers began moving into Wampum and developing the land (baird, 2017; Tavares Avant, 2001). Between 1970-1976 Wampum was the second fastest growing town in Massachusetts, doubling in size to about 4,000 people (New York Times Archives, 1976; Ross, 1977). Most of these White newcomers, who now outnumbered the Wampanoag people, were affluent, part-time residents who owned large luxurious summer homes (Ross, 1977). As a result, in 1976 the Wampanoag Tribal Council filed a land suit to regain roughly 11,000 acres of lands that was unlawfully stolen from them in 1870 and was now being developed by newcomers (“Indians lose in court,” 1978; Ross, 1977). On January 6, 1978 a federal jury decided that the Wampum Wampanoags did not constitute a tribe in 1870 when they claimed their land was taken from them and that they were not a Tribe in 1976 when they filed the land suit, which meant they were not entitled to the land (“Indians lose in court,” 1978). As a result, the tribe was forced to shift their focus in what they hoped would be a temporary fight for federal re-recognition. After 31 years of fighting with the federal government for re-recognition and the right to Tribal sovereignty, the Tribe completed the Tribal recognition process and regained federal recognition in 2007 (baird, 2017; Peters, 2016). Unfortunately, during the time between

the lost land suit of 1978 and the regaining of federal recognition in 2007, most of the 11,000 acres of land had already been stolen and developed (baird, 2017; Peters, 2016). In 2015, the federal government put 321 acres of Wampum Wampanoag land into a trust where the federal government maintains ownership of the land but allows the Tribe to exercise its full Tribal sovereignty rights including self-governance and self-education (Indianz News, 2018; Marcelo & Fonseca, 2018).

Sadly, battles over federal recognition and Wampanoag land are ongoing. In 2018 the federal government reversed the 2015 decision to put the land into a trust saying that the Tribe is not entitled to a reservation because they were not a federally recognized tribe in 1934 under the Indian Reorganization Act (Mizes-Tan, 2018). If this recent ruling is upheld the Tribe will not have sovereign land on which to practice self-governance and self-education and may be forced to shut down their Tribal court and police department, stop work on their housing development for Tribal elders and families, and pay back taxes to local and state governments (Marcelo & Fonseca, 2018). Moreover, the Wampanoag immersion preschool that the tribe started three years ago, which has teachers who are Montessori and Wôpanâak language certified but not state certified, risks closing if the school is forced to operate on land that is no longer considered reservation land (Trena, Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18). Their teachers would be considered unqualified and would have to meet state certification requirements (Trena, Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18). This recent development led the Tribe's vice chairwoman to exclaim, "It's incredible frustrating... We've been struggling to keep land under our feet since the 1600s" (vice chairwoman, as cited by Marcelo & Fonseca, 2018).

Ongoing struggles for federal recognition and land are not unique to the Wampanoag Tribes. Other Native communities on the East Coast and throughout the nation have also been engaged in ongoing battles with the federal government for federal recognition and ancestral lands (Marcelo & Fonseca, 2018; Mizes-Tan, 2018)

Cultural Revitalization

Despite ongoing battles for land, Tribal recognition and sovereignty, the Wampanoag people have not only been able to sustain some of their cultural practices, but they have also been able to revitalize components of their culture that became dormant during the nearly 400 years of colonial rule. In 1972, the Tribe was able to secure an annual grant from the US Department of Education to fund an Indian Education Program in all three of the district schools (Town Officers, 2015). The program, which is now in its 47th year, provides academic support and cultural education for Native students from various Tribes in the district but mainly Wampum Wampanoag (Town Officers, 2015). The Indian Education Program offers Native students cultural education (learning Wampanoag language, history, and cultural practices and traditions) through “lunch bunches” and afterschool activities and academic support in the form of tutoring and pullout reading services. During the 2014-2015 school year, 138 Native students participated in the program (Town Officers, 2015).

In 1993, the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project (WLRP) began under the direction of doreen (a pseudonym), current vice chairwoman for the Tribe, who earned a master’s degree from MIT in Algonquian Linguistics in 2000 (Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project, 2014). The goal of the project is to return language fluency to the Wampanoag Nation after 150 years or six generations without fluent speakers of the

language (Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project, 2014). A major outcome of WLRP has been the establishment of the aforementioned Wampanoag immersion preschool and kindergarten class in which Wôpanâak is the language of instruction taught by fluent language speakers (baird, 2017). The school currently serves 25 Wampanoag students in preschool through first grade. The goal is to expand the school to include grades PreK through 5th. Additionally, WLRP and Tribal government leaders have formed partnerships and Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with Wampum Public School administrators to increase language and culture-based programming in the public schools, including after school culture-based programs at the elementary schools and the teaching of Wôpanâak at the high school as a credit bearing world language course for the first time in the history of the public schools. More details about these partnerships and program offerings will be described in the findings chapters that follow.

The Battle for Cultural Recognition Continues

I began this section with words from Clan Mother JoAnne and young mother Athena, members of the Wampanoag tribe who were the most vocal about what they perceived as the town and school district's continued denial of the Tribe's cultural legacy in Wampum. Their voices are representative of the frustrations expressed by other Tribal members about town and school history and contemporary discriminatory acts against the Tribe. I now end this section with a story they each told about the same incident involving the Wampanoag flag which they shared to support their assertion that the Tribe's battle for cultural recognition and acceptance is ongoing.

They Refused to Raise the Wampanoag Flag
By Athena

You know, that's [Wampum] High School. A few years ago, before we had this building [the new Tribal government building], we had this tiny building in back, and the school was doing a cultural study, and they took a poll of all the kids in the school to write where their lineage was from. Were they from China? Were they from Aruba? Were they from Iraq? And they raised all of the flags in the middle of the school but refused to raise the Wampanoag flag. So, we had 17 kids walk out of school in the middle of the day... This was probably... we had gotten federal recognition in 2007. This was 2009, I think. Whole great flag in the middle of the damn rotary [in town] and they're [the school administrators] telling us that all of our kids are facing suspension. Well they all walked out. "They're all facing suspension!" "They're not facing shit. You guys aren't ignorant. This should not be an argument. Put the fucking flag up." Like you're right here, in [Wampum]. Our flag is good enough to [hang in] the rotary, so that all the tourist can think, "Oh, there's Indians here and everybody's hostile and the peace is kept." No, no, which I think she [a tourist] had a T-shirt that said merciless savage because that's what we were to them and in some aspects, that's what we still are.

(Transcript, 5.10.18)

A Flag from Every Nation Except Ours
By Mother Joanne

I'm gonna give you the story of one of the fights that we had. Now first of all, we were not federally recognized at that time. But that doesn't make a difference. We knew who we were, and we were here before anyone else. And that's imperative to know it and understand it, and why not accept it, okay. But one of the things that stays with me today and bothers me is that we had our flag and the school department would not accept the flag. And when you came into the school, you had a flag from every nation in America up and down the hallways. But they did not want to accept our flag. What I did...I called a meeting, brought our sachems in, brought our leaders in, and we had a round table talk and we finally got it in there. They did not want to put our flag in there. Could you imagine that? That's how deep-rooted that damn racism was.

(Transcript, 6.11.18)

Chapter Five: Indigenous Family and Community Members' Conceptualizations

Introduction

This chapter presents the perspectives of Indigenous parents, community members/leaders, and Tribal affiliates regarding education and educational engagement. Findings revealed that their educational priorities for Indigenous children mainly differed from those promoted and practiced by White educators in the Wampum Public Schools. In large part Indigenous parents and community members rejected engagement with the public schools and sought alternative spaces to achieve their educational preferences for their children.

Before launching into the findings, I feel that it is important to provide more information about the specific people who participated in this study. Clan Mother JoAnne and young mother Athena represent two out of 13 Indigenous elders, parents and community members and two Tribal affiliates who participated in this study. What follows are brief biographies and autobiographical descriptions of these Indigenous participants which incorporate their own words and detail their connection to Wampum and their status or role in the school district and/or town.

Participant Portraits

Elders

Clan Mother JoAnne.

I am 78 years old. I am a member of [Wampum] Wampanoag Tribe. I was brought up in [Wampum]. I attended [Wampum] Public Schools as well as the high school [in a town about 11 miles to the southwest] because we didn't have a high school here for a very long time. I worked very closely when I was younger

with my elders and that's why I became knowledgeable about my culture and the respects of Mother Earth, who provides us with everything in order for us to survive. I highly recommend that to be an understanding with people. I also was brought up with a lot of respect for not just my own people but for every culture that I ever came across and that's how my family wanted it to be...

I've had many, many years working with both the tribe and the town of [Wampum]. I carry a couple of leadership responsibilities. I am a Deer Clan Mother. I am also on the [Wampum] Wampanoag Housing Committee. I am a peacemaker in the [Wampum] Wampanoag Tribal Court. I presently serve on the [Wampum] Historical Commission, and I also worked for the [Wampum] Public School System as the Director of Indian Education for 26 years. I worked very closely with teachers, principals, guidance counselors, students, both Native and non-Native, but primarily Native students and families.

(Clan Mother JoAnne, Transcript, 6.11.18)

During her time as Director of Indian Education, Mother JoAnne was a fierce advocate for Native students and their families, speaking out against unfair and discriminatory actions by administrators and teachers. She was also a resource for the school community at large, giving demonstrations and sharing stories from Wampanoag culture. Mother JoAnne has also authored several books and many articles for local newspapers. In her articles, she is often critical about the inequities and injustices that she sees taking place in the public schools.

Elder Eddie is an 89-year-old historian and former chief of the Wampanoag Tribe. In addition to serving as the Tribe's former chief, he is a retired teacher and

entrepreneur, and has authored many books. He is friendly, has a sharp memory, and loves telling stories about his life. Elder Eddie was born and raised in Wampum and attended Wampum Public Schools. He has fond memories of attending schools in Wampum including his Wampanoag principal (who one of the schools in Wampum is named after), his “nurturing” teachers who were all White, and all the learning that took place outdoors. He recalled nature being a classroom and the outdoors being the stage for school plays and performances. He criticized contemporary schools for being a space that is too focused on getting through the curriculum and using technology, and longed for a return of improvisation and outdoor learning.

Parents

Absolom Attiquin is an accomplished musician, writer, professor of English, and Director of African and African American studies at a state university. He identifies as a Black Wampanoag. His Father is Wampanoag and his mother is from Barbados. Absolom grew up in New York City but spent his summers in Wampum. Absolom shared,

[Wampum] has always been part of my experience growing up. My mother worked for the board of ed., so she had summers off. So, we spent summers up here [in Wampum] and it was the interesting dichotomy of growing up in New York City and [Wampum], being a rural community, there was a lot more freedom. It was a lot more open. Which has sadly changed. The streets that I could safely walk down by myself at nine, I'm not comfortable with my son walking down at 14. (Transcript, 6.1.18)

Absolom is now a resident of Wampum with his son, a student with special needs who attends Wampum High School. Absolom is an outspoken advocate for his son and other Native students. He also advocates for students of color in the district, particularly the Black and Brown males, who he believes are criminalized and discouraged from considering college as an option from the moment they become middle-schoolers.

Athena is Wampanoag and Cape Verdean, though she identifies more with her Wampanoag heritage because her mother and grandmother never passed down or taught her about the Cape Verdean side of her family background. She and her family moved from Western Massachusetts to Wampum when she was eight or nine, and she grew up being fully immersed in and taught her Wampanoag culture and traditions. Athena noted,

I was raised in a very traditional and cultural family. So, I've always known the inner workings of regalia making and sweat ceremonies, and having a closeness with the creator, are things our parents made sure to instill in me. (Alex, Transcript, 5.10.18)

Athena raises her children in the Wampanoag cultural traditions that were passed down to her. Athena is a single mom of two children who currently attend the upper elementary school. She works multiple jobs and recently returned to school to complete her college degree. Athena is outspoken and frank in her conversations and speaks passionately about her people, her cultural heritage, her experiences, the experiences of her children, and the injustices that she sees in the town and district schools. Athena will confront and challenge anybody who she believes is behaving in an unfair or unjust manner toward her, her children, and her community.

Debby works for the Tribe as a council woman and serves as parent leader on the Indian Education Parent Committee. She was born and raised in Wampum and considers herself a full blood Wampanoag woman. Debby narrated that,

I have lived here [in Wampum] my whole life. I'll tell you, the town has changed. When I was in school, it was K-8, I didn't know about discrimination in [Wampum] and I didn't feel it. Also, we had the principal who, now, we have a school named after him, and [a Tribal member who] was at the front desk. That relationship that you had with somebody who was affiliated with you, with your tribe [made school a more welcoming place].

My mother's mother and father are full Wampanoag, on both sides. I mean there was no interruption. I think I was blessed in that way. Not saying you're not if you're not full...I have to walk one foot in a shoe and one foot in a moccasin every day because I keep my culture very close to my heart. I don't ever want to lose that. My mother, she was a strong believer about my culture and my heritage, so I think I passed that down to my daughter. (Transcript, 5.2.18)

Debby is married to a local Wampanoag man and they have a daughter who attends the upper elementary school in the district. Debby also raised her nephew after her sister passed away. Debby has always been a strong advocate for her children and for other Wampanoag children and families in the schools. She views the ability to self-advocate as a gift and a necessity for Wampanoag families.

Leto is a Wampanoag and Jamaican woman. Leto shared, "My mother and my grandmother, everybody on that side of my family is Wampanoag. And my father is Jamaican" (Transcript, 5.1.18). Leto lived most of her childhood in Boston but spent a

lot of time in Wampum during the summer months for family celebrations and get together. Leto moved to Wampum during her last year of middle school. She continues to live and work in Wampum with her Jamaican husband and son who attends the upper elementary school.

Leto serves as the current Director of Indian Education in the Wampum Public Schools and is also a paraprofessional in the district. She is an ardent advocate for Native and non-Native students alike, including White students. During the day, she serves as a paraprofessional in classrooms with students who have special needs, providing support to Native and non-Native students. After school Leto fulfills her responsibility as Director of Indian Education, providing cultural programming for Native students.

Michelle

My father is African American, and his father is native. My grandfather on my maternal side, he's Cherokee, and my grandmother is Nipmuc. We [Nipmuc's] are cousins of the Wampanoag. I'm from here, but I moved as a teenager to Detroit. I remember that from me growing up [in Wampum], some of the issues that we dealt with. We just were never welcomed or right. We were only good for sports. (Michelle, Transcripts, 6.27.18)

Michelle moved back to Wampum over 13 years ago to raise her six children. She has children in each of the three Wampum schools and has two that graduated from Wampum High School. Michelle is a nurse by profession and is very active in the community. She is a regular member and attendee at the monthly Indian Education Parent Committee meetings. She also served as Director of Indian Education before Leto, a position that she says she was forced out of by administrators in the district.

Michelle, like all the other Native parents who participated in this study, was and continues to be a fierce advocate for her children, other Native children, and children of color in the district. She persists in her advocacy even amidst what she has experienced and described as resistance from school officials and their targeting of her children. She shared that when she speaks up, her children are targeted by administrators. She also shared that because her children are strong athletes, there is some leniency.

Community Members/Leaders

Andrew is a friendly, upbeat, religious, and old school (no-nonsense) community leader who identifies as African American and Native. He recalled fond memories of his childhood,

I'm originally from the Bronx, New York. My remembrance of New York was Shiloh Baptist Church, and even though I was four years old, I remember the song, "One Way to God." We used to sing that all the time. And then we moved out to South Jersey, a little town called Mizpah. We were all poor, very agricultural out there. The main thing is that they stressed was on education, self-sufficiency, but also a lot of community help. (Transcript, 5.15.18)

Andrew lives in a nearby town and currently serves as a tutor and mentor in the district's Indian Education Program. He is a retired teacher and administrator who worked for many years in a nearby district where he taught many Wampum students who were there for high school because prior to 1996, Wampum did not have a high school. He knows and has personal relationships with many of the Native families in Wampum and feels that he is able to "be real" with parents and hard on their children, holding very high expectations of them. Though he was very successful in school and attended an Ivy

League college, education was demanding for him and he tried to make it demanding and purposeful for students during his time as a teacher and administrator.

Camille is Wampanoag and Portuguese and was raised by his Wampanoag mother and grandmother. In his words,

I grew up in [Wampum] in the summers. My mom was an educator, and we lived in [a city about 40 miles west of Wampum], but we always had a summer home down here since the 1930s and we still do. I enjoy [Wampum]. It's very culturally rich. (Transcript, 4.3.18)

Camille's mother was a dynamic school administrator and he strives to follow in her footsteps. He reflected,

I look at what my mother has taught me and she was absolutely incredible. She was a principal at a school for thirty years and when she passed we had a celebration ceremony for her and the amount of people that came up, all different nationalities ...their testimonies on how she's blessed people was awesome. I knew I had those qualities but I wanted to take it further. (Transcript, 4.3.18)

Camille served as a teacher and an administrator in another New England state before moving to Wampum. He returned to live and work in the community because he felt called by the Creator to do so. He believes that the Creator wanted him to be "more in touch with" his "ancestral roots" and to serve as a healer for the school and Wampanoag community. Camille previously served as Director of Education for the Tribe before transitioning into his current role as an administrator in the Wampum Public Schools. Since he was hired in the district, he has played an instrumental role in bringing back cultural events in the schools, inviting Tribal members to tell traditional stories and

perform traditional dances dressed in their regalia. Community members expressed happiness that he is in the district and worry about him leaving or being forced out.

Clara, a college student and the oldest daughter of Trena, was the youngest participant in this study. Her father is Wampanoag, and though her family owns a home in Wampum, she and her younger sister, who is currently a high school student at Wampum Middle/High School, grew up and attended elementary and middle school in another town about 10 miles to the north of Wampum. Clara accompanied her mother to our interview, over breakfast, at a local restaurant in May 2018. Clara contributed to our conversation and talked about her mainly positive K-12 experiences, only mentioning a few racist incidents. She also shared how fortunate she was to participate in a program called Native Tribal Scholars in Boston during her four years of high school. This was a six-week summer program that was started at a university in Massachusetts in partnership with the Tribe. The program offered culture-focused classes and academic support. Clara reflected that many of the Wampanoag kids that were part of the program, which ended in 2015, went on to college.

Danielle is Lakota and narrated the story of her growing up:

I was born and raised on the Standing Rock Sioux reservation in the Dakotas. It's a large Sioux reservation that spans the border between North and South Dakota. But I've been working with Wampanoag language projects since about 2006. And I've worked with probably about several dozen other Indigenous language communities for the past 10 or 12 years on language related projects, supporting language schools and producing documentaries and conferences and working on

grants and other types of funding to support language revitalization. (Transcript, 3.15.18)

Danielle currently works full-time on the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project, a role that she has served in since 2006. She is also director of the Wampanoag immersion pre-school. Danielle has collaborated with Trena, applying for federal grants to raise millions of dollars to open the Wôpanâak immersion pre-school and support language and culture-based programming in Wampum Public Schools and in the Wampanoag community.

Nathalie is a member of another Wampanoag Tribal community in New England and is part Portuguese. Explaining her ties to Wampum,

I'm born and raised in [a town about 40 miles west of Wampum], so I'm not far from here. [I] spent most of my life here in southeastern Massachusetts. Lived in [Wampum], lived in Virginia for a short time as a young person before I had children, but I was homesick, so I came right back. I'm very much connected to this place, so I haven't strayed too far. I also have, along with Wampanoag, Portuguese heritage. My father's Portuguese...Growing up in [a town about 40 miles west of Wampum], there's a large Portuguese community there, so some connections, but I always felt more drawn in at home and comfortable with my Native family and community. (Transcript, 4.3.18)

Nathalie now lives in a city about 25 miles northwest of Wampum where her children attend school. She shared, “[We] bought a house up there six years ago, a little bit more affordable than here [in Wampum], a little bit. It's good to spread out a little bit because things are too small here sometimes” (Transcript, 4.3.18).

Nathalie has been part of the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project since its inception and is one of the trained master speakers of Wôpanâak, the Wampanoag language. She currently serves as the language teacher in the first ever Wôpanâak language classes at the middle/high school in Wampum.

Nora is the daughter of a Wampanoag father and White mother. In her words, I was born in [Wampum]. I've only lived away from [Wampum] for about three years of my life. I am really fortunate to know exactly where I [come] from. I lived in California for those three years, in Berkeley. I worked in Oakland at a place called the American Indian Child Resource Center and most of the students who were there were not from the area. Their families had been there for several generations from relocation, and a lot of the students that I worked with didn't really understand their own tribal histories. They understood a pan-Indian identity, which was fine and it helped them survive these decades. That's great but it made me realize that if I am going to have kids, I didn't have kids then, but I owed it to them to have them grow [up] here and have that identity that I didn't realize I was so lucky to have. (Transcript, 3.22.18)

Nora attended Wampum Public Schools through grade eight and an international boarding school for high school. She earned her PhD in 2015 from a prestigious university in the state and is currently serving as a postdoctoral fellow at the Ivy League university where she completed her undergraduate studies.

Nora is the former Director of Education for the Tribe. She, like Nathalie, is also one of the master speakers of Wôpanâak, the Wampanoag language. She leads language classes in the community and played an instrumental role in the establishment of the

Wampanoag immersion pre-school, helping to write the seasonal framework that is used in the school. Nora is married to a man from a western Native tribe and has four young children. Two of her children attend the Wampanoag immersion pre-school.

Affiliates of the Tribe

Joseph, a White man who grew up in a large city about 86 miles northwest of Wampum, was hired by the tribe to assist with the Indian Education Program at the middle/high school, providing college and career readiness support.

I started about a year a half ago working with the [Wampum] Wampanoag tribe. We got a grant called Building Pathways for Tribal Youth, which is a college and career readiness grant. So, I've been managing that. Right now [someone from the Tribe] is managing it because I kind of went to part-time just because I didn't have enough time to do everything. I come to the high school a couple of days a week, try to catch the kids, engage them with what activities we're doing. (Transcript, 4.26.18)

Many Tribal members were upset when Joseph was hired for the position, and he shared that initially many members of the Tribe would not talk to him. Over time, the community grew to like and trust him. Joseph also works as an academic counselor and teaches several courses at a local community college. In his former position as a high school teacher in a nearby district, he tried to give the students experiences that they would not typically have, such as taking them hiking and camping. These were often students who struggled academically.

Trena shared that “I'm biracial. My mother is white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and my biological father is Jamaican. My stepfather who raised me was Black American”

(Transcript, 5.2.18). Trena grew up in New York City and was introduced to Wampum by her mother who moved there in the mid 1980s. She met her husband, who is Wampanoag, and they moved to the area when they had their first daughter. She noted, “He's [her husband] from the community, a tribal member. His whole family's here. His family has been here forever... Anyway, part of the reason why we ended up relocating here in '98 was because we wanted to be close to family” (Transcript, 5.2.18).

Trena and her husband have two daughters. Their oldest is in college and the youngest is a student at the middle/high school in Wampum. Trena has lived and worked in the community since 1998. Through her roles as Director of Development for the Wampum Wampanoag Tribe and as Business Manager for the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project, she helped raise millions of dollars in federal grants to support language and culture-based programs for the Tribe. Trena newest position is Development Director of the National Indian Education Association.

Now that the participants have been introduced, the remainder of this chapter will focus on themes from our interviews and conversations about the ways that Indigenous participants conceptualized education and educational engagement.

Engaging for Cultural and Post-Secondary Survival

Tribal parents and community leaders who participated in this study characterized the purpose of educational engagement as engaging for the sake of cultural reclamation and continuity and the survival and success of their children in post-secondary school, but they did not view the public schools as the only option or place to achieve their educational priorities for their children. In fact, displeasure with the public schools, a sentiment echoed by most of the Indigenous parents and community members/leaders in

this study, caused some to consider and actively pursue alternative educational spaces, structures, and strategies. Because many felt that their history, cultural traditions, and values were not recognized, valued, or respected in the public schools, some wished that they could homeschool their children while others were actively involved in developing separate alternative schools for Native students. Still others actively discussed advocating for cultural education within the public schools, a place where most Native students in Wampum receive their education. Themes from this chapter are thus presented and explained under the organizational headings: Homeschooling, Own-schooling, and Public Schooling.

Homeschooling: Building Students' Cultural Awareness and Preparing Them for Life

Athena and Nathalie spoke critically about the inadequacies of the public school system and described homeschooling as a means to achieve an education that is culture focused, builds students' character, caters to their interests, and provides life skills preparation.

Athena's Perspective

"I wish I could be one of those moms that homeschool their kids." I met with Athena on two different occasions, and during those conversations, she talked about what she perceived as a lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity among White administrators, teachers, and students in the district schools her children attend(ed). She critiqued teachers and administrators for not knowing or valuing Wampanoag history and culture, and criticized them for not taking advantage of teachable moments to address bullying

and ignorant and inaccurate comments made by students about Wampanoag identity and culture.

During one of our conversations, Athena criticized teachers and administrators for stating, “oh we’re really empathetic to Native culture,” during a meeting about a bullying incident in which her son was told by another student “You’re too White to be a Wampanoag” (Transcript, 5.10.18). Athena was offended by the failure of these educators to recognize or acknowledge “we’re not talking about Native culture on a whole. We’re talking about [Wampum] Wampanoag. This isn’t California. This is the town in which the ancestors that met the actual, god damn Mayflower, still reside” (Transcript, 5.10.18). Athena also reprimanded educators for not taking advantage of this teachable moment. “You guys, you know you missed out on the opportunity to explain [to the kids] why you can’t talk to each other [that way], and why its harmful” (Transcript, 6.28.18).

In another instance, Athena talked about educators’ and students’ ignorance regarding the single braid that Wampanoag males wear, its significance, and why it is so upsetting to her and her son when White students pull his braid.

My son is 9 years old and has a braid down to his bottom and when all these little white kids in the class want to pull on his hair and he comes home crying, I still have to explain to him the importance of keeping your hair, “keeping your hair in a braid down your back because that’s what protects your brain stem”... So, news flash, “you can’t pull my god damn kid’s hair and expect me not to get hair across my ass because that is his identity and that is his culture as a Wampanoag man.” (Transcript, 5.10.18)

In this story and the one that proceeds it, Athena makes an explicit connection between bullying and teachers' and students' lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity. As a result of these and other incidents, Athena asserted that the public schools were doing a poor job providing a safe and engaging educational environment for her son and other Native students. She also felt that the schools fail to teach her children and others, things that she values and deems important like how to be "nice," "kind," and "culturally competent" instead of "disregarding and disrespectful" (Transcript, 5.10.18). Niceness, kindness, and cultural competence are character traits that she tries to instill in her own children while also giving them permission to "throw punch somebody and tell them to go to hell nicely and make them think that they're going to enjoy the trip as long as it's based in honesty [or is warranted]" (Transcript, 5.10.18). Athena considers herself a "traditional Wamp," a Wampanoag person who grew up fully immersed in her cultural traditions and someone who continues to practice them. She has passed on her cultural knowledge to her children and has taught them to speak up and defend themselves when others, whether adults or their peers, treat them or their culture in a disregarding and/or disrespectful manner. This is what she means by "retaliation based in honesty."

Athena believes that the Wampanoag community know better what's best for their children. If she had the financial security, adequate skills, and education, she would homeschool her children.

I wish I could be one of those moms that homeschool their kids so I could teach them fun and important things. I feel like especially with our kids we all know what's better, our way is better than your way...I'm not sold on public schools so I guess I don't do as much. I know I don't really do as much as I should because I

don't trust you guys. I really don't. I send my kids to you ... I told them [teachers and administrators]. I'm like, "I send my kids to you because I feel like it's a force because I don't have the confidence in myself or know yet how I would pay my bills and maintain homeschooling my kids. That's the only reason you guys get them." (Transcript, 6.28.18).

Because of Athena's dissatisfaction with the public schools, she resists engaging in ways that teachers and administrators expect her to. She regularly refuses to make her son do homework, which he hates and resists doing on a daily basis. She attributes this to her own experience as a student and the fact that she has no recollections of doing homework or being made to do so by her parents. Athena also consciously chooses to refrain from attending school events. Though Athena chooses not to engage in these "traditional" school-scripted and school-centric ways, she is by no means an inactive or disengaged parent and is at the school all the time advocating for her children.

In Athena's view, teaching her children and all students in Wampum Public Schools about Wampanoag culture and history (cultural competence) and how to be good and respectful human beings (character education) are essential components of an educational system that fosters a safe environment. She views bullying as a significant issue within the public schools and believes that it could be avoided or minimized if teachers and students were more culturally competent and teachers took advantage of teachable moments to teach cultural awareness. Because Athena believes the school system is failing to provide this type of education and educational environment, she longs to pull her children out of the public schools and to teach them at home.

Nathalie's Perspective

“I don’t want to send my kids to public school.” Homeschooling was also a topic that came up in my conversation with Nathalie, the Wôpanâak language teacher at Wampum Middle/High School and a parent whose children attend schools in another district. Though Nathalie works in the Wampum Public Schools, she is not an employee of the district. She has been a long-term volunteer and now employee of the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project (WLRP), which is where her loyalties lie. During our conversation, she was frank about her negative perceptions of public schools and her belief that they fall short in meeting the needs and desires of Native students and their families. Nathalie is a strong proponent of an individualized, culture specific-education, and one that prepares Native students for life beyond high school.

During our conversation, I asked Nathalie to share her thoughts about what comes to mind when she hears the phrase family, school, community engagement.

What comes to mind is...if it's a group of people talking about the school, there's a lot of negativity, even before I had kids. It was, “I don't want to send my kids to public school,” kind of thing, not only because they're Native...I feel like the public schools don't address the needs of individuals. The whole, sit still and be quiet, you seven-year-old, you fit inside the box and all that sort of stuff.

Amongst mothers my age that are friends of mine and community members, we all share these things - sort of stuck between, we'd rather teach our kids in a different way [at home], but have to work and can't afford to do all these things.

So, [we] have to send them to school. (Transcript, 4.3.18)

Interestingly, Nathalie provided a critique of the public schools in response to my question and within her critique she conceptualized education as meeting the individual needs of students, outside of the educational system, through homeschooling. Her response revealed her lack of confidence in the educational institution (public schools) and her preference to disengage from it altogether.

When asked to elaborate on her conceptualization of a more appropriate way to educate Native students and what that would look like in terms of instruction, Nathalie shared,

A lot more practical things along with ... of course, reading is basic, and writing, but more things that are geared towards what the individual child is interested in, for one. We've [WLRP] had tons of conversations about it because we've got the preschool going and we have plans to open a charter potentially. So, we've gone round and round with what's the curriculum going to look like, so a lot more culturally specific education for our kids. Just things that are more relevant in life...You see things that point out the fact that you go to a school for 12 years and when you get out, you don't know how to feed yourself or budget money, all the things, regular, every day skills that you need in real life, and yeah, people should be getting those things at home, but ... I don't see what it is that is really taught in school beyond the basics that really is preparing kids for life. (Transcript, 4.3.18)

Preparing students for life beyond Prek-12 education through the teaching of practical life skills is a major way that Nathalie conceptualized education for Native students. This is a sentiment that was expressed by other Native parents in a survey that was distributed to them by WLRP to ascertain their opinions regarding the type of educational training and

opportunities that they wanted for their children. This input from parents was used in a new federal grant that Trena and Danielle, the other employees of WLRP that participated in this study, applied for.

Nathalie also envisioned “culturally specific education” and individualized education, or education “geared towards what the individual child is interested in.” In essence, Nathalie was arguing for a complete overhaul of the education model that has been in place in public schools since their exception. Nathalie’s alternative model of education for Native students is very much informed by her long-term involvement with WLRP, its staff, and the project’s guiding purpose to provide language and culture-based programming for Tribal students. In addition to homeschooling as an alternative to public education, Nathalie, like Danielle and Trena, supports the creation of separate and alternative, Tribal run schools for Tribal students, a topic that is explored next.

In summary, Athena’s and Nathalie’s rationale for wanting to homeschool their kids stemmed from their desire to disengage completely from the public schools because of the institution’s failure to teach “traditional” Wampanoag values and culture, and provide an education that is engaging to Native students, caters to their individual interests, and prepares them for practical living beyond high school. Neither trusted the public schools to educate their children in the manner they deemed best, and thus were “not sold on public schools.”

Own-Schooling: Language and Culture-Based Education and College Preparation

While Athena and Nathalie viewed homeschooling as a means for achieving their educational preferences and priorities for their children, Trena, Danielle, and Absolom were strong supporters of separate schools to attain their vision of a culture-based and

college prep education for Native students. Like Athena and Nathalie, they also critiqued the public school system for its failure to provide the education they prefer and believe is best for Native students.

Alternative School Models: Language and Culture-Based Education

“We have to have our own school for our kids... so that we can decolonize our curriculum.” Nathalie, along with Danielle, the Project Director of WLRP, and Trena, the Business Manager for WLRP, all believe that having their own Tribal run schools is essential to fully achieving their objectives of language and culture-based education for Tribal students. The Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project has successfully established a Wôpanâak language immersion preschool which is now in its third year of operation. The school includes grades pre-K to first grade and has a current enrollment of 25 students. During the talking circle that I conducted with five Native parents, Trena shared the project’s goal to “add a grade every year” and to eventually “go up to fourth grade and fifth grade” (Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18). She went on to state, “because at the end of the day I think we have to have our own school for our kids. Right? So that we can decolonize our curriculum, and it takes money” (Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18).

Trena strongly believes that the only way to ensure a truly decolonized educational space and curriculum for Native children is by having separate schools for them. Because having their own separate schools requires money, she and Danielle have been working to form partnerships with the Wampum Public Schools, hoping to establish a magnet school that operates within the public school system and is funded by the state. This magnet school would be in addition to the Wôpanâak immersion preschool, and

would accommodate grades six through twelve, and include a language and culture-based program.

Alternative School Models: College-Prep and Culture-Focused Schools

Like Trena, Danielle, and Nathalie, Absolom Attiquin, a self-proclaimed “Black Wampanoag,” and an English professor and Director of African and African American Studies at a state university, conceptualized educational engagement as working to establish separate schools for Native students and other students of color. In the talking circle with Native parents, Absolom talked about his hopes to start a school for middle and high schoolers that would better prepare them for college. He hopes to establish a school that uses the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) model which prioritizes original and critical thinking and depth of learning and understanding over breath of coverage and familiarity. In Absolom’s view it is the opposite of a one-size-fits-all approach of education for all students. Instead students direct their own learning, work at their own pace and move up as they complete levels in the CES model instead of each year by grade.

In addition to a CES model, during an individual conversation with Absolom, he shared his preference for a separate school modeled after independent Afro-centric schools. When asked if he had the power and resources to remake family-school-community engagement in Wampum, he, like Nathalie, critiqued the public schools and proposed a separate school model altogether.

My honest answer? You know those independent Afro-centric schools that pop up all over that start snatching up kids when they're in sixth grade and by the time they're graduating high school they're getting scholarships to the ivy league of

their choice? I want something like that. I'm not a proponent of segregation but I do recognize the value of certain aspects. I think, because one of the other dynamics of [Wampum] school, I should point to is the criminalizing of black students by educators, or [the criminalizing of] people of color. (Transcript, 6.1.18)

Absolom, like Nathalie, Trena, and Danielle, advocates for a culture-focused education. However, he differs from them on the type of culture-based education in his emphasis on schools that prepare students of color to enter prestigious White institutions. Absolom's suggestion of a separate school modeled after successful Afro-centric schools reveals his identification with and interest in the Black experience, particularly the experiences of Black, Native, and other male students of color in the district. Throughout our conversation he often referenced the experiences of Black males (like in the case above). Though I did not question him about this emphasis, I suspect that it is due to his identification as a Black Wampanoag, his position as Director of African and African American Studies, and what he characterizes as the criminalization of Black males and other males of color that he has witnessed in the public schools. Absolom shared several examples of the school's "propensity to criminalize males of color" around seventh grade (Transcript, 6.1.18). During the talking circle with Native parents, Absolom discussed an interaction with one of his son's high school teachers who commented, "'Wow, he's gotten scary looking' because he has [dread] locks and is 6'1'' and has a deep voice" (12.11.18). In response, Absolom commented,

We know all big Black men are scary. I got used to that when I was his age also.

We suddenly become really scary to White people. I understand that, and she's

like, “Oh, oh, no. I didn't mean.” I'm like, “well I understand exactly.” (Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18)

Absolom's emphasis on an education that prepares students for college, particularly Ivy League institutions, may stem from his perspective and position as a university professor. He shared on several occasions his problem with public education, particularly the Wampum Public Schools, is that they are not preparing students for success in college.

So, what we're ending up with are people coming into college with diminished critical thinking skills. They can paraphrase like nobody's business. But, the ability to actually critically analyze is nonexistent...college students coming to college very poorly read... [They] have not read a lot of books that I think would shape any kind of intellectual platform...And there needs to be a lot more opportunities, I would say, for students to engage in intellectual pursuits. Because the classroom is definitely not providing them. (Transcript, 6.1.18)

Though Absolom was the only Tribal member to emphasize the importance of preparing Native students and students of color for the top universities in the nation, he was not the only person who talked explicitly about college. While college and/or college readiness was mentioned by some of the other participants (Debby, Danielle, Trena, and Nora) and has been a focus of grants secured by WLRP, Absolom was the only participant who explicitly and extensively talked about the importance of students being prepared for and obtaining a college education.

In summary, the Native parents and community members who advocated for separate schools did not wish to engage with/in the Wampum Public Schools or with their

staff unless it was for the purposes of creating their own separate language and culture-based school within the Wampum Public Schools. In the case of Absolom, he preferred and proposed total disengagement through the establishment of an independent culture-based and rigorous college-prep school. Together, these Tribal members conceptualized educational engagement through exercising autonomy with the goals of strengthening the cultural and/or academic proficiency of their Native children, and, in Absolom's case, Black males and other males of color, in separate schools.

Public Schooling: Engaging to Improve Indian Education for All and Diversity Among Educators

The proponents of separate schools believe that accomplishing their objectives of education for their children and other children of color is best achieved in separate spaces where Tribal members have total control over curriculum and instruction and operate autonomously from public schools. However, the majority of Native parents and community members/leaders who participated in this study, including some of the proponents of homeschooling and separate schools, also talked about their desire to establish cultural recognition, revitalization and continuity in the Wampum Public Schools. This may be due to the fact that a significant majority of Wampanoag and Native students in Wampum, including some of their own children, attend the public schools. Native parents and community leaders alike identified three main ways that they believed the Wampum Public Schools were hindering their cultural reclamation and continuity efforts and wanted to see improvements. They desired to see a greater emphasis on culture-based education for their children within the Wampum Public Schools through the Indian Education Program. They also accused the predominantly

White staff in the public schools of being culturally insensitive and unaware and expressed the need for all educators in the system to be educated about Wampanoag and pan-Indigenous history and culture. Lastly, there was a general outcry for the hiring and retaining of Native and other educators of color in the schools as yet another way, a better way, of bringing cultural knowledge into the schools and providing Native students with language and culture-based education.

Indian Education for Native Students

“They’re not teaching Indian Education [in the elementary schools]...it’s more like educate the Indian.” Indian Education is a federal and federally funded program that has been in the Wampum Public Schools for 47 years, secured through the grant writing skills of the Director of Indian Education and the Indian Education Parent Committee. It is a program for Tribal students that is present in all three schools in Wampum and offers tutoring, language and cultural enrichment through “lunch bunches” at the elementary schools, and tutoring, college visits, and afterschool language and cultural enrichment programs for students at the middle/high school. Reflecting on her time as Director of Indian Education, Mother JoAnne shared,

We wrote the grant. I wrote the grants with the input of the parent committee, which was very helpful 'cause on my parent committee, I had parents who had a lot of background experience with our culture and knew what the children needed and we knew what we wanted to teach our students. That was a great input.

(Transcript, 6.11.18)

Indian education within the Wampum Public Schools, has, from the inception of the program, been an opportunity for the Tribe to accomplish their educational objectives for

their children. Though participants expressed gratitude for this program, many disapprovingly talked about the program's reduced focus on culture over time. Moreover, some reflected on structural changes that the program has undergone in recent years which has diminished the amount of time allotted for Indian Education and has hindered students' accessibility to the program at the middle/high school.

Debby, a Tribal Councilwoman and parent with a daughter in the upper elementary school, and Athena, a parent with two children in the upper elementary school, reflected on their time as students in Wapum Public Schools and the Indian Education programming that they received. They recalled that the Indian Education Program in the past had a heavy culture focus. Debby remembered being taught by Tribal Clan Mothers about their culture and how to make traditional cultural items such as "hand drums or regalias or ribbon shirts" (Transcript, 5.2.18). She noted that when she returned to Wapum Public Schools as a parent, "there was so much that had changed, they changed it more to academics. There wasn't a culture piece to it. It's supposed to be Indian Education too" (Transcript, 5.2.18). Through her new role as Chairwoman on the Indian Education Parent Committee which meets every month, Debby learned that roughly half of the grant money is spent on non-Native teachers who offer Tribal students in the elementary grades reading support through pullout programs.

Athena had a similar recollection of Indian Education when she was a student and reflected on how it is now for her own children. She recalled "always having solid Indian Ed" when she was a student and visiting the homes of Elders and learning how to make clay pots and traditional Native chokers (Transcript, 6.28.18). Reflecting on her own children's experiences in Indian Education, Athena shared that the program no longer has

“a cultural class or anything” and is mainly a tutoring program taught by non-Native teachers that offer Native students extra help with reading and math (Transcript, 6.28.18).

They’re not teaching Indian Education. You’re teaching my kid to read. “Oh, let’s round up the Indians, put them in a room and teach them to read. We’ll call it Indian Ed.,” but really it’s just extra help...It’s more like educate the Indian, not Indian Education. (Transcript, 6.28.18).

Though Athena disagrees with the new focus of the program and what she views as the absence of Tribal teachers, she did share that her “kids’ favorite part of school is Indian Ed” noting, “I let my kids go because they like the time away from their class” and “having the extra help” (Transcript, 6.28.18).

Interestingly, the “lunch bunches” in the lower and upper elementary schools that are led by a Tribal member, were barely mentioned by both women, and were not even considered part of the Indian Education Program by Athena - “there’s lunch bunches...and then there’s Indian Education which is different” (Transcript, 6.28.18). Debby referenced lunch bunches in a statement during one of our conversations. “They had [have] the lunch bunch so at lunchtime they have the language” (Transcript, 5.2.18). Apart from seeing it as separate from Indian Education, Athena shared, “We didn’t have lunch bunch, so my kids are grateful for lunch bunch. They can play the games and do language stuff...so they have some degree of cultural interaction” (Transcript, 6.28.18). Here she acknowledges that cultural education is not totally absent from the public schools. Lunch bunches occur once per week for 30 minutes in a conference room located in the front office at the lower elementary school and in a section of the library at the upper elementary school. The weekly lunch bunches are taught by a Wampanoag

Tribal member and include language instruction and seasonal lessons about Wampanoag culture. I had the opportunity to attend an Indian Education lunch bunch for kindergarten students at the lower elementary school on March 7, 2018, and noted in my fieldnotes,

They started by speaking in Wôpanâak to introduce themselves. [The Wampanoag instructor] then talked about spring and had students share things that they or their families do during the spring. She taught them a few plant words in Wôpanâak and then had them come up and say in Wôpanâak what they are grateful for. (Field Notes, 3.7.18)

Though culture-based instruction was more limited during the year that I conducted the interviews in this study, as a result of a 1.2-million-dollar federal grant secured by Trena and Danielle for the 2018-2019 school year, there has been more language and culture-based programming in the two elementary schools in the form of after school programs for Native students that are available three days per week.

The above examples of Indian Education in the elementary schools show Native parents' dissatisfaction with the current state of the program and reveal their desire for more culture-focused programming. Parent participants reflected fondly on their experiences in the Indian Education Program as students and evidently viewed it as a space within the Wampum Public Schools for developing and/or furthering Native students' cultural knowledge.

Indian Education in the middle/high school used to be “more of a cultural exploration program.” Leto, the current director of the program, shared a perspective about Indian Education at the middle/high school that echoed sentiments expressed by Athena and Debby. According to Leto, the Indian Education Program at the middle/high

school used to be “more of a cultural exploration program” (Transcript, 4.3.18).

Moreover, in the past, it was offered during the school day, 30 hours per week. Leto explained that the Indian Education room at the middle/high school, where Indian Education programming takes place, used to be open and available to Native students during the day to eat lunch, retreat to, and receive tutoring or extra help with their work. Leto noted that Native students were more productive in the Indian Education room working with her and the tutor because it was a space where they felt supported, comfortable, and at home. Additionally, she described it as a space where students learned about their Native culture through cultural workshops taught by community members.

This all changed about five years ago, according to Leto, when the previous superintendent and principal decided to change the program from 30 hours per week offered during the school day, to six hours per week and offered afterschool. Though Leto did not speculate why these changes were made, she did share that since the changes, attendance by Native students has been low. On most of the afternoons that I was present in the Indian Education room, I noticed that, apart from Leto, Andrew and Joseph (tutors and assistants for the program), the room was empty with only one or two Native students dropping in for a few minutes before running off. Leto shared that students have other afternoon commitments or responsibilities that include sports practices and games, jobs, or caring for younger siblings. Though Leto and Joseph consult with Native students to determine cultural enrichment activities that cater to their interests, and they try to entice students to stay afterschool or come out on weekends to participate in program offerings, the new time slot for the program competes with other

afterschool and weekend commitments and responsibilities. Leto blamed the new timeslot, not the Native students, for their lack of participation in the program.

The kids love their culture. I'm not gonna say they're not interested, because for me to tell you that is an absolute lie. They love their culture, they love being involved. Their parents hope that they're involved more, but if you give me the timeframe after school... these kids will prioritize their sports. (Transcript, 4.3.18)

Mother JoAnne and Michelle, both former Directors of the Indian Education Program, confirmed Leto's concerns about the new direction of the program. During one of my visits to Mother JoAnne's home, she talked about her time as director and how the program,

Over the years, it seemed like to me it got better and better.... I would outline a curriculum, but it was open because we had a lot of our people who traveled around, who lived in the United States but traveled around also and who would probably come home for maybe two or three weeks, and I utilized them and their resources. (Transcript, 6.11.18)

Mother JoAnne shared how Native students developed a strong knowledge of Wampanoag and Native culture from her and these guest speakers from the community who were well traveled.

Michelle, a parent with children in all three of the Wampum schools, confirmed Leto's story about how in the past the Indian Education room at the middle/high school was open and available to Native students all day, had tutors to assist students with work, and was more culture-focused. Similar to when Mother JoAnne was the director,

Michelle regularly brought in Tribal parents and community members as guest speakers and presenters to share Wampanoag and Native culture and history. The reduced time allotment after school has made it difficult to plan to have guest speakers because in most cases, they would be presenting to an audience of only a few Native students. Leto shared that this has happened and that she and Joseph are now hesitant to invite guest speakers and presenters because it is not the best use of Indian Education grant funds if students do not show up.

Participants' perspectives about changes in Indian Education programming at the middle/high school were similar to grievances expressed by Native parents about programming in the elementary schools. In both instances, parents were displeased with the reduced offerings of culture-focused activities and were concerned that Native students are less knowledgeable about their culture as a result of these changes. Their critiques of the program revealed their desire for more culture-based programming through Indian Education.

Indian Education and the Indian Education room as a contested space. In addition to the program's reduced focus on culture and changes in program structure and time allotted, Tribal participants also described Indian Education and the room it is located as a contested program and space. Mother JoAnne asserted that the Indian Education Program was resisted by the Wampum Public Schools from the outset.

Shanéé: Do you feel like the administrators, like I think of how long the Indian Ed Program has been around and it's federally funded, do you feel like the administrators basically were complying with federal requirements or do you get

a sense that some of them felt like yeah, this is a good thing and welcomed the Indian Ed Program?

Mother JoAnne: There was no welcome to the Indian Ed Program, that's the bottom line. There was no welcome to it, because I have evidence... This is before I was ever a director, all right, how they fought against Indian Education coming into the school system. I have reports, I can tell you. I can give you descriptions of meetings that they had. They would not accept Indian Education. Let's start from there, all right.

(Transcript, 6.11.18)

While Mother JoAnne described the program as being resisted from the outset, other Tribal members shared stories of contestation that included resistance to what was being taught in the Indian Education Program and opposition to the Indian Education room as a separate space altogether. Michelle described her time as director, and the “manipulation” that school administrators used to discourage parent committee members from supporting the program and how they forced her out of her position as director.

I have had other parents who were on the committee actually and come in to speak, and then they [administrators] started targeting [calling] their jobs. So, a lot of parents were jumping off by saying, “You know, I can't believe the avenues that they're taking for me not to be supportive for our children.” They would call me crying. They said, “I can't help you anymore.” (Transcript, 6.27.18)

When asked who the manipulators were, Michelle shared that they were leaders, some of whom are “holding higher positions now” (Transcript, 6.27.18). She followed this statement with the comment,

When we had these [Parent Committee] meetings and they say, “Oh. This person is working with us,” I want to tell them, “Be careful of the face that they put on, because I've seen the face that they were before, and I can't believe of a change within that short of time.” (Transcript, 6.27.18)

Michelle also accused administrators of forcing her out of her position as director. “They did some sneaky things to get me out. I told them I was leaving anyway, because I took the advice of Absalom, and he said, “You're more powerful outside of the role than you are in the role” (Transcript, 6.27.18). According to Michelle, Wampus administrators did not like what she and the parent volunteers were teaching Native students, nor did they approve of her outspokenness when she challenged them on policies practiced in the schools around disciplinary issues involving Native students.

While administrators questioned what was being taught in the Indian Education room, teachers and a few Tribal members complained about the room being used as a “segregated” space for Native students, and a place for them to retreat to. Prior to changes in the program, Michelle and Leto noted how some teachers questioned why Native students were able to complete their work in the Indian Education room and not in their classrooms while others complained that the program segregated Native students from the rest of the student body. Camille, a Native administrator in the district similarly saw the room as a “hangout room” and segregated space. He concluded that “it is unfair for a room to be solely reserved for one group of students” (Fieldnotes, 9.25.17). Lastly, Debby complained that the room was a place where teachers sent Native students when they “didn't want to deal with the kids” (Transcript, 5.2.18). Debby indicated that she went to the man who was superintendent at the time to have this practice changed.

“When I told him what I wanted to change, he was very good at doing that...Actually what we did was we started changing it to if you're in trouble, you go to the principal's office” (Transcript, 5.2.18). This former superintendent was a person that most of the Tribal members I spoke to despised because of his disregard and disrespect of Tribal members and their children, yet Debby repeatedly emphasized that she “had a good relationship with him,” that she “never had a problem with him,” and that “he always had the utmost respect for” her (Transcript, 5.2.18). These complaints may have contributed to the decision by those in leadership at the time to reduce the amount of time for the program and offer it after school.

In summary, participants expressed that changes in and resistance to the Indian Education Program within all three Wampum schools has contributed to the current group of Native students who are less knowledgeable about their history and culture. In general, participants want to see Indian Education return to its former status in the public schools as a predominantly culture- focused program.

Indian Education for Everyone

Another concern that Tribal parents and community members/leaders shared was the limited cultural knowledge and sensitivity of the nearly all White teaching staff and majority White student body regarding Wampanoag and Pan-Indigenous history and culture. They expressed that Indian Education for everyone in the Wampum Public Schools is essential to achieving an educational setting for their children that respects and supports the teaching and learning of Wampanoag and Pan-Indigenous culture.

“Cultural awareness for everybody on the whole is what they’re missing.”

Athena, perhaps the most frank and outspoken parent among the participants, talked extensively about the lack of cultural awareness among teachers and non-Native students in the school. She asserted that Indian Education for everyone in the school would encourage the acceptance of Wampanoag people in the town and the teaching of their history and culture in the schools.

We have like Indian education that goes on in the school, and we do the little language classes and lunch bunch and things like that for our kids. But I think what we’re missing more so, is just an overall education for the student body in the school... So, I think that cultural awareness for everybody on the whole is what they’re missing...culturally, I don’t think that the school is supportive enough to teach that there is another community here. We are a community and we are a family within this town and community and we’re not going anywhere. So, there needs to be a level of respect for the different sides of culture. But also, you all need to learn how to respect our culture. We already respect your shit...So, I think the cultural awareness for everybody on the whole is what they’re missing. (Athena, Transcript, 5.10.18)

This reflection came after Athena had shared several incidents of cultural insensitivity and disrespect from students and teachers towards her family. In the following story, Athena relates a conversation that transpired with her daughter’s third grade teacher after a field trip to a nearby plantation where Wampanoag history and culture is reenacted.

How the Fuck did you get a job in this district?

By Athena

The first year my daughter was at [the upper elementary school], they had hired a new teacher, nice, but I don't really care how nice you are. She was like, "Oh my gosh. [Your daughter] was my star student. She taught me everything that I needed to know about Wampanoag culture. And when we went to [field trip], she toured us around. I really wouldn't have known what I was doing if it wasn't for her." I'm glad that your school [university] that you passed to be a teacher, but... Bitch, did you really just tell me we are in Massachusetts where the fucking curriculum is Wampanoag history in 3rd god damn grade. You have a job in the fucking town where the Wampanoag live and you don't know nothing about Wampanoag [history and culture]? How the fuck did you get a job? Who hired you? Who was on this hiring committee? ...That to me is insanity.

(Transcript, 5.10.18)

The teacher assumed that her compliment of Athena's daughter would be well received.

She thought wrong and Athena did not hold back from expressing her disapproval.

Camille, the only Native administrator in the district and one of only three Native educators working in the Wampum Public Schools, agreed with Athena that everybody needs training in Native history and culture. "I feel that there needs to be training with everybody. I don't like to use the word cultural sensitivity, that's a weird word to me. I think we just need to be respectful and understanding of other people and who everybody is" (Transcript, 4.25.18). Like Athena, Camille believed that cultural education is key to cultivating an educational community in which everyone is respectful and understanding of one another.

Though most agreed that both teachers and students need a greater level of understanding, awareness, and sensitivity regarding Wampanoag and Pan-Indigenous history and culture, Leto noted that members of the Tribe were not always helpful or willing to take the time to explain Wampanoag culture to White teachers. Leto shared the story of a White teacher who was fearful of speaking to Native people, including Leto, as

a result of an incident that occurred when she was shamed for not knowing the proper term for traditional Native attire.

Takes five seconds to teach them

By Leto

When I first got the job here, there was a teacher that approached me and she's like, "I don't even know how to talk to you." I'm just like, "Open up your mouth sweetheart and you say whatever's on [your mind]..." She's like, "No, 'cause a long time ago, I didn't know the name of a regalia and I called it a costume and they tried to kill me." I just looked at her and I'm like, "Mm-hmm." But I get their frustration, because they're [members of the Tribe] looking at you like that's the most ignorant thing they heard all year. Okay, so it's huge. However, how would you know to call it anything other than that if that person didn't take five seconds out of their time to explain to you. I'm gonna tell you, "The name of it is a regalia, sweetheart. That's what we call it. Whether it's guy's dress or girl's dress, that's a regalia." I will tell you what hair ties are for. I will tell you, "we wear moccasins." I can tell you what type of materials we use because I have time. But if I didn't have time and I just wanted to say that's not what it's called, it's called a regalia, I still know that you took that little piece of information and when you're sitting around 20 of your friends, you just taught them if that conversation came up, and they're sitting around 100 people and it just taught them, so that's five extra [seconds].

(Transcript, 4.3.18)

Athena explained the unwillingness of some Tribal members to educate teachers on Native culture. "Our community has gone through so much. We have lost so much. We're not really open arms. 'Oh yeah, come learn this, come learn that.' Nope you gotta make us like you. You gotta work for it" (Transcript, 5.10.18).

In summary, participants believed that in addition to strengthening Indian Education within the public schools for Native students, there also needs to be intentional efforts to build the cultural awareness and competence of all staff and students in the schools. Though they did not articulate how or where this training should occur, their comments implied a desire to see Indian Education expand into every classroom within the Wampum Public Schools.

Hiring and Retaining Native Teachers and Other Teachers of Color

A final concern of Tribal parents and community leaders was the scant number of Native and other educators of color in the school district. Tribal participants expressed the need for a marked increase in the number of Native teachers and other teachers of color in Wampum Public Schools, believing that their absence from the schools equated to “a very limited application of Indigenous knowledge or culture” (Danielle, Transcript, 3.15.18).

“How do you make the best decisions for students of color if you don’t have the background yourself?” The absence or limited presence of educators of color in the Wampum Public Schools is a problem that has prevailed in the district since its inception. Though there was a Wampanoag teacher who later became a principal in Wampum during Elder Eddie’s time as a student in the district, he recalled that all of his teachers were White. Mother JoAnne, reflecting on her early years as Director of Indian Education, shared,

At that time, I would say the first ten years of my being Director of the Indian Education Program, I'll say the first five years, there was not one single teacher of color. There was not one single guidance counselor of color. There was no principals, no nothing. The school committee was all white...How do you make the best decisions for particularly, because I'm talking now of students of color including our Native American students... How do you make best decisions in curriculum development or in any facet of education and teaching, if you don't have that background yourself? There's no sharing, there's no sharing in the school committee, there's no sharing with the leaders...The principals and

teachers, okay, there's no sharing of culture or understanding. (Transcript, 6.11.18)

Though there are now a few staff of color in the district, including three members of the Wampanoag Tribe, people of color comprise less than two percent of the total population of educators in the district. Some Native parents complained about the absence of educators in the district from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds and the claims made by district leaders that they are seeking to hire more staff members of color.

They say they try to bring Natives into the schools. I know of many teachers that were Native that applied and never got the position... There's one teacher... but she just retired. We've never had teachers, per se that were teaching education. We had an art teacher but, again, in history that was true [there not being Native teachers in the district]. (Debby, Transcript, 5.2.18)

I have seen where they have had people submit resumes, and they've gone to the trash. I'm observing this, and they're saying, "Well, no one's applying." That's what they always say, "No one's applying." They're applying. They're just not receiving the interview. I know this personally, because we knew someone who applied from out of state, and she had all of the qualifications and beyond. They didn't even allow her an interview and said they never even received anything, like a resume or anything from her. We know they did. So, that's why I'm hoping and praying this man [Camille] stays. Again, they're claiming they don't have people applying. They do. (Michelle, Transcript, 6.27.18)

Debby and Michelle were adamant about how district leaders discourage and sabotage Native applicants. Michelle insisted that she witnessed the applications of Native

applicants being trashed by administrators in the district. She also stated repeatedly that she hopes Camille (the only Native administrator in the district) is not forced out of his position.

Michelle insisted that the district's failure to hire and retain teachers of color is an intentional and strategic move to maintain "power and control."

This school system doesn't have a Board of Ethics, so when they start putting those parameters in place, things will change. Why are all the resumes going straight to the superintendent's office? You've got a School Committee. You should have a Board of Ethics that goes and reviews these. They're not doing that. It's power and control. When you have too much of a good thing going, it might start to change ideas of, "Oh. Maybe these native people can begin to graduate, because they see someone else in there." (Transcript, 6.27.18)

In the above narratives, Michelle describes practices that were in place during her time as Director of Indian Education under previous superintendents. Her accusation that educators did not want Native students to have role models in the schools to inspire them to graduate is also a reference to her time as director when the graduation rate for Native students was below 50%.

Absolom speculated that district administrators were resistant to hiring educators of color and were quick to fire them due to distinct differences in how they teach and manage their classrooms.

I can think of two Wampanoag teachers who didn't have lots of problems... If they hire a Black teacher, they start counting down till they can get rid of him from his first day, or her first day. And [Wampum] has done this over and over.

They've had some excellent teachers where they've found reason to either not re-hire them, or to fire them. And this has happened over, and over, and over again... As recently as two years ago, there's a young man...who was teaching in [Wampum] and they chose not to re-hire him. They instead hired somebody who had lesser qualifications and lesser experience. (Transcript, 6.1.18)

Absolom attributed the district's discrimination against teachers of color to White administrators in the system wanting educators of color who are just like them.

It's the same fascist principle that is in operation in academia. When people look at diversity, by and large, what they want is a black version of themselves. Or a Native version of themselves. Or an Asian version of themselves... "if you have a red Ferrari, a blue Ferrari, a yellow Ferrari, and a white Ferrari, and a black Ferrari, do you have diversity?"... "No, 'cause they're all Ferraris, just in different colors." Now, if you have a Toyota and a Chevy and a Hyundai and a Honda, that's diversity. Some are trucks, some are cars, some are motorcycles, some are SUVs. That's where you have diversity. (Transcript, 6.1.18)

In summary, the absence or limited presence of Native teachers and teachers of color in Wampum Public Schools is another reason Native parents and community members believe that the schools are not a culturally or academically affirming and sustaining place for their children. In their view, having educators in the schools who look like their children and share their cultural background is essential to achieving the educational environment that supports and sustains their culture.

Conclusion

This chapter described how Native parents and community leaders conceptualized education and educational engagement. They were mainly not interested in engaging with the public schools in traditional, school-centric ways but instead had their own priorities which included cultural revitalization and continuity and their children's successful survival beyond high school through the acquisition of academic and life skills. While they imagined these embodiments of education occurring in alternative spaces outside of Wampum Public Schools, they also discussed ways of achieving their priorities within the public school system.

Native parents and community members were basically communicating their desire to be in control of their children's education. Their conceptualizations of education and educational engagement were an expression of educational sovereignty. Moll and Ruiz (2005) and other scholars define educational sovereignty as communities enacting local control over their language and culture in select spaces. Native parents' and community members' objectives to achieve language and cultural renewal and continuity in the Wampum Public Schools and alternative spaces are very much in line with the core priorities of education sovereignty, and the extent to which they have been able to achieve these goals will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Six: Indigenous Family and Community Member's Practices

Introduction

This chapter builds on discussion of Tribal members' perspectives but shifts from participants' conceptualizations of education and educational engagement and the multiple spaces in which to exercise it, to the actual ways they were engaging or partnering with/in Wampum Public Schools and for what purposes. This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first main section focuses specifically on Native parents' status or positioning within Wampum Public Schools which may help to explain the ways they chose to engage, for what purposes, and the outcomes of their engagement. The second section focuses specifically on Native community leaders, and similarly describes the focus of their engagement, their actual practices, and the outcome of their efforts.

Native Parents: Advocating for Equity and Equal Opportunities

There were multiple stories shared in the talking circle and during individual conversations and interviews with Native parents that revealed a group of outspoken advocates for their children and other Native and non-Native children of color. Their advocacy was often a response to policies and practices in the public schools that they believed unfairly targeted their children and denied them equal access to opportunities afforded to other, mainly White, students. The six Native parent participants whose perspectives are reflected in this section all have children in Wampum Public Schools. They are: (1) Absolom Attiquin, a professor and musician with a son who attends Wampum Middle/High School; (2) Athena, a young mother with a son and daughter in the upper elementary school who recently returned to school to complete her

undergraduate degree; (3) Michelle, a nurse, former Director of Indian Education, and mother with children in all three of Wampum Public Schools as well as two high school graduates, (4) Debby, a Council Woman for the Wampanoag Tribe, Chairwoman of the Indian Education Parent Committee, and the mother of a daughter in the upper elementary school and nephew who attends a local community college; (5) Trena, Business Manager for WLRP, Development Director of the National Indian Education Association, and a mother of two daughters, one who is a college student and another who attends Wampum Middle/High School; and (6) Leto, Director of Indian Education, a paraprofessional in the district, and the mother of a son in the upper elementary school.

This section is divided into three main subsections that address the following: (1) the issues that served as the focus or purpose of their advocacy; (2) the subjects or beneficiaries of their advocacy (their own children vs other, mainly Native children) as well as the results or outcomes of their efforts; and (3) how they were received or responded to by educators.

Advocating for Equity and Equal Opportunities

Native parents' engagement with/in the Wampum Public Schools entailed advocating to change policies and practices in the schools that they believed unfairly targeted or excluded their children, including issues related to discipline, attendance, and opportunities. Though their stories suggest that their child(ren)'s racial and cultural identity is a factor in how they are treated or mistreated in the school system, their stories also revealed the significance or relevance of their child(ren)'s intersectional identities in the types of issues they found themselves advocating for.

“He was really disruptive so we’re gonna keep him in for recess.” The first story of advocacy concerns a disciplinary matter involving Athena’s son when he was in second grade. The story relays Athena’s account of a “Flag Day” incident and her disapproval of the way educators handled the situation.

You Should Throw in a Little Color on Your Flag Day

By Athena

I had to argue with the school last year over “Flag Day” because my son didn’t want to sing the “Flag Day” song. What the fuck does he want to sing “High Ho America” bullshit for? He’s not interested. They were like, “Well, it’s “Flag Day” and some of the other kids found it disrespectful.” “None of the other kids found it disrespectful that my kid was giggling during the fucking flag song, you did, and I don’t care that you did because your tie is racist with your little stick figures of brown people and Indians. Get that shit off,” I told the principal. Come on... They asked him, “why do you keep interrupting?” And he said, “I’m not really interested in ‘Flag Day.’” “Okay, did you guys offer him... Maybe you could go home and talk to your mom about learning some Wampanoag songs for “Flag [Day].” Maybe your mom could come in and teach us a song.” Calling me and saying, “[Your son] wasn’t interested in “Flag Day.” He was really disruptive so we’re gonna keep him in for recess.” “You’re not keeping my kid in for shit. He doesn’t like your flag. Why would he?”... And I’m just like, “You know, think outside the box. You have literally, you’re in a school... It’s named after a [Wampum] Wampanoag person. You even give out an award in his honor, every single year. But you didn’t even think for one second that maybe you should throw in a little color on your ‘Flag Day.’ You have, that’s right, our flag is not outside of your school”... It brings in the fact that the Massachusetts’ state flag says, “We seek peace by the sword.” You want my son to put his hand over a heart when there’s a depiction of himself on there. And basically saying, “If you resist, we’ll kill you?” Ah, I don’t think so.

(Transcript, 5.10.18)

This story by Athena reveals her belief that Wampum educators, not her son, were at fault for their failure to be sensitive to and inclusive of Wampanoag students in their “Flag Day” preparations and proceedings. It is evident from her account of the incident that educators did not consider the potential offensiveness of “Flag Day” to Wampanoag students and families, nor did they take responsibility for their oversight. Instead, they reprimanded and sought to discipline her son for his refusal to participate in their patriotic event.

“They'd never really looked at that part of his IEP.” Absolom’s story, like Athena’s, describes an experience involving his son and a disciplinary issue. He tells the story of his son’s first month as a student in Wampum and what he interpreted as educators’ racialized representation of him as a disciplinary problem.

A Call Every Friday

By Absolom

He started third grade in [Wampum]. [His previous school] was a very different experience and it was largely because the school was mostly kids of color. I was very happy to have him there. He was on an IEP. They were very accommodating to work with, around his IEP, around his different learning issues, et cetera. So, very happy to have him there. And like I said, the dynamic almost changed overnight when we came here in third grade. I'm getting a call almost every Friday. I finally went in and said, “Okay, so far, he's been in school five weeks, and every Friday I've gotten a phone call about his behavior. He was in school in [his previous district] for four years, and I never got a single phone call. But now, all of a sudden, I'm getting these phone calls. Exactly what's going on?” Well, discovered, of course, the two dynamics, about with the black kids are criminal and needs to be regarded as such. That was one dynamic. The other factor was apparently they'd never really looked at that part of his IEP. So, the end result was, I basically had them expunge his entire disciplinary record, which, it was interesting, the principal had no problem. The assistant principal at the time, “Oh, well, we can't do that.” I said, “Well okay.” And she [the principal] was like, “Oh yeah,” when she realized, “uh oh, we're not accommodating.” But the assistant principal...he tried to argue the point. And I said, “Well, it's like this, you failed to provide proper accommodations for a student with disabilities, and you're therefore penalizing him for your failure.” I said, “So, the choice is you can expunge the record, or I can sue you.”

(Transcript, 6.1.18)

In Absolom’s view, his son was being penalized for something that was not his fault. Just as Athena blamed and lambasted her son’s teachers and administrators for their failure to be culturally inclusive of Wampanoag students in “Flag Day” proceedings, Absolom confronted school officials for their failure to provide appropriate, law required accommodations for his child. As a result of his advocacy and knowledge of IEP laws, he was able to get his son’s disciplinary record expunged.

“They had her...sign off saying that she no longer wanted the IEP.” In another example of advocacy involving a student on an IEP, Michelle shared the story of her eldest daughter’s last three months of high school and her fears that her daughter would not graduate.

They [school staff] had her, because she had turned 18 in February, sign off saying that she no longer wanted the IEP. Of course, they're telling her, and she's big headed and, “Oh. I'm 18 now. I can do this,” signed herself out of it. I went behind them, and I said, “Put her on a 504.” These are the things what I mean. It's manipulation. I said, “You guys needed me all school year. Now, you don't need me to make sure that she graduates?” I said, “If she does not graduate, I'm coming back to the school.” (Transcript, 6.27.18)

Michelle’s daughter has ADHD and had been on an IEP since she was in elementary school. Michelle suspected that the actions of the educators were manipulative and intended to prevent her daughter from graduating. Her interpretation of the situation stemmed from incidents she witnessed during her time as Director of Indian Education that involved, in her perception, efforts by educators to prevent Native students from graduating.

When I came into the system [as Director of Indian Education], the average high school diploma rate for [Native] students was probably at a 30% or 40%. They were using avenues to get the students to either quit school or just say, “You'll have to go through summer school to graduate.” There was always something that came up at the end of the school year, “Oh. You don't have enough electives,” or, “You don't have the grades for this.” There were potholes being

brought about. It was done in a very slick manner. I mean, if you weren't paying attention, then it would just bypass you. They had a lot of private meetings with individual students without parents being present, so-called counseling, but they were not counseling. They were ... “this is how we can get the student out of the school.” (Transcript, 6.27.18)

Though Michelle believed that her daughter and previous Native students were unfairly targeted and pressured to drop out or prevented from graduating by school staff, she did note that some educators “do not agree with what’s been going on, but they do not speak out” because they are “fearful of [losing] their jobs” (Transcript, 6.27.18). However, in the case involving her daughter, some of these educators, who Michelle referred to as her “inside people,” privately promised “We will make sure she graduates” (Transcript, 6.27.18).

Similar to Absolom’s struggle concerning the district’s failure to provide accommodations for his son, Michelle did not provide an explanation about why she believed educators in Wampum were targeting Native students, including her own child. From the interviews it is unclear why, in the past, these practices were taking place. However, over the past three years, according to district administrators and Tribal members alike, 100% of Native seniors have graduated from Wampum Public schools. Moreover, the story involving Michelle’s daughter had a positive ending, she graduated.

“You're only supposed to miss seven days out of the year.” In addition to disciplinary matters and graduation concerns, both of which involved students with IEPs, attendance was another focus of advocacy. Debby shared the story of an incident that she

believed was blown out of proportion and falsely and unfairly portrayed her daughter as truant and she and her husband as negligent parents.

I experienced something totally different with my daughter, where she had issues...and going back and forth to the doctors, when she would get pneumonia or an ear infection. They were trying to say, “You're only supposed to miss seven days out of the year.” I was trying to explain to them she was sick. When they had the meeting with my husband and the mental rehabilitation [specialist] and 10 other people from the school administration, again, I would have felt intimidated if I couldn't advocate for myself and if my husband wasn't there because there's a lot of single parents, okay? My husband had missed work and he's very quiet but my belief is if your kid is sick, you keep them home to get better. They can't even function at school if they're not feeling well. (Transcript, 5.2.18)

Educators suggested at the meeting that her daughter was having “mental issues” and feigning sickness, to which Debby responded, “if that’s the case, I can bring her to Indian Health Services where she can affiliate herself with Tribal Members that will be on the same level as her. Where she is [not] intimidated” (Transcript, 5.2.18). Debby believed that teachers and administrators in the district target Native families, expecting them to not advocate for themselves and to surrender to the “expertise” of educators. She also accused them of overstepping and infringing on the Tribe’s sovereignty in matters of health and wellness for its members.

During this conversation and in the talking circle with other Native parents, Debby pointed out that she has been an extremely active parent in the district for her own child and nephew as well as for other Native students. She shared that she is “not one of

them slack parents” and that she helps her daughter with homework and is aware of everything her daughter is learning (Transcript, 5.2.18). During the talking circle, Debby commented that despite her daughter’s absences, she is an “A” student. Debby was offended by educators’ assumption that she and her husband are neglectful parents who do not value the importance of education and by what she perceived as the school’s implied accusation that truancy was/is mainly a problem among Native children. “They’re saying, ‘We have a high truancy for children,’ and I know what they’re saying, Native American children. I knew exactly what they were saying” (Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18).

“The propensity to criminalize males of color comes around seventh grade.”

Absolom firmly believes that males of color in Wampum Public School are criminalized and this issue was yet another focus of advocacy. Last school year, Absolom and Andrew, a community leader and tutor in the Indian Education Program, partnered to advocate for the establishment of “I Am My Brother’s Keeper” (IAMBK) to support males of color in the middle/high school. “I Am My Brother’s Keeper” is a national program that, according to Andrew, was started by five Black police officers and offers enrichment activities like fieldtrips for black boys. Andrew expressed that for “our kids [kids of color], good enough is not okay” (Transcript, 5.15.18). Andrew believes that “if we can get our kids together and tell them about their history, how what impacts them now, and what will happen if they take a certain path, we can help them” (Transcript, 5.15.18).

The following story captures a narrative shared by Absolom about a meeting that he and Andrew had with a group of educators in the district about starting the IAMBK

program. He highlights the response of an adjustment counselor that confirmed his assertion about the criminalization of males of color in the system and validated the need for the program.

In having the meeting, talking about the issues that young men experience when they get to about seventh grade, and he [Andrew] brought in Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu's book, "Undoing the Conspiracy Against Young Black Boys." Bringing that in and showing them saying, "You know, we could change this from black boy to native boy, whatever." But if we're talking about anything but a white kid, this is what we're experiencing. Well, everybody seemed receptive, and then I remember [the adjustment counselor] pipes in, "I have a wonderful book." And her book was, the book that she was referencing, the title escapes me right now, but I had read it and it's actually talking about what leads to the formation of gangs in the inner city. (Transcript, 6.1.18)

Absolom called the adjustment counselor out on, what he interpreted as, her racist perceptions of and implicit bias towards Black males, and she was defensive in her initial response.

"Our kids get a pat on the back; their kids get directed to opportunities." A final example of parent participants' advocacy concerned instances where they believed their children were being denied academic and/or enrichment opportunities and were being discouraged from considering college as an option.

It seems that the underlying structure of the school is to basically break the spirit of our kids in every way possible, and if our kids are achieving or doing well, what happens is, our kids get a pat on the back, their kids get directed to

opportunities. “Oh, you're doing really well. Hey here's a scholarship.” That's the way they play it. (Absolom, Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18)

In one example involving his son, Absolom shared,

Like I said, in terms of the opportunities, they're suddenly very quiet with our kids when it comes to bridging opportunities. It took four phone calls to get [my son] on AV squad, and when he got on AV squad, they wanted to make him on camera talent, and I said, “Yes. I know.” Again, they want to speak over me. I know, “let's let little nigga sing and dance in front of the camera” while everybody else's kids learn how to run the camera. (Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18)

In this example, Absolom notes that the tactic used by educators to deny his son and other students of color opportunities is to withhold information from them and to make the process of gaining access difficult for parents who become aware of and interested in these hidden opportunities for their children.

In Absolom's view, students of color, mainly males, were not only being denied educational and enrichment opportunities, but they were also being discouraged from pursuing higher education. During the talking circle, Absolom and other parents in attendance engaged in a conversation about how this affected their children.

Absolom: I was saying one of the other little interesting things I've noticed. I would say from about seventh grade up until the present, it has been an attempt to discourage me from preparing my child to go to college. Where they start with the, “well, college isn't for everybody,” speech, and they like to press that, and over and over again.

Trena: Who says that?

Athena: Dude, they already started with my kid and he's nine.

Trena: What???

Absolom: When you're dealing with special ed., that's automatic. College is not an option, blah, blah, Blah...

Debby: A trade school, they said, instead of college?

Absolom: P.S., he's [my son's] on honor roll.

Trena: I'm gonna have to talk to [my daughter] about this whole college thing. I've never heard ... and maybe it's just with boys and young men, that ... the whole, "Oh, you don't need to go to college," because that's bullshit.

Absolom: It's the boys. Just the boys, because I've seen it. It's not by accident that it's mostly the young ladies coming out, this is not to say they're not brilliant, but it's mostly the young ladies were coming out and achieving beyond high school. It's sort of like boys are limping along or limping through unless they got somebody behind them.

(Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18)

In this dialogue, Absolom and Athena, both parents of sons, share examples of district educators, as early as elementary school, promoting a message to them and their children that "college isn't for everybody." According to Absolom, this is a speech that is delivered "over and over again," solely to the boys of color and automatically to students with disabilities. Though Michelle's perspective is not captured in the above conversation, the story that she shared about her eldest daughter's last three months of high school, supports Absolom's assertion that students of color with special needs experience the most challenges navigating and succeeding in the school system. Despite some educators' efforts to discourage his son from considering college as an option, Absolom has persisted in advocating for him and seeking out opportunities like the dual enrollment program which would allow his son to take college courses at a local community college during his junior and senior year of high school.

In sum, Native parents' agency were responses to grievances they had against the school system pertaining to disciplinary and/or exclusionary practices. Their advocacy

focused on securing fair and equitable treatment for their children within the school system by holding teachers and administrators accountable for practicing just disciplinary procedures, following IEP laws, supporting their children to finish high school, and ensuring that enrichment opportunities are also available to their children. They defended their children against what they perceived as fallacious accusations and labels by educators, and, in Absolom and Andrew's case, advocated for a program that would equip their children to combat systemic racism.

The advocacy of Native parents revealed the significance of race, gender, and dis/ability regarding how their children were perceived and treated by educators in the district. While Native girls were not immune from being accused of and penalized for deviant or noncompliant behaviors, being denied educational opportunities, and being discouraged from pursuing higher education, unless disability was a factor, there were marked differences in the experiences of Native boys versus Native girls in the school system. According to parents' stories, Native boys were more likely to be perceived as behavior problems and threatening while Native girls were accused of and reprimanded for truancy. Moreover, unless a Native female student also had a disability, they appeared less likely to be blatantly denied opportunities and discouraged from considering college as an option.

Advocating for Their Kids and Others

The personal stories told by Athena, Absolom, Debby, and Michelle about their advocacy revealed their displeasure with the school system as well as their expectations that school policies and practices pertaining to discipline, academics, attendance, and opportunities be fair, just and equitable. They were outspoken advocates for their

children and other, mainly Native, children in the public-school system. This section more explicitly describes instances in which they were advocating for their own kids versus instances in which their advocacy work was for the benefit of other, mainly Native students. It also more explicitly describes the results of their advocacy while considering factors that may explain their success or resistance to their efforts.

Advocating for Their Own

Absolom, Athena, Debby, Michelle, and Trena, all shared stories in which they felt the need to advocate for their own children. Some of their stories of advocacy are captured above and are elaborated on in this section. A few more specific examples are also described in this section.

“Your son's been getting infractions on the bus.” Athena shared multiple stories of meeting with administrators and teachers to advocate for her son. The aforementioned “Flag Day” story, the story that was shared in the previous chapter about the incident in which her son was told by a classmate that he was “too white to be Wampanoag,” and the following story about multiple infractions that her son received on the school bus all serve as examples of times in which Athena refused to be silent and unquestionably accept the account, actions, and authority of administrators and teachers. In the case of the “Flag Day” incident, Athena criticized teachers and administrators for not being inclusive of other cultures and flags in their song and dance selections while also expressing her disapproval of the decision to take away her son’s recess. She adamantly refused to allow her son to be penalized for his defiant protest of “Flag Day” which she believed could have been avoided. Athena spoke up again when her son’s third grade teacher failed to address the incident in which her son was told, “you are too

white to be Wampanoag” during a lesson on the French and Indian War. The following story provides yet another example of Athena’s advocacy for her son.

Three Bus Infractions This Week
By Athena

Just yesterday I got a phone call from the school. “Oh, it's not a problem. Everything's fine, but your son's been getting infractions on the bus, not sitting on his seat.” It's always something. You guys always have to call me about something. She was like, “well he got three infractions this week. One was on Wednesday afternoon, one was on Thursday afternoon and one was on Thursday morning.” Well, now I know you're lying because my son doesn't ride the bus on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday [afternoons]. He goes to language class. Where's the slip? If it happened on Monday ... If it happened on Wednesday afternoon and on Thursday morning, why didn't I get a call? The two back to back instances where you pretend[ing] [he] rode the bus? You're lying. It's weird. The best part about it is the phone call came as I'm sitting next to my cousin who's about to go to a meeting with the same administrator over her nephew 'cause they don't know how to act.

(Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18)

In this story, Athena articulates that school staff are always calling about something and that she is not the only Native parent being called to the schools for meetings about her child’s behavior. Athena has advocated for her son on many occasions throughout his schooling in Wampum. Her advocacy has entailed resisting and refusing school official’s assessment of her son and expectation that she listens to and accept their “professional” opinions and recommendations of disciplinary consequences for his behavior.

“Put her on a 504.” Absolom and Michelle, like Athena, are also ardent advocates for their own children. However, their advocacy, in contrast to Athena’s, produced more tangible results. Through their advocacy for their children with special needs, they were able to achieve the goals of their advocacy. They were able to move beyond expressing their disapproval with educators’ handling of the situations involving their children to requesting and persuading educator to rectify the wrongs done against them and their children.

Because of Absolom's knowledge of special education laws and the rights of students and parents, and due to his confidence and ability to communicate his knowledge of these laws and the school's violation of them as it concerned his son, he was able to convince administrators to expunge his son's disciplinary record. "After he [my son] had gotten his diagnosis from Boston Children's Hospital, I went and got the parent advocacy training for special needs. So, yeah, I kinda went in [to the meeting] knowing that this is the situation and this is the expectation" (Absolom, Transcript, 6.1.18).

Michelle is also knowledgeable about the rights of students with special needs and their parents. Like Absolom, she had the confidence to confront and challenge her daughter's teachers and administrators for the private meeting that they had with her daughter when she turned 18 to dismiss her IEP during her last few months of high school. Michelle knew to request a 504 Plan in its place and was fortunate to have "insiders," connections with teachers and leaders in the school who promised to do everything they could to ensure that her daughter graduated. Her knowledge, connections, and possibly her former role in the district as Director of Indian Education, allowed her to move beyond advocacy to securing support for her daughter to graduate.

"Why wouldn't I advocate for my own kids?" Like Michelle and Absolom, Debby was able to advocate for her daughter in a way that resulted in actionable steps to provide her daughter with necessary support. In response to the large group of 10 or 11 teachers, administrators, and specialists staging an intervention and accusing their daughter of having a mental illness, Debby shared,

I would have felt intimidated if I couldn't advocate for myself and if my husband wasn't there because there's a lot of single parents, okay?.. After that meeting, I told them, "I advocate for kids with IEPs and education and so forth, so why wouldn't I advocate for my own kids? Why wouldn't I think education is the most important thing?" By the time we were done, it was a whole different scenario.

(Transcript, 5.2.18)

Debby attributed her ability to advocate for her daughter to her self-assuredness and the presence of her husband. Moreover, Debby's belief that education "is the most important thing," is a strong impetus for her advocacy for own daughter and other children. Debby concluded this story by sharing its resolution.

Again, they never told me about that 504 Form. It wasn't until just recently that I had addressed it and got it. That's when the process went through, but I didn't know anything about it [a 504 Plan]. But I'm in the medical field. When I heard somebody ask for it, that's when a light on my switch went on and [I] went, "Okay, hold on. That's what I should be asking for." Again, if I wasn't in the field, how would I have known? I had a big problem with that. My feeling on it is, again, if the families can't advocate for themselves and don't know about the access they have to whatever... (Transcript, 5.2.18)

Debby's background in the medical field allowed her to understand the purpose of a 504 Plan when she heard somebody ask for it and to realize that it was the solution to her daughter's situation. This knowledge allowed her to shift from a defensive stance to a solutions-oriented posture of empowerment. She moved from merely defending her daughter to requesting and obtaining appropriate services to meet her daughter's needs.

Debby raises a legitimate concern for other parents who do not have the confidence to advocate for their children or who remain uninformed and unaware of school services for their children. She and other Native parents like Absolom, Leto, and Michelle have thus stepped in to advocate for not only their own children but other, mainly Native, students as well.

Advocating for Other Children

Debby, Absolom, Leto, and Michelle, are examples of parents who claimed to advocate, not only for their own children, but other, mainly Native, children as well. They all shared stories of instances in which they advocated for other Native students, students of color, and in Leto's case, White students.

“I speak not for mine, but for every other Wampanoag family around here.”

Michelle, during her time as Director of Indian Education, spent a lot of time advocating for Native students and their families, including Debby's, regarding educational matters and what she deemed as breaches in proper protocols for addressing disciplinary matters involving Native students. Her account of advocacy is captured in the following story.

Quick to Call the Police and DCF

By Michelle

I started calling them to the carpet on what they were doing. I advised them they could no longer have private meetings with students without myself, or a parent, or someone else being present. I would go when they go calling the police officers on students. They were calling the police to the school for students without calling the parents first. I would actually go to court. I've gone as far as [town] to get my [Native] kids out of the jail system.

I've always been hands on. When I would see these situations, I started calling in parents. I was calling in some of the elected members on the Tribal Council. I have a parent advocate or educational advocate I would work with. I called her in to make sure they were using their [students'] IEP[s]...which a lot of them [teachers] were not...I went and knocked on doors. When they had DCF coming into the school system, I said, “I need to be present, because I need to know what is the reason behind these cases.” Some

of them were valid, but some of them...again, instead of calling DCF to parent our parents, why not call the parent in and say, "Here, this is how we can help you," instead of saying, "Well, this is a DCF issue now"... Now you have a DCF representative coming into the school, badge wearing, and you obviously know where they're going to...Then you see particular parents that everyone sees coming in, so that's where the trauma comes in. I would say to them, "You can't have a meeting with the parent without calling a DCF worker? What does DCF have to do with school education? You're crossing the lines. What does the police coming into the school systems have to do with school education?"

(Transcript, 6.27.18)

Michelle's confidence and courage to speak up and require accountability from educators is evidence of her concern for the collective good of all Native students.

I want to know what you're doing for everyone else. Because I speak not for mine, but for every other Wampanoag family around here...there are so many different tribal people within this melting pot. We should be helping each other. (Michelle, Transcript, 6.27.18)

Michelle's account of her actions during her time as Director of Indian Education along with her ongoing advocacy for her children and other Native children through her continued participation on the Indian Education Parent Committee confirm her assertion that she speaks and fights for "every other Wampanoag family," not just her own.

"This is their first time that they do get to be together, all the way together."

Leto, a paraprofessional in the district and the current Director of Indian Education, like her predecessors, Michelle and Clan Mother JoAnne, is an outspoken advocate for not only Native students but all students within the public-school system. She has defended Native students and their right to congregate and commune in a separate space through Indian Education programming against teachers who complained, "I kind of feel like you're segregating them when you bring them to lunch bunches or when you call them

down. It's just the Natives that come down" (Transcript, 4.3.18). Leto's response to these critics is, "They [Native students] are sitting with all of you, all day long, so this is their first time that they do get to be together, all the way together, and it shouldn't make that difference, because you guys should know, you should trust me" (Transcript, 4.3.18).

Leto shared that her message to Native students as director of and teacher in Indian Education is to be their best selves, to embrace love and hope, and to persevere.

[Be open to all people...don't be like [them]...Be [y]our best...be better than [them]

Don't waste your time on anger, 'cause it's not getting you anywhere.

Do not meet ignorance with ignorance. It gets you nowhere.

Nothing can hit you too hard without making you stronger.

You're all right. You know how to survive, and you have thick skin. Keep rolling with the alligators and your skin develops thick[er]. (Transcript, 4.3.18)

Leto acknowledges the impact of colonial history on Wampanoag people, its contribution to feelings of anger and resentment in contemporary Native students, and the ongoing stresses and struggles (drug and alcohol addiction, death via overdoses and suicide, hunger, lack of sleep) that Native families and students face. "How do you teach life if everybody around you is dying? How do you try to create happiness when it's a sad story after sad story?" (Transcript, 5.1.18). The Indian Education room has served as a sacred and safe space for Leto to speak life to Native students, and she hopes that by affirming them, reminding them of their strength and resiliency, and challenging them to be better, they will have the knowhow to survive in an education system and society that does not support their survival.

“We're ridding ignorance the more that I bring them in.” In addition to resisting the complaints of some teachers by defending Indian Education and Native students' right to escape to the safe and segregated spaces the program provides, Leto has also found herself in the position of advocating for the inclusion of non-Native students in Indian Education spaces and programming against Native parents. Native parents have complained to her about allowing non-Native students into the Indian Education room at the middle/high school and about allowing non-Native students to participate in Indian Education lunch bunches at the elementary schools. When one parent complained, “I want them to just be around each other and not around anybody else,” Leto responded, “That's not gonna happen, because you, lady, your kid's the one that brought 15 non-Natives in with them as their friends, and guess what? They all got a hug from me” (Transcript, 4.3.18). Native students are allowed to bring their non-Native friends to Indian Education spaces because Leto believes, “we're ridding ignorance the more that I bring them in and it stops everybody that's in my Native community from being prejudiced against each other” (Transcript, 5.1.18). Leto asserts that non-Native students benefit from participation in Indian Education because it helps them to develop a greater awareness of and respect for Wampanoag people and culture. Also, because colorism was named (by several Native participants including Leto) as an issue in the Wampanoag community, Leto believed that having Black students and other non-Native students in Indian Education spaces is beneficial to Native students who may follow the lead of their parents by expressing prejudice against other Wampanoag who are darker in complexion or phenotypically white in appearance.

“The majority of our students in this school are Caucasian. I’ll still go to bat for them.” A final way that Leto pushes back against the critique of others, including her own people, is through her advocacy for White students.

The majority of our students in this school are Caucasian. I’m still their favorite.

I’ll still go to town and to bat for them because should they be punished for what their ancestors did? No. Do they still have moms that wish that they’re sending them to a safe place? Absolutely.

Among the Tribal community, Leto was the only member who mentioned advocacy for White students. This may be due in part to her role as a paraprofessional in the district. However, given her message of love, hope, healing, and turning the other cheek, her concern for White students is more likely an attribute of her character and perspective which are a result of her experiences.

“I have a tendency to think about not just what would be good for my child but what will have an impact for all of the kids.” Absolom’s approach to advocacy is different from Leto’s. His loyalties lie mainly, and arguably, solely, with males of color, particularly Black and Native males. He also has a more militant approach to resistance and advocacy. The plight that he and Andrew faced trying to gain support to establish the “I Am My Brother’s Keeper” (IAMBK) program in Wampum Middle/High School serves as an example of militant advocacy for males of color in the school system, including his son.

One of the impetuses for wanting to start the IAMBK program was, as Absolom reported, a culture of racism that pervaded the campus and was allowed to thrive. According to Absolom, Black and Native males at the high school complained that “Kids

are walking around calling each other nigger and saying nigger, and da, da, da, da, da” (Tribal Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18). During an initial meeting of the program, a student shared, “These white kids will say nigger right in front of the teachers in the halls and the teachers don't say a word” (Transcript, 6.1.18). In response, Absolom gave students the following instructions.

Well, what you do is when you see him, mad in the hallway, [say], “Yo, cracker, what up whitey?” I said, “Do that a few times and see what happens.” And they did that a few times and of course that got questioned. And said, “Well, you don't have a problem when he says nigger so why can't I call him a cracker? He can say nigger all he wants, but I can't call him a cracker?” (Transcript, 6.1.18)

Absolom suspects that the district’s support of the program stopped as a result of this retaliatory tactic that he advised and students followed. So, Absolom decided to take his cause and advocacy to the school committee.

And I talked about the nigger pass at the school committee meeting. And mentioned the fact that the athletes, in particular, feel empowered to use this word and I was glad to say that 'cause the [White] head coach grew up in [a nearby town], and there are a lot of people who know him. And yeah, he's very liberal with the use of the word nigger, in his youth. And so, apparently, he's created a culture of comfort with that word among the athletes. So, yeah, these are some of the interesting episodes and experiences. (Transcript, 6.1.18)

The outcome of the meeting was that school administration renewed support for the program though Absolom struggled finding a convenient time for students to participate.

Initially, it was offered after school but attendance was low, so, he planned to secure a space to have meetings during students' lunch time.

Absolom counted himself among a few Native parents whose advocacy extends beyond fighting for his own child. When asked about the involvement of other Native parents, he shared,

There are a handful who are involved. I think the only difference in the dynamic of my involvement is I have a tendency to think about not just what would be good for my child but what will have an impact for all of the kids of this ethos, we'll say. And have a couple of parents who think like that. You have Michelle, who's that kind of parent. You have...of the present day parents, you have Michelle and you have Leto. And everybody else I would say, if they're involved, it's purely for their kid. It's purely about what will my child get out of it? Not, a larger picture. Which is somewhat unfortunate but, by the same token, while it's good that there is at least somebody advocating for their kid. (Transcript, 6.1.18)

“We have to be there when it comes to policy and making sure [it’s] implemented.” My analysis confirms Absolom’s assessment that just a handful of parents (Michelle, Leto, and himself) are advocates for students other than their own children. Interviews and observations also revealed that Trena belongs in this category of parents. However, Trena’s conception and practices of advocacy centered around having a seat “at the table when it comes to policy” making. While most parent participants were reactive to school and district policies and practices that exclude or unfairly target Native students, Trena was proactive in her stance and believed that the best way to create a more equitable educational system for their children was to be part of the

decision making and implementation regarding policy. Her stance is captured in the following story.

You have to be at the table when it comes to policy

By Trena

I talked to James (an administrator in the district) because we had issues with [my daughter] being late. I was like, “this is bullshit because she's late 30 seconds, a minute, and then you give her two hours of detention.” It seems to be massive inequity, and they're like, “you should join the parent, there's a parent committee.” Next time it comes up, I just think we should join it and be part of the policy making process. This is something that James talked about. It's a committee that the school district has where parents sit on it and determine different policy issues, and are a part of policy making. He said that it's generally, there's a mass email, and I was like, “I want to be on there because I think this whole discipline around being late is absurd.” He's like, “Yep. Next time it comes up, just apply and see how it goes.” I don't know what the process is for getting on the parent committee. That's part of the school, but I felt like, “yeah, we definitely need to be a committee to be part of policy” because, at the end of the day, and I see this with my work with National Indian Ed, that you have to be at the table when it comes to policy. Yes. I think we all have to advocate as parents, but we have to be there when it comes to policy and making sure that policy that's implemented.

(Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18)

Trena, through her former work with the Tribal government, and her current work with WLRP and the National Indian Education, knows how important it is to have a seat at the table and be part of policy making. The “parent committee” that Trena referenced and encouraged other Tribal parents to join in the above narrative is actually called the “school council.” Each of the schools have one and the council consists of parents, at least one community member, some teachers, and school administrators. Parents on the council serve for a period of three years and must apply and receive majority votes in order to become members. As James, the administrator noted, announcements for parents to apply are sent through a mass email. Since these announcements are sent every three years in a mass email, it is not surprising that Trena and the other parent

participants were not aware of the council. If James had not sought Trena out and encouraged her to apply, she would still be unaware of the council's existence.

Trena's role and results in policy making will be further discussed in the section on community leaders' agency. This section on parent advocacy now wraps up with participants' perspectives about how teachers and administration responded to their advocacy.

School District's Response to Parent Advocates

Native parent participants believed that they were treated differently by educators because of their race. They accused teachers and administrators of presenting themselves as experts and professionals while perceiving and treating Native parents as uneducated subordinates who should not question their authority. Absolom asserted, "They are different in how they relate to parents of color. And when I go to meetings, I almost always have to re-establish, okay, you're not talking to an idiot" (Transcript, 6.1.18). Absolom also insisted, "There's a certain engagement, they don't want to be questioned in the engagement, the engagement is they tell you and you do it" (Transcript, 6.1.18). Likewise, in Athena's narrative about the call she received from an administrator in the district about her son's bus infractions, she lamented, "I feel like they just want me to just be their dumb Indian and yeah. Just, 'Okay, just believe what we say. We're the professionals. We've gone to school'" (Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18).

Absolom and Michelle maintained that speaking out and advocating for their children and others almost always resulted in retaliation from administrators. They each shared stories of their children either being suspended or denied opportunities because of their decision as parents to speak up about issues regarding inequities in the school

system. During the talking circle with Native parents, I shared findings from my conversations and interviews with administrators that centered around their expressed desire to listen to parents, welcome their feedback, and support parents' advocacy for their children. Absolom responded with the following story.

If You Speak Out, They Target Your Children

By Absolom

One of the things I notice here on the sheet, when you say allowing families to be heard and valued, asking for and welcoming their feedback, supporting and honoring parents' advocacy for their children. Well, it's kind of hard for a school district to do that when they don't call you back or email you back. I know that, in terms of a couple of issues I wanted to address around, that she [a district administrator] never got back to me on, I finally had to go to [a public comment meeting at the school committee]. Basically, had to take what should have been a two-person conversation to the school committee on local access television. The school has a really bad habit of...if you speak up, they target your child...within a week of [speaking out against the female administrator during a public comment meeting] my son got suspended... Within a week, and the thing was I told him, watch yourself, watch yourself 'cause I just painted a target on your back, and sure enough I get that phone call.

(Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18)

Michelle also believed that her children were targeted as a result of her outspokenness and advocacy during her time as Director of Indian Education.

My children have been targeted since I opened my mouth. Because of the role that I played, it bounced off of me, and they went to my children. My oldest son's eighth grade trip was to DC, he was denied to go to the trip because they said they didn't think he could wake up on time to hear the alarm clock to go on the trip...I brought in a group of people to fight for me, because when it's your child, you're kind of into it. Your feelings are different. Then they say, "Oh, no. Well, you didn't pay enough." ...I couldn't believe it, could not believe it. That's when it

really hit me that they are really targeting you and your family. (Transcript, 6.27.18)

Native parents' description of the ways that educators responded to their outspokenness caused Debby to reflect, "It's almost like you gotta ... it's not even be an advocate for your kid. It's almost like you got to push for your kid. You gotta almost fight against the school for your child instead of them working with you" (Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18). These findings confirm Dyrness' (2011) assertion that, "When the voices of nondominant parents are raised, their "critique is censored, silenced, and condemned" (p. 36).

Section Conclusion

This section highlighted the advocacy work of six Native parents, describing their priorities and plight as vested in school policies and practices which they perceived as inequitable and unfairly targeted their children and other, mainly Native, students. The advocacy work of these Native parents mainly entailed reactive and individual ventures to achieve equity and acquire opportunities for their own kids, other Native students, and/or students of color in general. Native parent participants expressed that their efforts were often not taken seriously by educators in the district or that they were treated in a dismissive or demeaning manner. This finding aligns with research literature on other minoritized parents, who are mainly perceived and treated as subordinates in the school system and are resisted when they raise their voices in protests against policies and practices that unfairly target their children and deny them the same opportunities that are afforded to White students (Dyrness, 2011; Fennimore, 2017).

Native Community Leaders' Agency

The next section focuses on the active and engaged community of Native leaders who, through their collective agency, ingenuity, and resourcefulness, were able to achieve their personal and professional priorities for Tribal children in Wampum. The main priorities of Native community leaders pertained to developing and furthering Native students' linguistic, cultural, and academic proficiency and continuity through a focus on curriculum development and programming within the Wampum Public Schools. This section describes the collective and overlapping work of Trena, Danielle, Nathalie, Nora, Debby, and Leto, leaders and agents of change in the Tribal community.

Positional Status of Participants

Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project leaders. Danielle, Trena, Melanie, and Nora all work for the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project (WLRP) in various capacities. The project, which officially began in 1993 under the leadership of doreen (a pseudonym), aims to return language fluency to the remaining four Wampanoag communities, including the Wampum Wampanoag tribe. Danielle is the director of WLRP, director of the tribe's language department, and director of the tribe's language immersion preschool. She and Trena, the Business Manager for WLRP and Development Director of the National Indian Education Association, work closely with the Wampum Public Schools to improve language and culture-based programming for Native students.

Nathalie is one of the master speakers of Wôpanâak, and she currently serves as the Wôpanâak language teacher at the middle/high school in Wampum as a WLRP employee. Nora is also one of the master speakers of Wôpanâak and serves as one of the

language specialists for the project. As a master speaker and language specialist, Nora has the responsibility of teaching adult language classes in the community to members of the four Wampanoag communities. She also played a role in the development of the curriculum for the Wôpanâak language class at the high school and curricula at the Wôpanâak immersion preschool.

Tribal government & Indian Education leaders. Nora also worked for the Tribe as Director of Education in the Education Department during the time of this research, a position she has since left for a postdoctoral fellowship. One of Nora's responsibilities as Director of Education was to work with the Indian Education Program in Wampum Public Schools and to attend the monthly Indian Education Parent Committee meetings.

Debby is a Councilwoman for the Tribe and Chairwoman of the Indian Education Parent Committee. As Chairwoman of the Indian Education Parent Committee, Debby attends and leads the monthly meetings to discuss the Indian Education grant and program, its goals, and progress towards meeting the goals. As a member and leader of this group, Debby works closely with Leto and the superintendent of Wampum Public Schools to determine how the Indian Education grant is spent. Leto is the current Director of Indian Education in the Wampum Public Schools, leads the culture-based programming at the middle/high school and oversees the work of other employees of the program. Joseph is a White man who works for the Tribe's Education Department and provides college and career readiness support to students through the Indian Education Program at the middle/high school. Last, though Michelle is no longer in an official leadership role in the Indian Education Program, she is a consistent and active member of

the Indian Education Parent Committee, and continues to advocate for all Native students and families through her participation in this committee.

This section now continues with a description of the purposes and priorities of these community leaders' work in light of the goals of their organizations; their engagement practices, including the structures and/or strategies for achieving personal/organizational goals; and the results or outcomes of their efforts, including challenges they encountered while striving to achieve their goals.

WLRP: Returning Language Fluency to the Wampanoag Nation

In the previous chapter, Danielle, Trena, and Nathalie were described as strong proponents of and advocates for language and culture-based education for Tribal students. They shared their preference for having their own, independent, autonomously run schools for Tribal students, believing that this is the best way to develop and sustain the language and cultural fluency of Native children. Through their work for WLRP, they have been able to actualize this priority while also improving language and culture-based education in the Wampum Wampanoag community and within Wampum Public Schools. Their work has entailed applying for federal grants, writing curriculum, and forming partnerships with/in Wampum Public Schools with the goal of achieving the project's primary objective of language and cultural continuity.

During a semi-structured conversation with Trena, she explained her work and her role in securing three federal grants for WLRP. She also described the purpose of each grant and the partnerships that she and Danielle have formed with Wampum Public Schools to increase language and culture-based programming for tribal kids in the schools.

Three Federal Grants for Language Reclamation

By Trena

I'm the business manager for the Wampanoag Language Reclamation Project. For WLRP, I've written all three of the big federal grants that the language project has. The first one was for what's called a master-apprentice program that allowed our master speaker [doreen] to teach three individuals Wôpanâak. Then those three people could go out into the community and teach language, and then people who are in their classes could teach language. In that sense, it really has become exponential.

The second grant was a three year, and our objective was to start a school for little ones...really trying to get language and culture into children's lives at an early age because it's really with children that language change happens. We figure if we can get them young, and we can start to instill those protective factors of language and culture at a young age, that the long-term benefits will definitely be there. That next grant was really for writing curriculum and trying to get a charter school started. The charter school thing did not work, it's very political here in Massachusetts.

But the third grant which we're in now... is again a grant to introduce even more language and culture into the [Wampum] Public School systems. We just got a signed MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with [the superintendent] and the [Wampum] Public School to be able to do that. Specifically, what we're gonna do is, right now the Wampanoag level one [language class] is being piloted in the high school. We're gonna increase that up to level five, so that a child can start in eighth grade and go all the way up to senior year, and really have that fluency. We're introducing, right now it's just the 20-30 minutes of lunch bunches in [the two elementary schools]. We're gonna do three days a week after school programming in Wampanoag language for 45 minutes a day...We're also gonna be creating books, bilingual Wampanoag books that can be used in both [the elementary schools]. Then as part of this MOU, a document that says this is what we agreed to between the partnership, we're gonna be introducing in partnership with the English department...Native authors and filmmakers into the ELA (English Language Arts) curriculum for high school...That's a five year [grant]. It'll be about 1.2 million-dollar grant if we get it.

(Trena, Transcript, 5.2.18)

The three grants show both the purpose and progression of the work of WLRP.

The aim of the project is to return language “fluency to the Wampanoag Nation as a principal means of expression” (WLRP Website). This was a clear goal of all three of the grants. The first grant has established a critical mass of fluent Wôpanâak language speakers, some of whom are teachers and language instructors of Tribal children in the Wôpanâak language immersion preschool and in the Wampum Public Schools.

Trena's description of the purpose of the second grant reveals a core belief of WLRP and its members, that the Tribe's best hope for revitalizing and sustaining their language and culture is through their children in separate language and culture immersion schools. During the talking circle with parents, Trena shared her wish to "decolonize the curriculum" by establishing a separate school for native students that has a "language and culture curriculum-based track" (Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18). She continued,

it's about having our own school, growing our own school...Danielle and I are always trying to find funding for language projects so that we don't have to be beholden, not just to white folks, but really also to try and sort of de-politicize what we're doing. (Tribal Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18)

Though the second grant did not achieve its original purpose to establish a public charter school due to "political" reasons, it did result in the creation of an independent Montessori Wôpanâak immersion preschool. Danielle shared why they chose to shift from a public charter school to an independent Montessori focus.

When I was hired, the grant that they had actually received was to develop a public charter school. And so, I was hired to write the public charter and develop the board of directors for that and all of the systems to found an independent school. And in the second year of that application process, when we reached the final stage, the state basically told us that we would be eligible for a public charter but they really didn't feel like they could support a full time Wampanoag immersion school. They wanted us to be a cultural immersion school and to offer half the school day in Wampanoag language. Our teaching team and our board of directors decided that they wanted to withdraw the application because that

wasn't their organizing vision for the past 20 years since they founded this nonprofit [WLRP]. So, to create new speakers of the language, they didn't want a cultural immersion school, they wanted a language immersion school. So, then we switched to a Montessori framework. And so, I led the process to work with the partners to train our teachers and to educate our parents about what Montessori is and how that can be overlaid with Wampanoag culture and language and how that's a more useful and flexible approach than the public school's focus on the Common Core standards for the state and standardized testing. (Danielle, Transcript, 3.15.18)

Leaders of WLRP refused to be beholden to the state by compromising on the organization's founding vision. Through their agency and resourcefulness, and with the help of other Tribal members like Nora, they have been successful at securing federal funding, designing language and culture-based curricula, and partnering with Montessori trained professionals to train their teachers to establish their own independent school. The Wôpanâak immersion preschool is now in its third year, enrolls 25 students, and has added a first-grade class with the goal of adding additional grades in the coming years. Presently, they are working to form partnerships with the Wampum Public Schools with the hope of creating a magnet middle/high school for Native students.

One of the things that we keep saying is either we create this partnership, and that's why Danielle and I go to those meetings all the time, to try to create a partnership with the school so that we can create a magnet school within the Wampum Public School district, that is language and culture curriculum-based track. (Trena, Tribal Talking Circle Transcript, 12.11.18)

While establishing their own Tribal run and Native serving schools for students in preschool through 12th grade remains a priority, Trena and Danielle also work to form partnerships with Wampum Public Schools to improve language and culture-based programming in the classrooms for the benefit of Tribal students and all students.

I just attend administration meetings to facilitate partnerships and to try to improve language and culture-based opportunities for tribal kids through my role. But in our school [Wôpanâak immersion preschool], I think that our entire approach is built around honoring and bringing Wampanoag and Indigenous knowledge and history and cultural practice into the classroom. And I don't think that really exists at all in the local public school. I think that's the process that we are trying to improve upon through our current interactions and planning now and hopefully developing some new funding opportunities to support that... I know that there aren't any native teachers and maybe one native administrator. So, I know that it's a very limited application of Indigenous knowledge or culture.

(Danielle, Transcript, 3.15.18)

The desire to improve language and culture-based education for Tribal children in the Wampum Public Schools is the impetus for the third major grant that Trena and Danielle received in May 2018. This project is called, "Numukayuhsunônak: Our Children Speak Two Languages" and aims to "increase both English and Wôpanâak language proficiency among Wampanoag students enrolled in Pre-K through Grade 12 in [Wampum]" (Project Abstract, 2018). As Trena noted, the district, through the signing of a MOU, has agreed to partner with WLRP and support the goals of the project. Within less than a year of the project's implementation, they have achieved most of the planned

activities that Trena outlined in her summary of the grant's purpose and goals. This school year (2018-2019), a level two Wôpanâak language class was added at the middle/high school with the goal of adding additional levels each year until there are a total of five. Additionally, in collaboration with the Indian Education Program, after school language and culture-based programs for Native students are now offered at the elementary schools and run three days a week for 45 minutes. Moreover, bilingual Wôpanâak-English books for Native students have been created and are available in the elementary schools' libraries. Lastly, through a professional development series for teachers in the district, Native authors and filmmakers are being introduced to teachers for integration into the ELA curriculum for grades 7-12.

In sum, WLRP leaders, through their collective agency and resourcefulness, have secured grants to fund their language projects and have been successful at forming partnerships with the Wampum Public Schools and getting district leaders to sign Memorandums of Understanding to achieve their priorities. They have been the initiators of and innovators in interactions with the public schools and are responsible for nearly all of the language and culture-based programming that is within the Wampum Public School. As Nathalie ardently asserted,

I feel like they want more of a pat on the back than they necessarily should get, because it's more from our end of, "Hey we want to come do this. Hey, we want to come do this and we're going to pay for it. Hey, let us come do this, we're going to pay for it." "Okay."

It wasn't them coming and seeking us out, "Hey we'd really love to offer this, are you willing?" It was more our prodding, "Hey, can we do this? We got the money

for it.” It says something that they didn't say, “No, we don't want it here.”

(Nathalie, Transcript, 4.3.18)

Indian Education: Partnering and Persisting for Cultural Revival and Continuity

In the previous chapter, the Indian Education Program and the major changes that it has undergone in recent years was extensively discussed. One of the major concerns that Leto, Debby, and other participants shared about the program was its reduced focus on cultural awareness or cultural exploration, which is one of the primary objectives of the program along with providing students with academic support through tutoring to assist them in achieving state standards (Town Officers, 2012, 2015). One participant expressed her sentiments that the program has become, “educate the Indian, not Indian education” due to its greater focus on academic support that includes reading and math pullout programs taught by non-Native tutors (Athena, Transcript, 6.28.18). These noticeable changes in the program from earlier times, were attributed to decisions that were outside of the control of Tribal leaders in the program, including structural changes in the amount of time and time of day the program is offered at the middle/high school.

This section explores ways that the Indian Education Program has been able to revive its cultural focus through partnerships with WLRP and the Tribe’s Education Department. Through its partnership work with WLRP, the program has been able to “fulfill the students’ cultural based knowledge” through the “interactive learning of the Wôpanâak language” (Town Officers, 2014). Similarly, through its collaboration with the Tribe’s Education Department, the program has been able to provide whole language and cultural immersion in the high school while also expanding the program to include life skills preparedness and college and career readiness. This section also focuses on the

Indian Education Parent Committee, a group that has played an instrumental role in the continuity of the program and a group that is arguably vital to the ongoing survival of the program.

WLRP and Indian Education partnership. A new partnership with WLRP is serving a pivotal role in the revitalization of the cultural component of the Indian Education Program. Most of the current language and culture specific offerings of Indian Education are as a result of the program's collaboration with WLRP. Trena alluded to this during her description of the various grants that she has written for WLRP to fund language and culture-based education for Tribal students within and outside of Wampum Public Schools. During the 2013-2014 school year, WLRP leaders and teachers began working with the Indian Education program, volunteering their services to provide Wôpanâak language classes to Native students at the elementary schools through lunch bunches and after school activities (Town Officers, 2014, 2015). During the 2017-2018 school year, WLRP expanded its services to the Wampum Middle/High School by providing a curriculum and language teacher for the first ever world language course in the school in an Indigenous language. The Wôpanâak language class is a credit bearing course that enrolled 7 Native students during its first year. Through the most recent grant and project, "Numukayhsunônak: Our Children Speak Two Languages," WLRP has been able to expand its support of Indian Education by adding a second Wôpanâak language class at the middle/high school and creating additional language and culture-based programs for Native students in the two elementary schools through after school programs that meet three days per week for 45 minutes each day.

In sum, through its partnership with WLRP, the Indian Education Program has been able to fulfill its purpose of providing culture-based programming for Native students with the added bonus of Wôpanâak language classes at the elementary schools and middle/high school to build students' language fluency. This partnership has made the program stronger and may be critical to the program's ability to meet its mission of developing Native students' cultural knowledge in the years to come.

Tribe's Education Department and Indian Education partnership. The Indian Education Program's partnership with the Tribe's Education Department serves as yet another example of a collaboration that has improved the program's ability to achieve its objectives. A College and Career Readiness grant, which is housed in the Tribe's Education Department, funds various programs and services for Tribal students within Wampum Middle/High School through the Indian Education Program. Trena helped write the grant during her former role as Director of Development for the Wampum Wampanoag Tribe and explained the purpose of the grant and the four focal areas that it funds.

College and Career Readiness Grant
By Trena

Then for the grant that is currently in the Education Department for the tribe, that's one of the things that we wrote into it was to support [Wampum] students going to College Horizons, so paying for the application, which is like \$500, paying for their travel. They [the Education Department] did some promotion, I think they could've done more. I think they could've been way more aggressive in promoting the fact that they were paying for College Horizons. The only person that's going is my daughter this year.

In the case of this grant, it was definitely parent driven. We did a lot of surveys with parents, asking parents what they were interested in doing...part of the grant is they wanted to get parental involvement. It's a four-year, million-dollar grant. It's like roughly 250 [thousand] a year, and now this is year two I think...The focus is preparing high schoolers mostly to get ready for college and career.

There were four areas of focus. One was academic preparedness. The grant included tutoring as needed. The second was life skill preparedness. So, that included learning how to cook, learning how to do subsistence, like hunting, how to do financial management. The third part was the whole language and cultural immersion. This year, for the first time ever, we introduced language into the high school class. My daughter is part of that small cohort of seven students that are now learning Wampanoag in the high school, which is possible because of a, I think, increasingly positive relationship with the [Wampum] Public School District. Then the fourth thing was career readiness... The idea is for kids to get interested in specific career goals to be able to intern at places of interest to them. As part of the grant, they're paid a stipend so that they can go and work at those places, but the company or the organization that they work for doesn't have to pay. Those are the four areas.

(Trena, Transcript, 5.2.18)

In the above narrative, Trena's comments are not limited to the purposes and benefits of the grant but also include some of the challenges related to promotion and access. Trena is transparent about her displeasure with the Education Department who she believes is not doing a good enough job promoting the resources and free funding that are available to Native students through the grant. She also lamented the fact that most Tribal students are not taking advantage of the programs and classes offered or funded through the grant. One of the programs that is funded through the grant is

“College Horizons.” Clara, Trena’s oldest daughter, explained the program as “a group that prepares high school juniors and seniors, and specifically Native kids to get into college. They do SAT prep, they do pretty much everything under the sun related to college-based things” (Transcript, 5.2.18). The program is offered for two weeks over the summer at a different participating college each year. Clara shared, “if you went to College Horizons, and you get in [to college], they’ll usually pay your whole tuition” (Transcript, 5.2.18). Clara participated in College Horizons when she was in high school and now her younger sister, as Trena noted, will be the only Native student from Wampum participating in the program as a result of poor advertisement by the Education Department.

The grant is also responsible for the first ever Wôpanâak language classes at the Wampum Middle/High school offered during the 2017-2018 school year. As Trena noted, the class had a small cohort of seven students, including her daughter. This year with the addition of a level two Wôpanâak language class, enrollment remains low with a total of 10 Native students between the two classes. According to Danielle, leaders expected the first class to have 20 or more students. She attributed the low enrollment to some teachers’ and administrators’ worries that the Wôpanâak language class would not count towards college credit and to claims that some teachers discouraged Native students from taking the class and advised them to continue with the language they were already taking. Leto had a different explanation for the low enrollment.

Even the language class, there should be more than six people, but I think there would've been if the connection was made better. The kids were used to me, myself and [my sister who teaches the lunch bunches]. Those were the faces of

this program, all programs. I mean, there is a lot of people that do a lot of things, but if the kids don't see you, they don't know you. And if they don't know you, their ears [are] already closed to you. (Leto, Transcript, 4.3.18)

The grant also funds some of the cultural preparedness and college and career readiness programs and activities through Indian Education at the middle/high school. Joseph, a White man who works with Leto afterschool in the Indian Education room at the middle/high school, is funded through the college and career readiness grant. He works part-time for the program and is at the middle/high school a couple of days a week working with Leto to “try to catch kids, engage them with what activities we’re doing” (Transcript, 4.26.18). Similar to Leto and Trena, Joseph shared the constant challenge of trying to get Tribal students to participate in planned activities.

We have events for the kids, and not this week, but the February vacation week, I had to beg kids to come, you know? And go pick them up. They had excuses or you're texting them and then they don't answer you because they want to avoid you. It's like why are we doing this? It's supposed to be for you guys, you know? (Transcript, 4.26.18)

According to Trena and Leto, low participation may be due to parents being unaware of some of the opportunities offered to Tribal students through this and other grants and programs and to the fact that most of these opportunities are offered afterschool or during weekends and holidays and thus are competing with students’ other responsibilities and commitments such as sports, jobs, and caring for younger siblings.

Notwithstanding challenges related to under enrollment and limited participation in classes and activities offered through the college and career readiness grant, this

collaborative effort between the Indian Education Program and the Tribe's Education Department has allowed the program to expand its offerings and meet its cultural and academic goals. Moreover, the partnership is not only helping the program and its leaders to realize personal/organizational goals but also the priorities of Tribal parents whose collective voices were the impetus and driving force behind the focal areas of the grant: whole language and cultural immersion, academic and life skills preparedness, and college and career readiness.

Indian Education Parent Committee. The Indian Education Parent Committee has played a significant role in the continued existence of the Indian Education Program in Wapum Public Schools since its inception in 1972. The committee, which is comprised of parents with Native students in the schools, Indian Education Program leaders, and representatives from the school district, is responsible for securing and overseeing the federal grant that funds the program. The Director of Indian Education, with input from the parent committee, writes the grant. During one of our individual conversations, Debby was quick to note, “we’re the grantors, we have the grant but it’s through the school. So, we work on it but they submit it” (Transcript, 5.2.18). By “we,” Debby was referring to the Tribal members on the committee, and by “they,” she was talking about the district or the superintendent.

Historically, the role of the committee has served to determine how and for which purposes the grant funds are spent and to discuss the progress of the program. Unfortunately, according to several participants in this study, in recent years, parents on the committee have had less of a say in how grant funds are spent and the parent committee is not as strong as it used to be. According to Leto, when she first became

director, the committee was comprised of eight active parents who made a lot of decisions and were very supportive of students. In Leto's view this changed under the leadership of the previous superintendent, who "took power over the grant from the Tribe and the parent committee and made all the major decisions concerning the grant" (Transcript, 5.10.18). Though Leto acknowledged that the current superintendent does a better job of listening to the committee and trying to accommodate their wishes, the current superintendent has continued the practice of having the ultimate say and decision in how grant funds are used.

Michelle echoed Leto's assertions, noting that the committee used to be larger and more active, and that communication between the parent committee and the school district used to be better. During an individual conversation with her, she shared,

I don't know what's going on. Our committee was never like this before, we had nothing but educators at the table. We had some serious people. It used to be the point where we couldn't have any more people on the committee because it was so many. But recently, because of the past superintendent and her manipulation, people started dropping off like flies because they were getting sick of the games. And then when [the superintendent before the current one] went in, he just shut everything down. He was completely against the grant. And so, everyone [superintendents], every year comes with this idea of "I didn't know you could do that." And I'm like, "We did the same thing last year." I said, "Why is everything brand new every year?" Because what happens is we'll make out a plan and we're thinking it's being done throughout the year, and we find out within three or four months she's [the current superintendent] changed the whole thing around. And it

was like, “that’s not what we said.” She [the current superintendent] would agree to it in the beginning, she would change it to do whatever she wants. (Transcript, 6.27.18)

Debby, on the other hand, who became Chairwoman after the previous Chair and Secretary left because they were “fed up with the way it [the program] was working in the school system,” noted that the current superintendent, “works with me very well. She knows I don’t take no stuff and she will rearrange the budget how I want her to” (Transcript, 5.2.18).

My observations of two parent committee monthly meetings in the Spring of 2018 in the Indian Education room at the middle/high school, confirmed some of the concerns and assertions of Leto, Michelle, and Debby. Attending were a group of core parents and leaders that I had seen in other spaces, including the Tribe-district partnership meetings (which will be described in the next section). Their agency and advocacy played an instrumental role in attaining the education and educational environment that they wished for their children. Leto, Debby, and Trena were present at an April 2018 meeting along with the superintendent and Robyn, another leader in the district. Leto, Debby, and Trena were also present at the May 2018 meeting along with Michelle, Danielle, Joseph, the superintendent, and another parent. Both meetings focused on the Indian Education budget and the progress of the program. Based on my observations, everyone apparently felt free to contribute to the discussion and make suggestions.

The purpose of the April meeting was to discuss the remaining budget for the current school year and to begin discussions about how best to spend the \$50K budget for the upcoming school year. Leto began the meeting by explaining the challenges that she

and Joseph face trying to get Native students to attend the various events that they plan, noting that the program competes with students' other afterschool commitments. She pointed to the list of activities on the front board that she and Joseph had planned for the rest of the month of April and into May. At this point, Trena chimed in that she was unaware of these activities and Robyn suggested that a letter be sent to parents emphasizing the importance of the program and the upcoming activities. The superintendent then switched to discussing the budget for the upcoming school year. She and Robyn suggested using some of the funds for an after school Native culture and possibly, language, class for Native students at the upper elementary school. Robyn also shared that the school committee would be willing to support a cultural language class for 7th grade students during the language block, emphasizing the importance of all residents in Wampum knowing Wampanoag history and not being able to opt their children out of this class. The superintendent added that she wanted to keep the tutoring at the elementary schools. Trena shared information about the new grant that she and Danielle were working on that would offer additional support for language and culture-based programing in the schools. The superintendent and Robyn left early to attend another meeting and the remainder of the time was spent in conversations about some of the misdeeds of current and past staff in the district and the repercussions that one of the members faced for speaking out and reporting them.

The purpose of the May meeting was to discuss and come to a consensus about the proposed budget for the 2018-2019 fiscal year so that the superintendent could submit it later that month. Unlike the previous meeting, most of this meeting was spent with participants engaging in off topic conversations, sharing their gripes about employees of

the Tribe who they felt were not doing their jobs, and about a public hearing that was happening concurrently at the Tribal Government building regarding the Tribe's Indian Education budget, a meeting that most participants complained that they had not heard about or only learned about last minute. It was evident that some in attendance felt resentful about not being informed early enough and that they believed they were being intentionally excluded from attending the public hearing at the Tribal Center. I learned the previous day that the same federal Title VI grant that funds Indian Education in Wampum Public Schools also provides separate funding for the Wampum Wampanoag Tribe and is used to pay the salary of the Director of Education and is supposed to provide scholarships and other funding for Wampanoag students.

I was surprised that Tribal parents and leaders discussed members of their Tribe and the Tribal government in front of the superintendent. In fact, during an individual conversation with Michelle, a Native parent with children in all three of the public schools in Wampum, I shared my concern.

I also noticed how, in one of those last [parent committee] meetings that I attended with the superintendent sitting there, some of the discussions that were being had ... and I just think about being a person of color and how certain things you don't share in the company of people who are considered outsiders. I guess I'm an outsider too, but I found that interesting that there were certain conversations had there that I believe early on there would have been a lot of caution around. They were really accepting of her there. I kind of felt like that gives her an argument when... (Transcript, 6.27.18)

As I was about to finish my thoughts, Michelle interrupted and shared her own reflections on and responses to conversations parents were having in front of the superintendent. Her concerns about the potential impact of these conversations on the superintendent's re/actions mirrored my own.

I have said that to the committee multiple times. When we sit at this table, it's about business. Stop bringing your personal gripes to the business table, because once you hear the business, she [the superintendent] has to go. Then we talk about what needs to happen. I said, "this is what people do in regular meetings." Out of order. This is what you do. But, every meeting someone comes with some problem. I'm like what do you guys not understand? And it's always a "me, me, me" case instead of saying. "okay, let's look at the bigger picture," because if it's happening to yours, it's happening to someone else. They're just not able to talk about it. But they involve her...again they shoot their own foot off and it's not just some of the parents, it's some of the people on the committee that keeps telling her too much. (Transcript, 6.27.18)

Michelle believed that sharing too much with the superintendent exposes the vulnerabilities of the Tribe, takes away their credibility, and thus infringes on their ability to effectively advocate for their children and other Native students as committee members.

At the end of the May 8th meeting, after a limited amount of time spent discussing the budget for the upcoming school year, a consensus had not been reached about the final budget. I noted in my field notes, "In the end, Debby and the superintendent suggested leaving the budget as is and that money could be moved around after they got

the funds” (Fieldnotes, 5.8.18). Perhaps the limited input that some parents and leaders believe the parent committee now has regarding how grant funds are spent has more to do with the inefficiency of the monthly meetings due to off topic conversations and the content of conversations which may be fueling some educators’ stereotypes about the tribe.

Though I am not able to speak about the motives of the superintendent or other school district representatives on the committee, my observations at the two parent committee meetings suggests that administrators are hearing parents and attempting to support their wishes. At the April meeting, the superintendent and Robyn suggested using part of the budget for the upcoming school year to fund a culture class at the upper elementary school. Also, at the May meeting, the superintendent said that the district could pay for one of the after school cultural classes, which would free up some money to fund a social events and other desires that parents at the meeting requested for students. So, it appears that leaders in the district are seeking to respond to the concerns of Tribal members for more culture-specific programs and activities in Indian Education.

Though Native parents and leaders on the Indian Educational Parent Committee believe that they have less power over the grant and less input concerning how funds are spent, they have persisted in remaining active members and outspoken advocates for their own kids and other Native students. Notwithstanding the apparent inefficiency that is occurring in monthly meetings, the Indian Education Parent Committee consists of a core group of caring, concerned, and committed Native parents and leaders. Many of them serve in other positions or leadership roles and have been successful at securing funding and improving or increasing language and culture-based programming for their kids in

the Wampum Public Schools. They are the grant writers, and though all of their input regarding how grant funds are used may not be included, without their dedication and continued commitment and contribution to the program, it would not be in its 47th year in the district.

District-Tribe Partnership: Expanding Cultural Knowledge and Awareness

The Wampum Public Schools-Wampum Wampanoag Tribe Partnership is a final example of Tribal agency and a way that Tribal leaders are engaging with/in Wampum Public Schools to achieve their priorities for Native students. The vision statement for the partnership states, “We envision a positive and productive partnership between the [Wampum] Public Schools and the [Wampum Wampanoag Tribe that includes and values the Tribe’s rich heritage and culture” (Partnership Agenda, December 11, 2017). Similarly, the mission statement relays,

In partnership, we advance that academic growth and social/emotional well-being of our Wampanoag students through an emphasis on culture-based education principles and practices. All [Wampum educators and students will continue to learn about the [Wampum] Wampanoag Tribe’s history and culture, resulting in expanded cultural knowledge and awareness. (Partnership Agenda, December 11, 2017)

The partnership was formed in the fall of 2017 as a result of, according to Nora, “a casual conversation between Robyn (a leader in the district) and Linda, our communication’s director, manager here. So, it started with just a conversation that the two of them had and then Linda came to me and Robyn went to [the superintendent]” (Transcript, 3.22.18). As a result of this conversation between Robyn and Linda, the

school committee was invited to visit and hold one of their meetings at the Tribal government building. Trena shared her own perspective about how the partnership was formed in the following story.

We Really Know What We're Doing
By Trena

It was probably last year when Linda, who is the communications director at the Tribe invited the Wampum school committee to have one of their meetings at the Wampum Community Center [Tribal Center]. As part of that, they got a tour around the building, but even more importantly they got a tour of that preschool. Selena (one of the preschool teachers), she's wonderful. Selena started talking about the Montessori pedagogy. She just talked about the process, and the school room, and how it's set up, the resources that are there. Honestly, I think she blew the educators in Wampum Public School away, blew them away. I think that they ... this is just my feeling, my opinion, but I think they have always felt like, "Oh, those dumb Indians don't know what they're doing." When they saw the level of professionalism that we had, I think it really changed their mind. The same thing goes for that Wampanoag level one [class] that's in the high school. I don't think they realized that we had created a curriculum for an entire school year. I think four or five days a week, that they're [students are] taking it? So much so that it's a credit bearing course, it's a credit bearing language course. I just think they didn't realize that we're just not dumbasses, that we really know what we're doing. It's been since that school committee meeting that there's been a subgroup that's met on a quarterly basis, which I attend. It's myself, Nora, Allene, who's the assistant director in the Education Department. Nora was there last time, and then I think all of the heads of the schools plus [the superintendent].

(Transcript, 5.2.18)

So, in Trena's view, the partnership between the Tribe and the district would not exist were it not for district leaders' visit to the Tribal center which, she believes, convinced them of the Tribe's professionalism and that a partnership was worth pursuing. As Trena noted, the partnership meets quarterly and comprises Tribal leaders and district leaders.

I attended a partnership meeting on December 11, 2017. Doreen, one of the founders of WLRP, Trena, Allene, and Danielle were the Tribal representatives present along with all the administrators in the district except Camille, the Wampanoag administrator. The agenda for the meeting was to discuss progress towards achieving the

24 item action steps that the group created during the previous quarterly meeting.

Actions steps include: (1) a Wampanoag culture workshop series for Wampum Public School staff; (2) tours of the Tribal center for all school staff; (3) re-establishing the annual clambake in the Wampum Public Schools; (4) school assemblies and class presentations to inform students about and celebrate the Wampum Wampanoag culture; (5) extending the Wôpanâak language class to the middle school; and (6) having Native American parent representatives on the school councils for each school. The accomplishments of the partnership as of December 11, 2017, included: (1) presentations to all staff members about the history and language of the Wampanoag Tribe by doreen at each of the schools; (2) Wampanoag books added to the schools' libraries; and (3) regularly scheduled meetings between the Tribe and district leaders.

I also attended the next quarterly meeting that was held on March 5, 2018. Nora, Danielle, Trena, the superintendent, and all of the school administrators (principals, assistant principals, and deans of students) were present. A major topic of discussion was the upcoming, 10-week professional development (PD) series for staff in the district that would run from April to June and be led by Danielle and Nora. Topics for the PD sessions would include: (1) the language and culture-based year-round curriculum that is used in the immersion preschool; (2) the historical context and contemporary Tribal politics of the Wampum Tribal Government; (3) showing a documentary about the revitalization of the Wampanoag language; and (4) teaching about treaty rights and Wampanoag Tribal sovereignty and citizenship. Also, on the agenda was reviewing the 24 action steps noting what had been accomplished and what still needed to be done. One of the major accomplishments since the previous meeting was a Wampanoag Day at

the upper elementary school on March 2, 2018, that included tribal dancers, drummers, students dressed in traditional regalia, exhibits, and museum quality presentations. The lower elementary school and middle/high school were also planning to have a Wampanoag culture week and day, respectively.

Another important topic of discussion was the recruitment and hiring of Native teachers to fill vacancies for the upcoming school year. During my individual conversation with Trena on May 2, 2018, she shared,

It is tough to recruit teachers in Native serving schools, and so that's why I was so excited in our last meeting to talk about the recruitment website through the National Indian Education Association, which is my other job. Yeah, so I sent all that information to [the superintendent], and hopefully they can begin recruiting.

(Transcript, 5.2.18)

Despite the district leaders' expressed intentions to recruit and hire Native teachers, no Native teachers and, to my knowledge, only one educator of color (Latinx) was hired in the district during the 2018-2019 school year. The sole educator of color was hired at the middle/high school by James, the only administrator in the district that Tribal participants discussed positively. Also, of note, James was the only administrator in the district to reach out to me, as an educator of color, to see if I knew of any teachers or administrators of color who might be interested in working in Wampum at the middle/high school.

My overall observations of the partnership are threefold. First, I noticed that Tribal leaders led and monopolized the discussions during both of the quarterly meetings that I attended. During the meeting in December, Doreen directed and dominated the conversations while Nora and Danielle were the main speakers during the March

meeting. Apart from these Tribal leaders, the superintendent was the only educator from the district side who was a significant contributor to the discussions, and her participation was clearly deferential. This type of engagement served as a strong example of the agency of Tribal participants and their ability to shift traditional power dynamics in which educators un/intentionally position themselves in an authoritative role.

Another major, and related, observation pertains to a significant outcome of the partnership, and that is the importance of Tribal-based engagement. By Tribal-based I mean engagement activities that are hosted by the Tribe in their spaces. The following story, told by Nora, supports this observation.

It Has Real Potential to Improve the Situation

By Nora

I think that [the partnership] is going to help. I don't think that it has necessarily helped yet in terms of students' families. When we had a [high school] basketball game, we held it here [at the Tribal center] in this gym. There were members of the school committee here. There were members of the administration here. There were a few teachers...there were at least a couple that I recognized. I think more events like that will eventually get people feeling more comfortable because they'll at least recognize faces. And maybe at some point, someone has a conversation with [the superintendent], not even realizing who she is, and then maybe they find themselves in her office, and then they're like, "Oh, I know you. This is going to be fine." So, I think that it has real potential to improve the situation for sure. But I don't think that it will be this year. It probably won't be next year. It may not even be five years from now. But if we can keep our momentum going, I think it definitely does have potential. I think that something that is a constant challenge is town history. And that is bigger than just inside the school because this town, it's at least recent memory, is not positive, the interaction between the tribe and the rest of the town. So, even though we can all sit at a table and get together, and that's fine, but for anyone whose memory goes back more than twenty, twenty-five years, then they're probably squirming in a meeting like that.

(Transcript, 3.22.18)

Here, Nora notes the potential of the partnership and the hosting of events at the Tribal center to improve familiarity and relations between Tribal members and district

educators. However, she reflects that significant improvements may take many years due to town history.

Within a year of the establishment of the partnership, the Tribe has hosted school committee meetings, Wampum Middle/High School basketball games, and tours of the Tribal center for students, staff, and families of Wampum Public Schools. This shift in perspective and practice from solely school-based events to Tribal-based activities is a major deviation from, not only what has been traditional practices of the district, but also from what is commonly found in research literature about family-school-community engagement (Ishimaru, 2014; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). Though town history, as Nora asserted (and other Tribal members and district staff have noted), remains a constant challenge in the formation of trusting relationships between Tribal members and district educators, the partnership, if the momentum is sustained, has the potential to significantly improve relations between the two sides.

The last major observation is the fact that Native parents and teachers are not included or represented in the Tribe-district partnership. Though these two parties play (or should play) a pivotal role in family-school engagement, their absence from the partnership is a glaring omission. Michelle, when asked about her knowledge of the partnership, shared my sentiments.

Shaneé: You're aware of the partnership between the tribe?... Are you aware of the partnership between the tribe and these quarterly meetings that they've been having?

Michelle: No. I have not been ... See, again, this is part of the manipulation that's been going on. Indian education, the grant that we have, our Parent Committee, has been here since I was a kid, so we've always had monthly meetings. We've had better communication within the school system, but we always ... I would say now I guess some people feel ... because I brought this up in a meeting. I'm like, "If you're having meetings with the tribe, we're not separate. We're all together,"

which ... I'm not gonna say it's just the school district. I will say within the tribe too, I don't know why everyone's trying to keep us separate? What is the scare? We've been here. We're founded. We're not going anywhere. We've been here for all these years.

Shanéé: Your concern is why does it just involve some of the leaders of the tribe, and why aren't the families-

Michelle: Right. Why are [they] separating us. Why are you doing what they have done to us for so many years if you're within our own community? What is the challenge?

Shanéé: You feel like the family voice is being silenced or not being-

Michelle: Oh. Most definitely. It's about, "This is what you're gonna do, and this is what you're doing," instead of saying, "Oh. What has been working? How can we evolve from there? Why would you separate the two?" I brought it up to the superintendent, "Why are you having side meetings with them and we don't even know who's involved. She turned around and said, and she was right, "Why are they not telling you that we're having meetings?" She was absolutely right, because they should be talking to us. But, again, it's the division that's happening amongst the people.

(Transcript, 2.27.18)

This exchange about the exclusion of Native parents from the partnership uncovered a significant detail that we both had overlooked. The absence of family voice and participation in the partnership is as much and maybe even more the fault of Tribal leaders than district leaders. Michelle's comments also imply another reality, that many Native parents may not even be aware of the existence of the partnership. During the time of our conversation, Michelle revealed that she had not always been aware of the partnership. Michelle is part of a small, core group of active and engaged Native parents, and her knowledge of the partnership is likely due to her ongoing participation with/in Wampum Public Schools.

Regarding the omission of teachers from the partnership, district leaders, particularly the superintendent, were surprised when I critiqued the partnership for not

having teacher representatives during a meeting with administrators on January 15, 2019 to share findings from the research. Teachers, like parents, often suffer a similar fate in schools, being overlooked or un/intentionally excluded from having a seat at the table and being involved in decision making that impact them and their students. The practice of meeting and making important educational decisions without teacher and/or parent representatives is not unique to Wampum Public Schools, but a common practice that is prevalent in schools and districts around the nation (Ingersoll, Sirindes, & Dougherty, 2018; Ishimaru, 2014, 2017; Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). Also, as Michelle rightly noted in the above exchange about the value of parent voice, and I would add, teacher voice, parents and teachers possess a greater awareness of what is and “what has been working,” so why not involve and consult them when plans are being made that directly impact them.

In sum, despite critiques about the structure of the Tribe-district partnership, it serves as yet another example of Tribal agency, and a partnership that is achieving Tribal priorities. The partnership is unique from others described in this chapter in that district staff play a more active role in the Tribe’s efforts to extend the linguistic, cultural, and academic fluency of their children. A bonus of this new collaboration is that district staff and non-Native students are also benefiting from the programs and activities that have resulted from the partnership.

Section Conclusion

This section has served to describe the engagement practices of leaders from the Native community with/in Wampum Public Schools. Leaders of WLRP have partnered with Wampum Public Schools, the Indian Education Program, and the Tribe’s Education

Department to achieve the project's mission to improve language fluency among Native students. Operating from shared interests and through collective and collaborative efforts, leaders have been able to improve and increase language and culture-based programming in the public schools. Similarly, the Indian Education program, as a result of its partnerships with WLRP, the Tribe's Education Department, and the consistency and commitment of the Indian Education Parent Committee, is now in its 47th year of fulfilling its mission to provide culture-based programming and academic support to Native students. Lastly, the new Tribe-district partnership has made notable progress in fulfilling its mission to improving the cultural knowledge and awareness of all students and staff in the district.

Conclusion

The priorities or purposes, strategies, and outcomes of the work of Native leaders has been noticeably different from that of Native parents. While the Native parents who participated in this study were more concerned about and outspoken against policies and practices in the schools that contributed to the inequitable treatment and exclusion of their children and other Native students and students of color, the Native community leaders were more concerned about and committed to developing and furthering Native students' linguistic, cultural, and academic knowledge and fluency through curriculum and programming. Also, whereas the parents were mainly fighting as individuals and in a reactive manner, community leaders were more likely to work collectively and proactively to achieve their priorities. Moreover, the outcomes of their advocacy were markedly different. Native community leaders, by and large, were able to achieve the goals of their advocacy whereas Native parents had mixed results. Lastly, as drivers and

enforcers of language and culture-focused education for Tribal children in the public schools, Native community leaders were exercising educational sovereignty (McCarty & Lee, 2014, 2017; Moll & Ruiz, 2005).

Parents had varying degrees of success in achieving the goals of their advocacy. Absolom, Debby, and Michelle tended to have better results and more tangible outcomes. Arguably, this may be due to the fact that they possess more cultural capital (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Each have professional careers and each spoke about the knowledge they possessed due to their positions and/or education. However, despite his status as a well-educated person with a professional career, Absolom asserted that Wampus educators' initial perceptions of him and other parents of color is that he/they are uneducated and not expected to question the authority or expertise of teachers and administrators.

The types of issues that parents are advocating about and/or for may also contribute to how they are received or responded to by educators. Many of them are questioning and challenging policies and practices that may cause educators to feel defensive. Athena and Absolom accused educators of portraying themselves as experts to be listened to and Native parents and other parents of color as subordinates who should comply with and not question the expertise or authority of teachers and administrators.

In contrast, while Native parents felt that they were often resisted, treated in a dismissive manner, or perceived and treated as subordinates by educators, the efforts of community leaders were evidently better received and supported by district administrators, and they thus have better success in achieving their goals. There are a number of factors that might explain the different results that Tribal leaders are able to

achieve. First, perhaps, the projects and initiatives that Tribal leaders are advocating for are less threatening than the demands being made by Native parents. The Native parents who participated in this study accused school administrators and teachers of being racist and biased and of engaging in practices that are unjust and inequitable whereas Tribal leaders are mainly asking for and supporting the schools to improve culture-based education for their kids and all students and educators in the system. Educators may perceive the priorities of Tribal leaders as aligned with their own objectives and state and national expectations for teachers and leaders to be more culturally responsive in their teaching and practices.

Second, Native community leaders were more proactive in their efforts to achieve their personal and professional priorities for Tribal children. They were not waiting around for district educators to provide the language and culture-based programs and activities, but took initiative to create their own opportunities for Native students. Third, there may be more power in numbers and collaborative efforts. The priorities and work of Native community leaders often overlapped and merged to produce greater results and benefits for Tribal students and other students and staff in the district. Fourth, through Tribal leaders' agency and resourcefulness, they have been able to secure funding, create their own curricula, and form partnerships with each other and the school district to realize their priorities for their children and community. The fact that they are able to approach district leaders with a well-structured plan for implementation and money to fund their projects may be the reason why they are better received and responded to by district leaders. Last but not least, Tribal leaders have the support of their organizations,

which provide them with the resources, manpower, motivation, and professional status to achieve their goals.

Chapter Seven: Educators Conceptualize and Practice: An Open-Door Model?

Introduction

This chapter presents educators' conceptualizations of and practices concerning family-school-community engagement in general and particularly as they relate to Indigenous families and community members. Like the Native participants, brief portraits of each teacher and administrator are provided using a combination of biographical and autobiographical descriptions which provide information about their connection to Wampur and their role in the school district as a teacher or administrator.

Participant Portraits

Teachers

Allie has been a teacher in the district for three years. She grew up in a town about 30 miles north of Wampur where she continues to live. Allie started off as a long-term substitute teacher and the following year was hired as a full-time teacher. In her interview Allie described her impressions of the school and district:

I really like it here. I think there's a few things that I noticed. One is everybody is very welcoming. So, even as a long-term sub, I was honestly surprised at how friendly everybody was, just very talkative. Even though a lot of people here have known each other for years, they didn't just ignore you. Also, the administrators tend to be very kind, and they treat you like people. It's nice to work for and around people that seem to actually care about your life, not only as a professional, but outside as well, very understanding. (Transcript, 5.1.18)

Charlie is in his seventh year as a teacher in the middle/high school. During our interview he shared,

I was born in Washington DC and raised in Maryland. I went to college in Colorado for my undergraduate degree. I had family who lived in Colorado growing up, so we'd go out there and I kind of fell in love with it and went to Colorado College and met my future wife there. She grew up in a sort of suburb of Boston, spending summers in [a nearby town about 4 miles south of Wampum]. Both sides of her family, her mom's side and her dad's side, go back a couple generations in [that town], so she was really interested in moving there, and I was okay with that so that's what sort of brought me to the area. (Transcript, 6.13.18)

Prior to becoming a teacher in the district, Charlie had a lot of interaction with members of the Tribe in his previous career. He is thus very knowledgeable about Tribal history and uses this knowledge to connect with his Native students and their families.

Barbara has been a resident of Wampum since 1986 and a teacher in the district for over 20 years. She raised her children in Wampum and all of them attended the Wampum Public Schools. Barbara explained her reason for moving to Wampum:

One of the reasons I moved to [Wampum] with my husband is we both came from small towns that remind us of [Wampum], where the school is such a part of your social life. And so, I grew up in a small town which had rich history. So, to come to [Wampum] and have the history of [Wampum] was really a neat experience for my kids to be able to experience. (Transcript, 4.5.18)

I visited Barbara's class on many occasions and witnessed the strong rapport she has with her students. She has a warm and motherly demeanor. As a result of her many years in the town and district, Barbara was able to recall a time in which Tribal members

were more active in the schools. She shared fond memories of Tribal parents and grandparents coming to her classroom to share stories and conduct cultural demonstrations.

Jennifer grew up in a town about four miles south of Wampum and has continued to live and work in the area. According to Jennifer,

We moved from Boston to the [area] when I was five, and I actually currently live in the house that I grew up in. I've lived here for 45 of my 50 years. I love the [area], and my parents live here, and my grandparents did till they passed away...I love the whole being [here], the connected community piece...everybody knowing everybody, taking a village to grow up. (Transcript, 4.10.18)

Jennifer is in her eighth year in the district and served previously in two nearby districts. Jennifer is extremely active in all matters relating to family and community engagement in the district. She attends every PTO meeting, is part of grant funded program for families in the community, and she helped plan and facilitate a three-part parenting class last year.

Jessica was born and raised in Wampum and attended Wampum Public Schools. During our interview, she shared,

I was very fortunate to be raised by parents that were pretty naturally minded, too. We had a farm in [Wampum], with horses and chickens and we grew a lot of our own vegetables. So, pretty much from the get-go I was exposed to, I guess, how to be a steward for the environment and to respect the natural world around us and really how beautiful and intriguing it is. So that, I think, had a big influence too

on my becoming a science teacher. And it's really nice that I get to teach my passion. (Transcript, 4.27.18)

Jessica is in her twelfth year as a science teacher in the district. Her classroom is filled but not cluttered with objects and animals from nature that provide a tangible and hands on learning experience for students, which keeps them excited about learning. Jessica also uses various sections of the school building and outside spaces as additional classrooms.

Kathy is a free-spirited, funny, and very sociable person. She grew up in a town about 65 miles northwest of Wampum and moved to Wampum nearly 20 years ago for her husband's job. Her children were born and raised in Wampum and attended the Wampum Public Schools. Kathy has been a teacher in Wampum for five years and previously taught for eight years in other districts in the state. She started off in Wampum as a long-term substitute teacher following a long break from official teaching to stay at home with her growing family. She described her time as a stay at home mom:

Our kitchen, and my husband makes fun of me because when we look at old pictures of our kitchen, it was like a school room. There were posters on the wall. These kids [her kids], they knew from the get go that school was very important to me, and I loved teaching. It's just funny because they grew up that we go kind of god, family, education in our house, so that's kind of how they grew up. I'm very hands on with them. I'm into their world and their lives and everything like that. (Transcript, 5.2.818)

Kimberly is a long-term resident of Wampum and a veteran teacher with 28 years of teaching experience. Kimberly relayed the story of how she ended up in Wampum:

I was teaching overseas in Germany for eight years and decided to come home because my sister had the third kid and I was like, okay my parents are getting older. My parents had retired in [Wampum] and I, once a New Englander, always a New Englander, and so I was thinking Maine or Massachusetts. I had prayed, Lord let me not spend my whole summer applying. Let me find the job you want me to have right away. I interviewed and within a week I was hired in [Wampum] 20 years ago. (Transcript, 5.8.18)

Kimberly is very open about her faith, and like Kathy, lists faith and family (in that order) as very important to her. Kimberly notes that she is,

one of four people that've been in all three buildings...They hire well because the teachers here, no matter what's going on, everybody supports each other. Overall, it's just a very pleasant place to work, great people! And the kids, I like suburbanite life. Suburban kids, you're not dealing with inner city. (Transcript, 5.8.18)

Roxanne has been an educator in the district for over 20 years. She grew up in a town about 55 miles north of Wampum and moved to Wampum with her family in 1991. Roxanne was a teacher in another district in the state before moving to Wampum. She stayed home with her children until they were school age. She spent one year in Wampum as a substitute teacher before becoming a full-time teacher. She noted,

I stayed and chose this district because it's where I lived, and once I substituted for a year here, my fear [of teaching] was gone. So, I stayed because it was safe. I did not look into other districts. I remember thinking I really liked it because it represented where I grew up. So, my son and daughter were around kids that

were Native American, African...There were so many cultures here from their littlest days. (Transcript, 4.3.18)

I visited Roxanne's classroom on many occasions and found her to be a strong, no-nonsense teacher. She has very high standards in terms of behavior and academics and believes that all students are able to rise to her expectations. Roxanne regularly challenges her student academically and gives them a hands-on learning experience. Other teachers in the building regard her as the teacher that Native families love. In the past, Roxanne has asked the parents of her Native students to come to her class as guest speakers and presenters, sharing aspects of their culture with all the students in her class.

Thelma grew up in a nearby town and has been a teacher in Wampum for 24 years. She described how she began teaching in Wampum:

I moved [into the area] with my parents when I was nine, starting the fifth grade. I lived in [a town about nine miles north of Wampum]. When I graduated from high school, I got [a] scholarship that, basically, I promised to try to come back to the [area] because they were getting a lot of the young people to come back and teach. I did a lot of subbing between [the town where I grew up] because I knew a lot of the teachers and I could get in there, and then right next door is [Wampum]. Once I got in here [Wampum Public Schools] permanently I moved to [Wampum], so I do live here....I kind of like the underdog, and I feel that [Wampum] has been very underrated for a long time. I've had a taste, a small taste, of bigotry and bias, having grown up in [the town 9 miles north of Wampum] that was pretty wealthy. We were not wealthy by any mean...I know how that feels. (Transcript, 5.23.18)

Thelma described herself as an advocate for marginalized students, addressing racial injustices when she saw them and advocating for the inclusion of students of color in opportunities that they are frequently overlooked for or intentionally excluded from.

Administrators

Elizabeth is an administrator in the district and previously served as a teacher. She began her career in the district as a substitute teacher after switching careers. She explained why she decided to become a teacher:

I really didn't have a connection to this town prior. I started out as an accountant, so my work into education was not directly out of college. I was in my mid-thirties and I had my children when I decided that doing great financial statements that nobody understood was not valuable work if I was going to be away from them. So, I went back to school for education, but I subbed for a whole year in multiple districts, and it definitely was different in [Wampum]. (Transcript, 3.22.18)

Elizabeth grew up in a military family and “moved around a lot” until her family “settled” in the area “from third grade on.” She got married and raised her children in a town 15 miles northwest of Wampum where she continues to live. Elizabeth is beloved by educators in the district who consider her a strong leader and role model for teachers and other administrators alike. Teachers described her as a leader who knew and interacted well with all families and students. They praised her for knowing every student's name, knowing where they lived, and never being judgmental. Elizabeth expressed,

I have loved every minute in this district. This is my 23rd year I think. I was 10 years as a building administrator. Two of them was as an assistant principal and eight of them was as principal. (Transcript, 3.22.18)

Ester has lived and worked in the district for more than two decades. Describing how she became a teacher,

My husband and I relocated to the [area], and it was just the two of us. He came down for work, and so I followed. Soon after we moved to [Wampum], we adopted our son [a person of color]. I was fortunate enough to be home with him until he was four to five years old. And then, when he started to go to preschool, it's like, "Oh my gosh, this is so fun. These kids are amazing." That's when I actually started in the district as a paraprofessional and kind of followed him into school here in [Wampum]. I spent a couple years as a paraprofessional. I got my master's in education, and while I was doing that, I continued to work as a para. And then when I became certified, I got a job filling in for [a teacher on] maternity leave. But all of that kind of kept us in [Wampum], and we raised our son here. He went through the [Wampum] schools, graduated in 07. (Transcript, 5.8.18)

Like Elizabeth, Ester comes from a military family and moved a lot as a child. She had the experience of being in a variety of schools including public, parochial, armed forces, and an international school. This experience along with her experiences as a mother of a son of color who faced challenges in the public schools, has given her a greater appreciation for the important role of parents as advocates for their children.

Jacob comes from a family of whalers who later became very successful vegetable farmers who “owned large amounts of property” and were “very well known for their produce.” He has been an educator for over 30 years. He began his career as a teacher in the town where he grew up. He shared,

I live....in a town [46 miles west of Wampum] where I had spent 21 years as an elementary teacher, and then I went to my first administrative position, was in the town [over], very small town. I was the elementary assistant principal, but I was also the district curriculum coordinator. (Transcript, 4.12.18)

Jacob is in his third year as an administrator in Wampum. Though he loves being an administrator, he is quick to note that teaching is his first love.

What keeps me here? I don't see the leadership changing in this town. I think [the superintendent] is here for a while. I completely believe her direction. Her leadership style complements my own. Her leadership team actually is built up of people who are like-minded. We're all student-centered administrators. We believe wholeheartedly in collaboration and communication and because the district is so small, it's only like 1,600 kids, it's very easy for us to stay in touch and communicate. (Transcript, 4.12.18)

James, an administrator who was well-liked by Native parents, introduced himself with the following narrative.

I'm the proud father of two. I have a six-year-old daughter, a soon to be three-year-old son, and then my wife. Family, outside of school, means everything to me, but it's also how I approach my profession. Being fortunate to be in a small school district like [Wampum], you really try to build those relationships with

students and other families, and hopefully, have kids understand that when they come to school, it's not just school, but it is somewhat of an extended family.

When I work with our kids in the building and our staff, it's always a family first approach and I try to make them feel as comfortable as possible. This is my 11th year in [Wampum], I started as a social studies teacher and a coach. I coached football, basketball and track and field for several years. Then, I've been in administration for four years. (James, Transcript, 4.25.18)

James grew up in a racially and ethnically diverse community about 40 miles west of Wampum. Native participants in this study only had positive things to say about James. Those who have children in his school, shared stories of positive interactions with him including his care and concern for their children, his openness to dialogue, and his practice of welcoming new families to the district. One parent attributed his ability to connect with students of color and their family to his experience growing up in a diverse city.

In addition to being well-liked, James is also a leader with a track record of success. During his short time as an administrator, and as a result of strategic changes he implemented, there have been significant improvements in student achievement, including a 100% graduation rate among Native students for the past three years. James lived in Wampum when he first started teaching in the district but now lives in a town about 11 miles southwest of Wampum.

Luke is an administrator in the district who grew up in Baltimore and attended both public and private schools. He has been an educator in the district since 2011, and has fluctuated between teaching and administrative roles throughout his tenure in

Wampum. Luke began his teaching career in a prestigious suburban district in upstate New York and soon transferred to an urban district closer to where he was living at the time because he felt called to work in schools that were more diverse and had greater challenges. Sharing his philosophy of teaching,

What I try to bring to the educational experience for students is hands-on, and engaging, and fun, and also just give them an idea of how what they're learning can be applied, whether it's music, whether it's language, because often you get, "Why do I need to learn this stuff?" Here's one reason. (Transcript, 5.1.18)

Robyn is a leader in the district who moved to Wampum with her family in 2009 for her job, a national scientific agency. Her children attend the Wampum Public Schools. She has a history of working with Indigenous communities in the West and a background in "American Indian policy." Describing her educational and professional experiences,

My master's degree was in environmental policy, and during the summer of my graduate program, I worked on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. So, I had a background in, what I referred to [as], American Indian policy. The guy that I worked with was one of the founders of the American Indian Movement. So, I was, frankly, a little surprised and embarrassed when I realized that [Wampum] was ground zero for the very first treaty that was ever broken with the Native Americans. And then I thought, "well, maybe that's why I had to end up here out of all the places in [the area]." (Transcript, 5.8.18)

Several participants in this study, including a Tribal member, gave Robyn credit for playing a critical role in the establishment of the Tribe-district partnership. Through

her leadership role in the town and district, Robyn desires to see Wampanoag culture and language everywhere and intertwined in the daily life of the town and the schools.

Family-School-Community Engagement as an Open-Door Model

A major way in which educators in the district conceptualized and claimed to practice engagement is through what many of them described as an “open-door” model. This notion is captured by three of the school administrators in the following collection of short quotes. “I want those doors to be open to everyone” (Ester, Transcript, 5.8.18). “We have an open-door policy” (Jacob, Transcript, 4.12.18). “My door is open” (James, Transcript, 4.25.18). Though other administrators and teachers in the district did not use this exact terminology, their ways of conceptualizing engagement and describing actual practices were, with some variations, aligned with how the three building administrators envisioned and purported to practice family-school-community engagement.

By “open-door” or “door(s) that are open” educators in the district were referring to a school environment that is welcoming to families, makes them feel part of the community, and offers them many opportunities to engage or be involved. Their conversations and stories suggested that cultivating such an environment requires: (1) open-mindedness on the part of educators in terms of being empathetic of families’ traumatic histories and contemporary challenges and being willing to learn in order to better serve them; (2) engaging families in open-communication or dialogue by being responsive to families’ concerns, inquiries, and feedback and through a reciprocal exchange of information; and (3) ensuring that the school doors are always open to families through a plethora of engagement opportunities, including support services and non-academic events. This chapter focuses on these three ways that educators

conceptualized and purported to practice the open-door model of engagement. Because conceptualizations and practices were often shared in unison during conversations and interviews with participants, each section is comprised of participants' conceptualizations with a few examples of practices merged throughout and, in most cases, explicitly discussed at the end to more clearly make a distinction between ways that educators were thinking about family-school-community engagement and their actual practices. Also, to make a clear distinction between family-school-community engagement practices that are planned and intended for all families and those that were specific to the Native community, a fourth section on Tribe-Centric Engagement is included.

Open-mindedness

This first section describes the various ways that educators talked about the concept of open-mindedness as a component of the open-door model of engaging families. Their perspectives and practices ranged from the need to be empathetic and understanding of family challenges to considering inadequacies within themselves as individuals and, to a greater extent, in the organization (or school system) as a whole. In some instances, participants' gazes were bidirectional, and considered struggles and/or shortcomings in families as well as themselves. A few participants acknowledged that one of the shortcomings of the organization is the limited number of staff members of color. This section begins with the perspectives of participants who talked about the need for educators to be empathetic towards families and concludes with the viewpoints of those who offered critiques of the school system and expressed the need for more diversity among staff.

Empathizing for/with Families?

Empathy was a word that came up frequently in my conversations and interviews with teachers and administrators regarding family and community engagement. Multiple participants expressed the need for educators to be empathetic regarding families' home lives, and cited family challenges as a reason that some families are unable to attend school events or support their child(ren)'s learning at home.

“You have no concept of weeknights...with kids doing homework.” Elizabeth, a veteran administrator in the district, believes that empathy is an important quality that all teachers should have.

I do think it helps when anyone in the school, and not that you're not a great teacher with our children but, once you have them, it opens up a whole side of empathy for yourself because you have no concept of weeknights at home with kids doing homework and all of the challenges of raising children which I think is helpful for anyone in education to have. (Transcript, 3.22.18)

In this statement, Elizabeth is expressing the need for teachers to withhold judgement of students and families who may not be meeting school expectations and to be open-minded to the possibility of family complications. Allie, an early stage teacher in the district, expressed a similar perspective on empathy.

I think teachers need to be kind...even with things like homework. I think sometimes it's easy to just say this needs to be done...Teachers don't always get insight into what's the night like at somebody's home. Maybe it's very chaotic. Allie, like Elizabeth, mentioned homework and night life challenges, and while they both articulated the need for or responsibility of teachers to be understanding, Allie argued that

teachers should not fault or penalize students for not having their homework done. Both Allie and Elizabeth seemed resigned to and convinced of the existence of family challenges, and, whether intentional or not, they both expressed the need for teachers to be empathic based on assumptions of family challenges rather than actual evidence. Irrespective of the accuracy of their concerns about family challenges, there is the danger of empathy expressing itself in resignation and lowered academic expectations as was the case in Allie's comment.

“Families are really busy” ... “sometimes multiple jobs to keep housing.”

Ester and Thelma are two educators who spoke with more certainty about the existence of family challenges. Moreover, Thelma suggested that schools maintain high academic expectations for students from these homes through the provision of extra academic support and opportunities. Ester, one of the building administrators, commented, “Families are really busy. They are working to keep food on the table and a roof over their family's home” (Transcript, 5.8.18). Thelma, a teacher in the district, echoed the sentiments of Ester, “I think people are extremely busy. You have both parents, sometimes multiple jobs down here in order to keep housing” (Transcript, 6.1.18). Thelma continued, “So, I mean, food, shelter, clothing - I can see that being as the priority other than trying to get in to sit down and meet with the teacher” (Transcript, 6.1.18). As is clear from Ester's and Thelma's statements, family busyness and struggles to survive were used to explain their lack of engagement in school matters. Thelma went on to express the need for teachers to compensate for students who come from homes in which parents are not around or are not able to provide homework support. She believed that schools need to provide opportunities and extra support for students in these

predicaments to ensure that they are not at a disadvantage compared to students whose parents are able to play a more active role in their child(ren)'s education.

“Native American Population”? While most educators used a colorblind approach in discussions about family challenges and the need for empathy, several named Native families as part of this group. Jessica, a teacher who was born and raised in Wampum and attended its public schools, spoke specifically about the Native population and the lack of knowledge and empathy among educators regarding their history and contemporary challenges.

But these are little children that are exposed to things, or that have parents working three or four jobs, or, you know, we just don't know. So, I think we definitely are still lacking, I guess, empathy for the children of the tribe, because people that go, “Oh, that was a long time ago.” And I mean, even alcoholism for the Native American population, that's a major thing, healthcare, so all those little things that people forget about that still are affecting our kids today, is just really important...A lot of people that are newer to here don't know all of that. And I think like, even administrators, aren't even really aware of the true history of the tribe. And even like, their land being taken away and how that was all done up, too. So that wasn't that long ago, in the grand scheme of things. (Transcript, 4.27.18)

Similar to Elizabeth and Allie, Jessica begins her narrative with the need for empathy based on assumptions of family challenges. She then connects this conversation directly to the Native population as a whole, naming specific challenges and explaining these challenges as a consequence of historical injustices against the Tribe. Jessica continued

this narrative by attributing the inability of some educators, including “a few key people that are in big decision-making positions,” to empathize with and show compassion for “people coming from very different walks of life who may be doing everything they can just to put dinner on the table,” to “White privilege culture” (Transcript, 4.27.18).

Barbara, a long-term resident of Wampum and veteran teacher in the district, also referenced Native people specifically when discussing family challenges. However, while Jessica talked about the Tribe as one unit and attributed their contemporary challenges to town history, Barbara described a specific family and ascribed their generational behaviors to family history or reputation. With great caution and hesitation, she shared,

the one hard part, and I don't know how to say this, we have sort of a stigma around one household here in [Wampum] that several families live in...they're the children that have a lot of issues in school. They happen to be from the same family...If I gave you names of children you would know, but that has been pretty much the whole time I've lived in [Wampum]. It's a generational thing there. Their parents were the kids who were troublemakers in school. And I hate the fact that because they're Wampanoag that it shines a bad light on the Wampanoag piece because I think it's just ...yeah. I'm going to leave that one at that, I think. (Transcript, 4.5.18)

During our conversation, it was clear that Barbara felt hesitant and uncomfortable speaking negatively about this Native family. She also worried that this family's history may portray the Wampanoag Tribe, as a whole, in a negative light, causing some to believe that all Native families have the same challenges.

Jacob, like Barbara, also shared a perspective on family challenges specific to Native families but with more candor.

I find within the Native population, there is, and I don't want to say it incorrectly, but for some families, there might be ... there's no urgency to get to school or to get to school on time, and it's part of their culture. They're wanderers, and I get that, but sometimes it's at the sacrifice of a child's wellbeing, and I mean that by when a child gets here late, and I'm thinking of one particular child right now, it sets him off because he's late. He's already missed everything ... He's missed the start of his day. He's not connected to his peers. Then there's chronic tardiness or chronic absenteeism which is its own, academically, and then why are they late? Were they up all night? If they were, why? Why is this a regular pattern?

(Transcript, 4.12.18).

Jacob, like Jessica, begins his narrative talking about the Native population as a whole and then, similar to Barbara, shifts to speaking specifically about one Native family and child. He then closes his narrative by implying that tardiness is an issue among Native students in general. Jacob differs from both Barbara and Jessica in some of the stereotypical comments that he makes about the Tribe and “their culture” regarding the issue of school attendance and in the certainty with which he makes such assertions. This difference may be due to Jacob’s presence in the district as a newcomer. Though Jacob has been an educator for over 30 years, he has only been an administrator and employee of the district for three years. Jacob’s narrative illuminates the sometimes closed-mindedness and/or unidirectional gaze of some educators who chose to focus on what they believe to be deficiencies in others instead of or in addition to being reflective and

considering the existence of inadequacies within themselves, a topic that will be discussed next.

In sum, participants in this group expressed the need for educators to be empathetic towards families, particularly those who have challenging home lives that make it difficult for them to meet school expectations. Whether they were referring to families in general or Native families in particular, the need for educators to have empathy was a common refrain among teachers and administrators, most of whom appeared to use family histories and challenges as an excuse or justification for families' absences from or lack of involvement in school events and school related activities. However, there were some who suggested ways that this barrier to engagement might be overcome and others who shared actual actions that the district has taken to address family challenges, which will be discussed in the section on Open Schools.

Redirecting the Gaze to the Organization

This subsection describes a progression of educators' perspectives related to the theme of open-mindedness. Though the dominant perspective and practice was to gaze upon families and their suspected challenges or inadequacies, a few redirected their gaze to an organizational focus, recognizing or acknowledging the deficiencies among educators in the system.

“I think ignorance is part of our problem.” Roxanne, a long-term teacher in the district, always spoke with admiration about the Tribe and their rich culture and history in the community. She questioned, on several occasions, why there is not a Wampanoag curriculum in the schools to ensure that students are learning Wampanoag history from

pre-school through 12th grade. She was also critical and frank about what she perceived as ignorance among staff regarding the history and culture of the Tribe.

Even for myself, because I think ignorance is part of our problem. I think that because we don't know, and because we don't understand, it causes friction and problems. So, to me, can you imagine the difference if all of us were learning what they believe, and what they do, and how they function as a people.

(Roxanne, Transcript, 4.5.18)

Roxanne was excited about the forthcoming 10-week PD classes for educators (described in the previous chapter) about Wampanoag history and culture and its potential to remedy ignorance and improve communication and relationships between the Tribe and district.

“Our staff does need to be better educated.” Elizabeth was also self-reflective and gazed upon inadequacies within the organization while expressing her enthusiasm about the potential of the Tribe-district partnership and the 10-week PD module to be “game changing” in term of building educators’ “wealth of understanding” (Transcript, 3.22.18). During our conversation, Elizabeth repeatedly expressed her belief that “we have a lot better that we could do to engage all families, than we are right now” (Transcript, 3.22.18). She shared examples of teachers who are not “responsive to parents” and the need for them to “try to be open-minded and see the perspective of the parents” (Transcript, 3.22.18). She also spoke of the need for educators to put their “parent hat on” when “sitting with a kid or with a parent” and how having this perspective hopefully leads to them making “a different decision” (Transcript, 3.22.18). Elizabeth ended this series of thoughts with the comment, “We do have more that we can do to engage our families, particularly families of color and our Native American families

and families that are experiencing more challenges than others which is just the day to day survival” (Transcript, 3.22.18). Elizabeth views the Tribe-district partnership and the 10-week professional development module for teachers, a product of the partnership that is now in its second year of implementation, as an opportunity to build teachers’ cultural sensitivity and improve the district’s relationship with Native families. She expressed,

I am so excited about our partnership and our PD too. I don’t know why over the years it became a negative relationship. I don’t know where it started. I know there is some sort of a history with the town. And I know in the 70s there were land issues and all of that. And so, I think some of that filters down through the generations. But, I think, having the right people at the table, just continuing to come up with more and more ideas to not...you know, it’s two sided, our staff does need to be better educated. They do not understand. They think they do but I absolutely would admit that I don’t understand and I need to be better at that. And, the more we do things and actually participate in activities over there [the tribal center]. It’s just a way to celebrate, to celebrate everyone’s differences, but work together so that everyone’s able to grow. (Elizabeth, Transcript, 3.22.18)

Here, Elizabeth shifts the gaze from Tribal members and their part in the negative relationship that exists between the Tribe and the schools to the staff and their lack of understanding. She even admits to her own ignorance regarding town history and its impact on the Tribe. She also emphasizes the importance of educators being “better educated” to combat gaps in understanding. Elizabeth concludes her comments with the same assertion that Nora made at the end of the previous chapter, that having school

events at the Tribal center is a way to overcome discord and build relationships between the two sides.

James, a well-liked administrator among Native parents, was yet another educator who gazed upon the deficiencies of the educational system and the lack of understanding of tribal history among educators.

I think it's about understanding it and being mindful, respectful, but also not being afraid to learn either, because we don't know about every culture, we don't know about every background, we don't know the history of everything. This town has a very long history naturally with the tribe and their ancestry and dating back over 12,000 years to this area. It's across the board but I think that we just have to continue to chip away at it and reach out and do it until people feel comfortable enough to engage. (James, Transcript, 4.25.28)

James, like Elizabeth, expressed the need for educators to learn what they don't know. He also emphasized the importance of being "relentless" in the pursuit of better relations with Native families and being persistent in outreach to the Tribe until they become comfortable engaging.

"We have to address those biases and prejudices, and try to educate people."

Another example of reversing the gaze and taking action to combat ignorance and restore or re/build relationships with the Tribe comes from Robyn and her perception of the district as comprised of "well-intentioned" people.

And I think, as I get older, I learn that well intentioned people are really the only way anything gets done. You know? So, to the extent that people have prejudices, or biases, or hurt in their hearts about the past, or things that have happened to

them, I think we can collectively only move forward with these well-intentioned people. So, some of what we have to do is address those biases and prejudices, and try to educate people, and try to ... but not be patronizing. You know? Not make it a right or wrong thing, but really just offer opportunities for people to learn. And I think we'll grow that group of well-intentioned people that'll be there to help us solve the problems of tomorrow, and the ones after that, and the ones after that. (Robyn, Transcript, 5.8.18)

While Elizabeth and James refer to themselves and/or teachers as lacking in knowledge, and Roxanna calls it ignorance, Robyn accuses educators of being biased and prejudiced. Like Elizabeth, James, and Roxanne, she emphasizes the importance of learning as a mechanism for combatting ignorance, and shares Elizabeth's enthusiasm or hope that the Tribe-district partnership will produce real changes or improvements in the system. Though Robyn is more candid and precise in her description of the issue or problem with educators, her solution for rectifying their "biases" and "prejudices" is to educate with caution or sensitivity. This is evident in her comment about not being "patronizing" and not making it "a right or wrong thing." It could be argued that Robyn seeks to protect White fragility (DiAngelo, 2018). However, considering Robyn's long history of working with Native people and Native communities, her essential role in the formation of the Tribe-district partnership, and her mission to see Wampanoag history and culture taught in every grade and evident throughout the town (which will be described in more detail later), her stance on how to educate staff members may be more about being strategic. As she asserted, educating with caution and care will grow the group of "well-

intentioned people” to solve the problems and accomplish the goals, her goals, for the town and school system.

In sum, educators in this group acknowledged inadequacies within themselves and/or the school organization and the need for learning and growth on the part of educators. In reality, through outcomes of the Tribe-district partnership, including the 10-week PD module for educators and a presentation at the three district schools by doreen, one of the founders of WLRP, the district has been making moves to combat ignorance among district staff and improve their knowledge and understanding of the Wampanoag community.

“It's important with family engagement to increase diversity within your staffing.” The need to improve diversity among educators in the district serves as a last example of a way that teachers and administrators were thinking about open-mindedness. It also exemplifies a progression in the thinking of some educators about inadequacies in either themselves or the system as a whole. A few educators expressed that having more educators of color brings in diverse perspectives that are needed to rectify ignorance or biases in the staff while also improving the possibility of students and families feeling more welcome or represented in the schools.

Jennifer and Roxanne mentioned how much they learn and students benefit from having staff of color in the building. Roxanne spoke extensively about the benefits for students of having diverse staff.

We used to have a gentleman that substituted, and I'm not sure of his background; he was a man of color...probably one of the best assets to our school from this age all the way up because he's an example. Like, “Oh, look. Look what I can

accomplish. Look at where I can go.” Same thing I feel about Mr. Sam, our custodian. He's such a strong, positive influence. Because he's a man of color; he can ethnically relate to a good portion of our students; and he shows them respect, he shows them kindness, he shows them “this is what people are like.” He demonstrates that we all work together. I think that that's a wonderful influence. I think ... I wish we had more. I wish we had more men, too, at this level.

(Roxanne, Transcript, 4.5.18).

While Roxanne shared ways that students benefit from having staff of color in the building, Jennifer noted how much she learns, particularly from Mr. Sam. “With Mr. Sam being Native American, I learn stuff from him all the time. He brings in different things like food-wise or he'll talk about when it's the powwow. It's just there is that exposure” (Transcript, 4.10.18).

Elizabeth, like Roxanne and Jennifer, also emphasized the importance of having diverse educators for staff and student growth. She acknowledged that “our staff does not reflect our students” and shared that “we want our kids to see themselves reflected in the adults in their building” (Transcript, 3.22.18). Elizabeth expressed that having more educators of color “would go a long way to just helping those kids feel like even more, they belong up there” (Elizabeth, 3.22.18). Speaking specifically about the benefit of having more Native people on staff as teachers, she noted, “I kind of think having members of our staff who are Native would be really helpful because I think of all the different meetings and the different perspectives coming in would be pretty impactful” (Transcript, 3.22.18).

Elizabeth went on to assert, “I think we try to do a good job” and shared things they have done in the past and were currently doing to try to recruit and hire more staff of color. She shared how James has “tried” and that there were two candidates of color who applied for and were offered an assistant principal job at the middle/high school but turned it down. Elizabeth remarked, “they were very qualified and, in the end, they chose to stay where they were” (Elizabeth, 3.22.18). She continued, “So, outwardly you think he [James] never wanted to [hire people of color] but he did.” Currently, Elizabeth has been working with Trena, Business Manager for the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project and Development Director of the National Indian Education Association, to share job openings on a National site for “Native Americans who want to be teachers” (Elizabeth, 3.22.18).

While Roxanne, Jennifer, and Elizabeth relayed the importance of having diverse staff members for students and educators in the system, James noted its potential contribution for improving family engagement.

Well, I think you have to be mindful of cultures. You have to be mindful of families that come from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities...It's also important with family engagement to also increase diversity within your staffing and within your school because our students, I believe, should see a version of themselves within their schooling, a reflection of themselves within their schooling. That's something that we continue to try to do. (James, Transcript, 4.25.18)

Indeed, James has made it a priority to increase diversity among the staff in his school. At the end of the 2017-2018 school year, he was the only administrator in the district to reach out to me to see if I knew and could recommend any teachers of color to fill

openings that he had at his school. James was also the only administrator in Wampum to hire a person of color, an assistant principal, for the 2018-2019 school year.

In sum, this section has shared educators' wide-ranging perspectives on open-mindedness in terms of having empathy for families, providing learning opportunities for teachers and leaders, and hiring staff members of color. Findings revealed that some staff members are more open-minded than others and some are more progressive in their conception of open-mindedness than others. No matter where they lay on the spectrum, they all viewed open-mindedness as a prerequisite or necessity for improving family-school relations and, in some cases, participants were actively working to improve the system's capacity to better connect with families.

Open-Communication

Another essential component of the open-door model, that was articulated by both administrators and teachers in the districts, was the notion of engaging families in open dialogue or communication. Most teachers and administrators emphasized the importance of communication in the cultivation of a welcoming environment in which parents feel valued and are willing to engage. Perspectives on the role of communication ranged from re/actively listening to families' concerns and being responsive to their requests to proactively seeking and implementing their feedback. Participants also reported communication as one of the main ways they engage families.

Re/Active Listening and Responding

“It really is being a good listener” and “be[ing] responsive to parents’ concerns.” Jacob and Elizabeth, two administrators in the district, expressed that good communication is essential to fostering an environment in which families feel welcome.

They described communication as listening to parents and being responsive to their needs. For Elizabeth, ensuring that families feel welcome and heard is one of her top priorities. She asserted, “Making sure that they feel welcome...but it really does come down to relationship, good communication, making sure that you’re a good listener. It really is being a good listener” (Transcript, 3.22.18). She went on to express her expectation for “every administrator to be very responsive to parents’ concerns where there is a phone call or email that needs to be handled right away because they [parents] are important to us” (Transcript, 3.22.18). According to Elizabeth, it is the responsibility of administrators to “serve as role models” for teachers and to support them in all school matters including how to interreact with and respond to students and families.

I say to teachers that I view them as an extension to myself. That’s why, I say to the administrators, I don’t want to ever get an email where a parent says, “I haven’t heard back from somebody.” That is very upsetting to me because, some teachers dig themselves a hole and don’t need to. And then they try to climb out of it but they’d never have to do that in the first place if they just are responsive to parents and try to be open minded and see the perspective of the parent.

(Transcript, 3.22.18)

Jacob similarly articulated the importance of listening to parents and being responsive to their concerns. He commented that he wants parents to feel that “they always have a voice and an ear and specifically with the administration” (Transcript, 4.12.18). He went on to state,

It's making parents feel that they're welcome here...That's why we have an open-door policy and I will talk to parents. I'd prefer they make an appointment, but I

will answer my phone calls. I answer emails with, I hope, very sincere and open conversation type communication because I want people to feel that I'm their principal and I'm not someone who's untouchable, I'm very visible. (Transcript, 4.12.18)

Jacob's views on the topic of communication closely align with and may be influenced by Elizabeth's views, who is very transparent and verbal about her beliefs and expectations. Interestingly, both Jacob and Elizabeth describe listening and being responsive in terms of interactions that occur virtually via email or phone calls. Jacob mentions having "an open-door policy" but follows this statement by noting phone calls and emails which may indicate his conception of open-door as something that happens virtually or his preference that these interactions occur virtually. Elizabeth confirmed, "We connect with parents a little more easily through our technology" (Transcript, 3.22.18). However, she also commented that technology is "impersonal and I don't think it replaces getting people in the building" (Transcript, 3.22.18).

Elizabeth's last comment about the "impersonal" nature of technology reveals that it may not be an appropriate way to facilitate communication with families that is open and responsive. Noting his preference for phone calls over emails, James shared, "I still believe in phone calls as well. We try to make as many of those types of interactions as possible, because emails are tone deaf and they're just, to me, not the best way to communicate" (Transcript, 4.25.18).

In sum, participants in this group viewed open-communication as educators listening and being timely in their response to parents' concerns. They also communicated a message that communication with parents mainly occurs virtually

through the use of technology, forms of communication that, in Elizabeth's opinion, may not be the best way to achieve their goals of building better relations with families and making them feel welcome.

Communication as Reciprocal

"I see it as a reciprocal relationship." Charlie, a teacher leader at the middle high school and a member of the school council, articulated the bidirectional nature of open communication.

Making sure the communication between the school and families, parents, is open and effective and clear. I think especially that parents feel like they can reach out to the school and have a positive experience, whether that's with an individual teacher or administrator or central office or whatever it is...guess I really see it as a kind of reciprocal relationship and that families can't just sit and wait for the school to reach out to them and do all the work, that it's got to go both ways.

(Transcript, 6.13.18)

In this statement, Charlie is explicit about the role of schools to foster an environment in which families feel heard and are comfortable reaching out. However, he also expressed the need for parents to be proactive and to not wait for the schools to be the first to reach out.

"That's the role of a parent, to advocate for their children." Parent advocacy, as articulated by Ester, serves as an example of the reciprocal nature of communication that Charlie described. Ester emphasized the importance of educators being open to parents' loudly expressed grievances and "constructive" feedback. According to Ester, "I think that's the role of a parent, to advocate for their children, and I have always felt the

loudest, most difficult parents are that way because they love their child. It's not because they're trying to be difficult" (Transcript, 5.8.18). Ester shared that her response to these parents is "Hey, we're on the same team. We want the same thing" (Transcript, 5.8.18). Ester's belief in and support of parent advocacy is due to her experience of having to advocate for her own son, a person of color, when he was a student in the Wampum Public Schools.

I just think I wanted, and I still do, the best for him. I wanted to advocate for him as needed...But that was the role, to support him and make sure that he ... he didn't fit into the cookie cutter, "This is school. Come sit down. Read the book." He didn't fit into that. He wasn't that typical learner, so that's where it's like ... I wanted to make sure he had opportunities to grow. (Transcript, 5.8.18)

Ester's narrative about her son's experience in Wampum Public Schools and her desires and advocacy for him is similar to the stories shared by some Native parents. So, in a sense, she could relate to these parents and expressed her receptivity to their advocacy for their own children. However, as Native parents shared in the previous chapter, when they reach out to the school or speak out in advocacy for their children, the experience is rarely positive. This makes Charlie's concept of communication as reciprocal, a challenge.

In sum, participants in this group viewed open-communication as reciprocal and put some of the onus for reaching out first on parents. While Charlie emphasized the importance of schools cultivating an environment in which parents feel comfortable taking the initiative to reach out first, Ester's encouragement of parent advocacy implies a

belief in parents reaching out even when their or their child(ren)'s experiences within the schools are not positive.

Pro/Actively Seeking Families' Feedback

“The school should be open to listening to parents and seeking their feedback.” In a final and evolved example of open communication, educators expressed the importance of proactively reaching out to families for their guidance and feedback about ways that they can better serve families or improve their teaching and/or leadership. Charlie, a teacher in the district, voiced his opinion that, “the school should be open to listening to parents and seeking their feedback and seeking their guidance and encouraging involvement in the school” (Transcript, 6.13.18). Charlie stood out from most teachers interviewed in his assertion that schools should be actively seeking feedback and guidance from parents. Though this perspective was distinct from the other teachers, it was a common statement among administrators in the district, including Charlie's principal.

James was a firm supporter of parent feedback and viewed it as a way to improve his practice and the practices of all educators in his school, as evidenced in the story below.

We Want the Parents to Have Feedback

By James

We want the parents to have feedback. My door is open. Any parent that wants to come in, I want them in here. I want their feedback. As a leader it's one thing to, you don't want to get defensive. If we can be better at what we're doing then I want to know. If there's an opportunity, I missed, then, I want to know about it so I don't miss it again. If there's an opportunity for me as the leader of this building to grow, then I'm going to. That's something that I think that, hopefully all the parents I've dealt with, are generally appreciative of the fact that I'm not dismissing things. I'm here to listen and reflect. I try telling our teachers the same thing, to reflect. Look in the mirror every morning. Is this the best you could give? ... It comes down to communication and sharing of ideas. "How can we be better?" And accepting that feedback... If anybody comes in this room, I want them to understand that they are valued and what they're saying is valued and that we take it all in and we take the feedback constructively, we don't take it critically."

(Transcript, 4.25.18)

In this short narrative, not only does James communicate his belief in the value of parent feedback and valuing it, but he also clearly articulates his conception of open door as families coming into the school building, and into his room or office to engage in open communication. His conception of open door was noticeably different from the one Jacob expressed earlier. Moreover, whereas Jacob emphasized listening to parents, James stressed the importance of asking for and reflecting on their feedback and then implementing it to improve practice. James shared an example of this practice of engaging families, "We do surveys" to find out ways to "communicate effectively" with parents (Transcript, 4.25.18). Native parents confirmed James's assessment of his leadership. One parent even shared, "[James is] one of the people who's open to open dialogue, very open conversation with him about education and so forth" (Absolom, Transcript, 6.1.18).

Like James, Ester viewed parent feedback as an opportunity to learn and grow as a leader. She emphasized the importance of educators being sensitive, yet sincere and honest about their motivation for doing things and then being open to parents' critiques.

I think in education, sometimes we sugar coat a lot, so we don't hurt people's feelings. And you have to be sensitive to where other people are coming from, but I think if you're sincere, you're honest, you tell people your motivation, they listen. Most people do that. They're more open. And it's okay to have a difference of opinion. Isn't that healthy?... Challenge me. Question that. Maybe that decision wasn't the best, because I didn't see a certain side. (Transcript, 5.8.18)

James and Ester portrayed themselves as reflective and receptive educators who recognize that they can always improve and grow in their leadership practices. Though Absolom did not rate Ester as high as James, she did make his short list of only two administrators in the district with whom he's had a good experience.

Elizabeth and Robyn also regarded family input as something to be sought after and implemented as a way of better serving them. During my interviews with Elizabeth and Robyn, they talked about a family survey that they drafted and disseminated to parents. According to Robyn, "the other thing that we started in the community, an outreach working group, was a family opinion survey....[to] identify different ways that we can tailor activities and services to families.

In sum, educators viewed open-communication as a critical component of family-school-community engagement. They conveyed conceptions of open-communication that involved listening and being responsive to parents, embracing parents' initiative to reach out first and advocate for their children, and proactively seeking input from families with

the goal of improving engagement practices. They also shared a few examples of ways that they were operationalizing their views regarding open-communication. In actuality though, their overall practices entailed frequent communication with parents in various modes and for the purposes of keeping them informed about their child(ren)'s academic and behavioral progress and keeping them abreast of the many opportunities offered by the schools for them to engage or be involved.

Communication Practices

Kathy, a resident of Wampum and teacher in the district, provided a comprehensive summary of the various forms of communication that administrators and teachers use to keep families informed about what is going on in the district.

I know right here in our school system, Jacob does a great job. He gives an FYI out, I think it's called the Falcon Eye. It's something that he sends to parents once a week with important dates, with what's going on, with classroom chatter, grade chatter that teachers update, I think that's a huge part. I think he is also on twitter, and that's engaging for whoever has that technology...And then over at [the upper elementary school] Elizabeth started that weekly email, Ester kept it up. She has a blog every week which has pictures, important dates, tidbits of information....The teachers also have webpages, twitter... Teachers are very accessible. And even over at the middle school, teachers have websites, they have the Google classroom...they let you know. They do have twitter if you choose to follow it, they answer emails right away. It's pretty, across the board, I feel, because we're such a techie district, that technology piece, unless you don't have a smartphone, you're in it. You're getting email, unless say you can't be emailed, you're getting

hit all the time, so I find that fascinating. I think it's pretty, in a community that there's opportunities to get engaged if you want to, if it's your choice. (Transcript, 5.2.18)

Kimberly and Barbara, two teachers with over 20 years in the district, shared other types of technology that are used to keep families informed about their child(ren)'s progress. Kimberly shared, "a lot of people here use DOJO for communication and we all have website." DOJO is a behavior management tool for classroom teachers that allows teachers to set up profiles for each student and easily assign positive and negative points to students during lessons which parents are able to access. Kimberly referenced this tool several times during our conversation, sharing how effective she thinks it is and how much teachers like it. She described it as a form of text messaging.

Barbara uses an App called Seesaw to remain in daily contact with parents. Seesaw allows her to send pictures and short video messages to parents about their children, and parents are able to send messages back.

I have to say this year, I don't know if I have to credit my class in and of itself, because I have very involved parents, or if I credit the fact that this is the first year I've used the Seesaw App. But, I find parents really want to be involved. And I think the more you give them the opportunity, the more they feel valued and respected. But it also is a great way to show we're a part of a team, raising these kids together for the 180 days that we have with them. (Transcript, 4.5.18)

Teachers' uses of emailing, texting, twitter, teacher websites, an Apps such as DOJO and SEESAW as a way of communicating with parents underscores that Wampum, in Kathy's words, is "such a techy district." However, while Kathy and other

teachers saw this as a virtue by providing a variety of ways for parents and teachers to remain in contact, Jessica, another teacher in the district, saw it as a vice.

People are being inundated with posting and what looks real on the internet as opposed to what's really going on...I wish there was a better way to engage them or to keep them informed, because again, you might be losing people that don't do email, or that don't look at Facebook or twitter or whatever. (Transcript, 4.27.18)

Similar to Elizabeth's comment earlier in this section, Jessica acknowledged the limitations of technology as a tool for engaging families and keeping them informed.

In sum, this subsection on actual practices reveals yet another way that educators were conceptualizing open-communication, and that is keeping families informed of their child(ren)'s progress and all that is going on in the district through the use of various technological tools. Communicating in these ways was one of the main ways that teachers and administrators in the district reported engaging with families.

Open School

A final and essential component of the open-door model that was expressed by multiple participants was the importance of the school building being perpetually open to families and the community through the offering of a wide range of services and opportunities for engagement. Interestingly, most educators articulated a conception of family and community engagement with/in the schools that was non-academic in focus. They mainly spoke of engaging families and communities for the purposes of supporting them and building relationships with them.

Community School Model?

Schools as “an all-encompassing support system.” Several administrators and teachers in the district envisioned school as a place that provides wide-ranging support services to families. When asked about her conception of family-school-community engagement, Robyn, a district administrator, basically described a community school model in which the school offers a plethora of services that draw family and community members in.

Make People Come to the Schools for Something

By Robyn

I was reading about...these schools in Oklahoma...Oklahoma had some severe budget problems, and some of their public schools were really failing. And there was this great article that was in the New York Times...it might have been a year ago. But it talked about how to reinvigorate the school that was kind of floundering. They made it a central component of the community, and so that school was where everything happened. If you needed to get this service, or that service, it was offered at the school. And it made people from the community come to the schools more for things. So, it got me to thinking about how we could make our schools more central in the community. Now, we're resource rich, compared to this particular place or town that I'm talking about. But they did sort of attach everything to that school. And so, when I think of family, school, community, I think of that model, which is make people come to the schools for something.

(Transcript, 5.8.18)

Elizabeth had a similar notion of the role of schools in engaging families. In the section on open-mindedness and the need for empathy, I shared an excerpt from my interview with her in which she expressed the need for educators to be empathetic towards families because of the dire circumstances that epitomizes their home lives. In the following passage, she provides a more complete explanation of her views about family challenges and what she believes the school's response should be.

As a school, we sort of need to be an all-encompassing support system. It is our job to be the primary educator in terms of like content and skills and then support

families to do that as well. But everyone is not as equipped and we need to recognize that and give them the resources they need. I think we're more like the wrap-around too. If you understand what each family's situation is, making sure we have things in place for them...it's our job to make sure that the education is there, and then whatever resources the family needs in order to help them be better at that. But again, it comes back to the parents own prior experience, their belief system and how they're raising their children. (Transcript, 3.22.18)

Like Robyn, Elizabeth shared a conception of family-school-community engagement in which schools provide comprehensive services to families. While Robyn does not specify which types of services, Elizabeth explicitly references academic support and "wrap-around" services. Elizabeth's last statement also suggests another area of support she believes some families need. The following story describes her desire to provide parenting classes as an additional support service to families and high school students to remedy what she perceives to be a lack of parenting skills.

Whoever You Live With is Pretty Influential on How You End Up

By Elizabeth

I wished high schools had a parenting class because that's like the one thing, you leave and you have no skill set for that... You have your parents to go from. You either say, "I don't want to be like them" and hopefully you can try to be better or you're just like them because that's all you know. So, when little kids, and you see it over there [in the lower elementary school], when they come in and they act out in the morning, or they yell and they're disrespectful, sadly, they were probably greeted like that in the morning...the tone in the house. It breaks your heart. How do you fix at the family level, which is what we need to do? ...I've said that the many things we're doing to try in education over many years, until you can get more into providing the families with some of the skill sets needed, you might never affect the change that you need...because we get them for six and a half hours...and in some cases, there's extended care involved...but it's still that, whoever you live with is pretty influential on how you end up. So, even parenting courses with dinners or something...and we've tried.

(Transcript, 3.22.18)

Elizabeth's criticism of the aforementioned (though not identified) families' belief systems and child rearing practices, and her desire to correct it through parenting classes, similar to Jacob's comments about Native families and attendance, calls into question the educators' claims to be open and understanding of all families. It also may be an indication of what Jessica called out as "White privilege culture" in which some White educators are not able to relate or appropriately respond to the "very different walks of life" and upbringings of others, specifically Native families. Moreover, "White privilege" may be a factor that contributes to their un/conscious characterization of family belief systems and rearing practices that differ from their own as problematic and in need of intervention.

Elizabeth's comment that "we've tried" at the end of her deficit-based depiction of some families, is a reference to life skills parenting classes that were organized and facilitated by Jennifer, a school counselor, and a county sheriff and offered at the upper

elementary school. According to the Ester, a diverse group of 25 parents participated in the classes and learned so much that “they all requested to have more sessions” (Transcript, 5.8.18). Like Elizabeth, Jennifer saw the schools’ role as being aware of the needs of families and providing the necessary supports for students and their families, including parenting classes and financial and material provisions through annual holiday fundraisers such as the “giving tree” sponsored by the lower elementary. Jennifer also felt that the town community should ensure the availability of resources that meet the needs of families and have procedures and processes that make it easy for families to access them.

Roxanne, similar to Jennifer, believed that the schools and the town should provide support services for students and their families. She articulated the school’s responsibility as supporting families in developing children who are healthy and strong by providing breakfast and lunch, and health services like dental care. She also expressed that families in need should reach out to health services that are available in the town.

In sum, educators in this group conceptualized family-school-community engagement in a manner that mirrored community school models in which the schools are always open and offer wide-ranging support services. The next section describes a different conception of open schools that was expressed by other participants.

Building a School Community

Multiple participants spoke of the importance of having a multiplicity of opportunities for families to engage with the schools for the purposes of community building or building a relationship with them. Allie voiced her opinion that,

I think the school and the teachers and personnel have a huge responsibility to make families feel welcome and to give them a lot of opportunities... The school needs to make everybody feel like they're a part of the community. Part of that is opportunities. (Transcript, 5.15.18)

Also speaking of the importance of community building and of offering many opportunities for parents to engage, Barbara stated,

I find that parents really want to be involved. And I think the more you give them the opportunity, the more they feel valued and respected. But it also is a great way to show we're a part of a team, raising these kids together for the 180 days that we have with them. (Transcript, 4.518)

Likewise, Jennifer commented, "As a parent, wanting and feeling like, 'I'm welcomed' and that 'I'm part of that team.' And then, as a school, being open and welcoming to want everybody to access us" (Transcript, 4.10.18). Of note, all three teachers associated opportunities with families feeling welcome and connected or part of the team or community.

There were a plethora of events taking place in the schools that offered many opportunities for families to engage and feel connected to the school community. The events ranged from curriculum nights, to open houses, to community cookouts, to sporting, music and drama events. There are so many events taking place in the Wampum schools on a regular basis that some educators in the district were concerned about overwhelming families. James talked about the importance of finding "the balance of not asking the parents to be here all the time but to do as much as we can to inform

them what's going on and to really try to reach out to them early in the school year to build that relationship” (Transcript, 4.25.18).

Although the district offers many events and opportunities for families to participate in, some of which draw large crowds, several educators expressed the importance of having events that were more laid back and non-academic in focus as an essential way to foster an environment in which families feel welcome and part of the community.

“Engaging for community purposes”... “Not just academic purposes”

Another way that these educators in the district imagined being able to better connect with families was through what they termed, “non-traditional,” non-“intimidating,” “informal,” and “relaxed” events. Administrators and teachers, like Charlie, equated such events to those that are nonacademic in nature and beyond sporting events and music or theater performances. James shared,

It’s all about not just engaging for academic purposes, so like engaging for community purposes and building community and building relationships, because it’s not just about schooling itself, it’s a whole wide range of experiences that we want for our kids. That’s a really well-done event. (Transcript, 4.25.18)

For James the goal of engaging for nonacademic purposes was not for the sole benefit of families but for the advantage of all members of the school community, including students. The goal of “well-done” nonacademic events is to build community relationships.

Further addressing the necessity of events that are nonacademic in nature, Ester, another administrator in the district noted,

I don't want the families feeling intimidated from curriculum and they bring their own maybe negative experiences to school when that's the only focus. So, we really try to break down some of those barriers with some more just welcoming...come and watch a movie with us, come have dinner with us, come and play games with us, and just this is a place you can come and feel like this is a safe place to be with other families. (Transcript, 5.8.18)

Ester considers families who have had negative experiences in school that were academically related and the intimidation these families may feel about attending events with an academic focus, such as the curriculum or theme nights. Academic events may be a reminder of negative experiences and may thus discourage them from attending.

Roxanne and Charlie, two teachers, also emphasized the importance of having less formal events which they equated to non-academic events. They felt that the more traditional events like curriculum nights, open houses, and sporting, music, and drama performances do not foster an environment in which families are able to connect with one another and with teachers. For them, connecting means being able to engage in fluid conversations in a relaxed and fun setting over food. Charlie shared, "I think that connecting with families on terms that are different than the traditional academics and sports and extracurricular is a positive thing" (Transcript, 6.13.18). As an example of an event that he constituted as non-traditional, Charlie mentioned an end-of year picnic that the middle high school was planning.

According to Roxanne, relaxed and informal events include food and celebrating students' accomplishments.

I think family engagement would have to be the joy of celebrating their children in a relaxed environment. Not a formal where you get a little pamphlet. Just come on in, we're gonna have some pizza. We're gonna sit. They're gonna get a certificate. We're gonna applaud all their accomplishments. I think the more relaxed it is for me personally, I love it" (Transcript, 4.10.18).

Roxanne juxtaposed an event like this one to a typical open house or back to school night in which teachers present to parents, sharing the curriculum for the year, and often speaking using language that may be intimidating to parents or make them feel uncomfortable or like they do not belong. Roxanne was thus more in favor of events without an academic focus, viewing less formal and more relaxed events as a better way to build community.

Two events that were frequently cited as examples of a non-academic and non-intimidating events was the community back-to-school picnic hosted by the PTO's of the two elementary schools and pasta night at the upper elementary school, both of which involved free food.

Community back-to-school picnic. Similar to other educators in the district, Elizabeth was a strong advocate for more intimate, non-academic, and non-intimidating events. She viewed the PTO sponsored third annual back-to-school community picnic as a strong example of family and community engagement at its best.

the community picnic that, they've done it for two years now. And what I like, I like any opportunities we can to benefit the interaction between families... it's laid back, everybody's happy because you get free food... But you really get a chance to see, just people with an opportunity to have laughter and

conversation... even with all of the events that they come to for STEM night and math night, they're not as connected in terms of communication, like the picnic... any time you get a chance for families to sort of sit together and eat, you tend to have conversations that can evolve into a much better outcome. So, I think we need to do more of those types of activities. (p. 17)

In essence, Elizabeth described the annual community picnic as a "laid back" event that facilitates interactions and communication among families. She compared the back-to-school picnic to curriculum nights, noting that families communicate more and develop better connections at the picnic, which is not the case with the curriculum nights. She believes that the features of the community picnic that make this possible are the free food and opportunity for parents to sit and commune together in a "laid back" atmosphere.

My own reflections of that day and event support Elizabeth's description of it as a laid back, happy event with free food.

Yesterday evening I drove out to [Wampum] for the School/Community BBQ hosted by the PTO's of [the two elementary schools]. It was the third annual BBQ with a turnout estimated at 800... I arrived at 5:45... It was a nice sunny evening. I saw in the large field between the two schools about 4-5 bouncy houses, a tent with tables for sitting and for face painting, tables set up for food and drinks and a long line of parents and children to get food. (Fieldnotes, 9.12.17)

In addition to free food, there were many fun activities to engage the students and seating areas, as Elizabeth noted, for families to sit and commune together over a meal.

Unfortunately, what I did not catch or see that evening was the self-segregation and self-separation tribal members engaged in at the event. Speaking at a later date about the event with Camille, the Wampanoag administrator, I noted in my journal that,

[he] praised the community BBQ that took place in early September. However, his reflection was that he noticed the Wampanoag community segregating themselves from the other families, mentioning that they gathered near the bleachers, far away from the other families. He commented that people from the tribe often play the race card and do not appreciate non-Native jewels who work for the tribe or wonderful people within the [Wampum] community. (Fieldnotes, 9.25.17)

Camille's observation reveals that although the community picnic draws lots of families in a relaxed atmosphere, it falls short of fostering connections and dialogues among Native and non-Native families. Elizabeth seemed not to notice this separation and segregation along racial lines, particularly as it related to the tribe. Like me, she did not notice tribal members off in the distance, engaged in their own, separate gathering.

In sum, educators conceptualized engagement as cultivating a welcoming school environment and offering many opportunities for families to get involved and feel connected or part of the school community. Some described their preference for a community school model while others emphasized the importance of building community through engagement events that are less formal and more laid back. According to participants and based on my observation in the district, the schools are doing a lot to engage families; however, it appears that despite their efforts, there are still some families that, though present at some of the events, may not be engaged or may disengage from

the broader school community, as was the case for Wampanoag families at the community cookout. The next and final section of this chapter focuses specifically on the Native community and the examples that educators cited or referenced as ways that the district engages these families and community members.

Tribal-Centric Events

A significant portion of the interviews and conversations that I had with educators in the district centered around general practices pertaining to family-school-community engagement for all parents. However, there were moments in which they shared practices that related specifically to Native families that were mentioned freely or after being explicitly prompted to provide examples. I noticed a stark difference in the examples of Tribal-centric or Tribe related events that teachers shared compared to the administrators. The more veteran teachers recalled and express a longing for past Tribal-centric events and activities that took place in the schools annually and were led by Tribal members. Knowledge about contemporary events was shared by the most active educator in the group and by one of the teacher participants who has served in the district the longest and worked in all three of Wampum's public schools. Other teachers referenced contemporary events, including the presentation by doreen given during one of the professional development (PD) days and the 10-week PD module on Wampanoag and Native history, governance, and culture, that was offered for credit to district educators. With the exception of a few teacher participants, most of the teachers had no knowledge about the Tribe-district partnership and were not aware that the 10-week PD module was one of the outcomes of that partnership. In contrast, the conversations by the administrators focused on current practices and their plans or vision for the future.

Past Activities

“They used to...” Teachers who have taught in the district for 10 or more years or who have longer histories with the district because they or their children attend(ed) Wampum Public Schools, recalled a time in which the presence of Wampanoag culture was more prevalent in the schools as a result of regular and more fluid involvement from Wampanoag community members. Roxanne, a veteran teacher who has been in the district for more than 20 years, remarked, “one of the things that they've done in the past is they have them come in, and it's a one day, and they demonstrate regalia and their drumming, and they do beautiful things... It's a snippet of who the Wampanoag Tribe is” (Roxanne, Transcript, 4.5.18). Similarly, Kimberly, also a teacher with 20 plus years in the district, recalled a time “at least 10 years ago,” when Tribal members were regular presenters in the district (Transcript, 5.8.18).

They would come and do a presentation, the Chief would come and speak opening remarks, you know like 10 minutes but he would tell stories and he'd have the whole group laughing. Sometimes they'll come and they would do the dances...More informative, we had a speaker once, that came and explained the different traditions. We had the Pow Wow that a lot of the people on staff go to. (Kimberly, Transcript, 5.8.18)

Kimberly also recalled a time “going back 15, 16 years,” when “the Wampanoags” would come in to “demonstrate to the kids” with dancing, and how the kids were “fascinated with it” (Talking Circle Transcript, 11.20.18). This led her to declare, “I love Native American culture” and to express, “I would love to see the tribe go back to what they were doing” (Talking Circle Transcript, 11.20.18)

Jessica, a science teacher in the district who was also born and raised in Wampum and attended the public schools, also wished that Wampanoag history and culture was more prevalent in the schools, like it was when she was a student. She recalled a fifth-grade field trip she participated in as a student in Wampum,

The tribe would meet with us there, and show us how to go Quahoging and to go clamming and then we did a traditional clambake. I still remember it really, really clearly. And I think those are the types of experiences, I mean, I think the pendulum has swung way too far in one direction of testing, and data collecting, and kind of burning kids out on school. (Jessica, 4.27.18)

Jessica attributed the significant changes in the level of involvement from the Tribe to contemporary school-related barriers such as testing. She also admitted her own shortcomings as a teacher who attended public schools with Native students, has Native friends, and who benefited from a schooling experience in which Wampanoag culture was taught and celebrated.

I don't really feel like I do anything specifically, right now, where I have reached out to the tribe to say, "I would like to support you in this way," or, "I would like you to come in, and do something in the school." I feel really bad about that"

(Jessica, Talking Circle Transcript, 11.20.18)

Though Jessica confessed that she was not helping to foster a return of the Tribe's presence in the school in her own classroom, she did credit Roxanne for her initiative in welcoming Tribal parents into her classroom to present their culture.

I remember Roxanne actually, she had a student two years ago, that his father was a member of the tribe, and he had his tribal name and everything. And the dad

came in wearing all of his furs, and brought in a couple of different artifacts to show the kids, did some drumming, did some dancing. And it was awesome. She invited me in, because she knows that I'm into all that. It was actually in this room, her room used to be in this classroom. And that was like, brought tears to my eyes, it was so cool. And the kids were just in awe of him. Like, "That's your dad. Look at what he's doing." (Transcript, 4.27.18)

During one of our conversations Roxanne confided that she loves having Native students in her classroom and always invites parents or their family members to present to the class. Roxanne is one of the few teacher participants in this study who is proactive in welcoming and teaching Native culture in her classroom through the ongoing involvement of Native parents. Kathy also shared how in the recent past, she had a Native parent who was very active and volunteered in her classroom.

In a final example about past participation and involvement of Tribal members in the school, Barbara, another long-term teacher who has been teaching in the district for more than 20 years and whose children attended and graduated from Wampum Public Schools, shared a story of cultural revitalization that is occurring in the lower elementary school as a result of the Wampanoag administrator.

We just had the event here with the dancing, and the storytelling. My children [students], at four, and five years old, can tell you what's in a three sisters' garden. They can tell you, at least three of the dances they learned, and we haven't reviewed anything....Just to go back, to the town history piece. Having been here over 30 years, I feel like there was a lull with the schools, and the tribe working together. Having my own children having gone through Wampum, I saw it mostly

with my older son, that the tribe didn't seem as strong as a unit, back then. Then, I saw it start to come back. I don't know ... I think they had a lot going on, within the tribe, with their own things, and the schools was turning more towards MCAS, and standardized testing. I think we, at the same time, moved away from a lot of that. It's nice to see that we're working on it. (Barbara, Talking Circle Transcript, 11.20.18)

In this narrative, Barbara provides a perspective about Tribal participation in the public schools that ebbs and flows, with a contemporary lull that she, like Jessica, attributes to standardized testing. However, she talked with enthusiasm about a current culture-based presentation in the school by Tribal members that excited and fostered memorable learning experiences for her pre-school students. Jessica also shared, “Thinking about this year, at the [lower elementary] school, we've already done several things to celebrate, and teach the culture of the Tribe, but I strongly feel that that's only because one of our administrators is from the Tribe, so that makes me sad” (Talking Circle Transcript, 11.20.18)

Indian Education

Though Indian Education has been an ongoing program in the schools for 47 years, only two teachers mentioned it as an example of ways that the school system engages Native families. Jennifer is an educator who has lived in the area nearly her entire life, been an employee in the district for eight years, and is the most active in matters relating to family and community engagement of all the participants that I interviewed. She briefly mentioned, “We have our Indian education and our lunch bunch

groups here” (Jennifer, Transcript, 4.10.18). Kimberly, a veteran teacher in the district, also referenced the Indian Education Program, sharing,

We have, they have Indian Ed. Now they have certified teachers doing it, it's been consistent. I think that's been very effective. They also have...a Native American, I can't think of her name. I talk to her every time she comes in...She comes every Thursday and sits with the kids. And it's really exciting because I have [lunch] duty, and I turn around to peek. She brings in artifacts and they've revived their language.

Interestingly, Kimberly shifts from laying claim on the Indian Education Program to identifying it as a district program. This was a common refrain among teachers who mostly referenced practices related to the Tribe as something that the school was doing. Moreover, her inability to recall the name of the “Native American” teacher of the lunch bunch, though she speaks to her every week, may also be an indication of the distance between school or district practices and her personal teaching practices. Perhaps, if she had a more invested interest or participation in Indian Education, she would know the Wampanoag teacher’s name. Lastly, Kimberly was quick to point out that she believes the program is more effective now that they have certified teachers. She was not referring to the Wampanoag leader of the lunch bunches but the non-Native teachers who work in the program. This is one example of the disconnect between Native parent perspectives regarding the virtues or shortcomings of Indian Education and an educator’s view of the program. Native parents complained about the non-Native teachers who are now serving as tutors in the program.

Luke, a long-term educator who has fluctuated between teaching and administrative roles in the district since his arrival in 2011, spoke the most extensively about the Indian Education Program.

As far as the native community, we have the Indian Education Program...There is a parent advisory committee. They have monthly meetings. There's a grant, and it's through the federal government, the school administers. Leto is paid through it as the Director of Indian Ed. They have tutors at the elementary [schools]. I know that there's some tutoring, and there are lunch bunches. Then at this level, there used to be a class during the school day when we were middle school and high school. The middle school had a class. I don't know if it was all just native kids because in a public school you're really not supposed to do that...There hasn't been that during the school day Indian Ed class for a few years now, I don't think. Back to the parent piece, there's a parent committee that advises the program. I don't know really the extent of it, but I know it exists. I used to go to those meetings when I was assistant principal back in the day, but I haven't been since I came back to this role [as an administrator]. I'm busy. If there's one less meeting I have to go to, great. I wouldn't mind going. That's that. (Transcript, 4.10.18)

The Indian Ed class that Luke referenced is a course. According to James, the course is “a Native North American history class” that has run “on and off” and “hasn’t run just due to lack of enrollment” but is still on the program of studies at the high school that students can choose from (Transcript, 4.25.18). James recalled that the last time it was taught, he was “a very young teacher” in the district and though he didn’t teach it, he remembers “bringing in leadership and members of the Tribe to talk about their

experiences, to talk about the heritage in those classes. That was very engaging and unique” (Transcript, 4.25.18).

The Partnership

As a final example of tribal-centric or related events, participants shared stories about the Tribe-district partnership, how it was formed and its outcomes. Robyn, a leader in the district who moved to Wampum with her family in 2009 and whose children attend Wampum Public Schools, takes credit for the formation of the partnership. During our interview, Robyn discussed the conversations with Tribal members that inspired the formation of the partnership. She described her relationship and conversation with Linda, the communications director for the Tribe who is Native Hawaiian. They talked about how “in Hawaii the native culture is so intertwined with daily life there, and that's one of the things that makes it so amazing. Why don't we do that here?” (Transcript, 5.8.18). Robyn also noted her relationship with another Tribal member, who is Wampanoag and whose granddaughter plays soccer with her daughter, and a conversation in which she expressed,

“I want this stuff for my kids.” Like, “I know you're doing this for your tribal members, but I want my kids to grow up with this sense of place, that they're in a very special place.” It's not just special to tribal members, it's just special, period. But the tribal members are the key to unlocking that. They're the ones with all the legacy, and information, and understanding, and appreciation for what used to be here, and what used to be there, how the tribes used to live off this land, and what their culture was like. (Transcript, 5.8.18)

Robyn stood out from other educators in the district who participated in this study. Not only did she talk passionately, appreciatively, and extensively about the Tribe's rich history in the area, but she has also played an instrumental role in initiating and supporting the revitalization of Wampanoag history and culture in the Wampum Public Schools. In the following story, she provides a summary of how the Tribe-district partnership came to be and her role in its formation.

Formation of the Tribe-District Partnership

By Robyn

So, the first thing we did was we had this joint meeting, and it evolved into a school committee meeting at the tribe, never been done before. I mean, remarkable. Why wasn't it ever done before? Well, because there wasn't somebody like me, I guess, on the committee, who just had a natural curiosity about why we're not collaborating more. So, we took this great tour, everybody was invited, we had all the administration, so each of the principals. We had all the school committee members, and then other key staff. And then we rolled right into a school committee meeting at their thing [Tribal Government building]. Then as an outgrowth of that, we developed this leadership team with tribal leaders, like their Director of Education, Nora, and Jessie, the Vice Chairwoman. And Danielle, who is the head of the immersion school. And then a group on the school district side of the superintendent, the principals, the deans, and ... I don't even know all those people's positions. But, basically, her [the superintendent's] leadership team. They came up with 24 items, more than 24, I think, of things they could work on. And more than half of them are done already. So, there wasn't a lack of willingness on either side. It was just creating this climate and opportunity for conversation and collaboration, that, just, the floodgates opened.

(Transcript, 5.8.18)

As Robyn noted, the partnership consists of Tribal and district leaders who determined 24 action items, most of which had already been achieved at the time of our interview.

Charlie and Jennifer were the only two educators who indicated any awareness of the partnership and its purpose. Charlie commented during our interview,

I know that the superintendent is really open and respectful, too. I think she really wants to know and wants to listen in a way that not every superintendent would

be...[she] has made clear that it's an important thing for her...to engage with the tribe and have them more involved. Just one example would be those meetings that school committees had at...and they have a second one scheduled, meetings at the tribal council. That's just a really good gesture. (Transcript, 6.13.18)

Jennifer also talked about the school committee meetings at the Tribal Center and other activities sponsored by the Partnership.

I think they are and they did a few school committee meetings lately that have brought in either activities or things that are going on in the community. The whole piece of having a meeting at the tribal center, bridging that gap... I'm actually taking that 10 week class on Thursdays. So, it was really interesting to learn about their school and, of course, pre-K through K right now and just their curriculum and what they're doing for their curriculum. That was really eye-opening, and tying it into their culture...Personally, it probably could be more [to engage Native families], but I think the intent is to increase it and I definitely have seen an increase though since I've been here (Transcript, 4.10.18)

Jennifer, unlike other teacher participants, possessed an awareness of the partnership and its outcomes and activities that are “going on in the community.” Although other teachers such as Roxanne and Barbara talked about the 10-week PD Wampanoag classes that they would be attending, Jennifer was the only teacher who recognized it as a product of the partnership.

Sharing his perceptions about the benefits of the partnership and his hopes for a long-term collaboration, James expressed,

I would love to see continued collaboration in events and opportunities that are held together. We're very open to hosting and working to have things at the tribal center as well as here, but I think this year was a really positive step in rebuilding a relationship that was not as good as it should have been for a variety of variables...I think it's really important to continue to build and to provide opportunities and to just work together because these are our kids. They're our kids and I think that's important that everybody is on board with that. (Transcript, 4.25.18)

James noted something significant in this narrative that was also expressed by Robyn, Jennifer, Charlie and others which articulated one of the ways that they conceptualized family-school-community engagement. There has been a shift from solely school-centric and school-based activities or opportunities to tribal-centric and hosted events. The district is shifting from a conception and practice of family-school-community engagement that solely aims to get families into the school building to a recognition of and openness to the importance of engagement opportunities on the Tribe's turf or territory. Teachers and administrators recognized this as an important step in re/building relationships with the Tribal community.

In sum, there was a clear distinction in the Tribe-specific events that teachers referenced compared to administrators. Teachers mostly gave examples of past events and shared that Tribal community members used to be more active in the schools. In contrast, administrators had more knowledge of and noted current Tribe-centric event that are taking place in Wampum Public Schools. They also shared their hopes that the Tribe-district partnership would improve relations with Tribal members.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the ways that teachers and administrators conceptualize and practice family-school-community engagement. Educators that participated in this study described an open-door model of family-school-community engagement and expressed the importance of cultivating a welcoming environment and offering many opportunities for engagement so that families feel connected and want to be involved.

Collectively, participants shared a spectrum of views on how to achieve their ideal of family-school-community engagement that fell within three main areas: being open-minded to family histories and challenges while also being aware of their own limitations (biases, prejudices, lack of knowledge) and their learning needs; engaging in open-communication which entails listening and being responsive to parents while also being willing to be proactive by asking parents for their input and feedback before making decisions; and practicing an open school model in which families are always welcome and are afforded many opportunities to connect or be involved. The educators' conceptualizations about family-school-community engagement generally included all families within the school system with a few variations that related specifically to Native families. They mainly shared practices that pertained to or encompassed all families within their school communities. However, when prompted and, in some cases, through the natural flow of conversations (and perhaps because of their awareness of the focus of my research on Native families and community members), participants did share practices that were targeted for or directly related to Native families and community members.

The ways that educators conceptualized family-school-community engagement mirrored Henderson's (2007) "Open-Door School" in which there are many ways or opportunities for families to be involved. Henderson's (2007) "Open-Door School" model contains five components: (1) building relationships; (2) links to learning which entail keeping families informed about their child's progress and having curriculum nights; (3) addressing differences; (4) supporting advocacy; and (5) sharing power. Teachers and administrators addressed all of these components except sharing power. Though the Tribe-district partnership is an example of sharing power, administrators mainly mentioned its outcomes and potential to strengthen relations between the Tribe and district.

In conclusion, apart from references to the Indian Education Program and the outcomes of the Tribe-district partnership, educators' conversations about family-school-community engagement were very different from those shared by Native parents and community members. Clearly, the priorities and practices of the district regarding family-school-community engagement are very different from the Tribe's. The discussion chapter that follows considers why this is the case while also revisiting the theoretical framework and answering the last research question of this dissertation which asks whether or not the engagement practices of educators and Tribal families and community members are aligned and culturally sustaining/revitalizing.

Chapter Eight: Discussion

This exploratory case study (Cresswell, 2002; Hartley, 2004; Yin, 1981) examined family-school-community engagement in a small New England school district and town that is home to the Wampanoag people, a federally recognized tribe that has inhabited the area for 12,000 years and whose children represent the largest group of racially minoritized students in the local public schools. This is the Tribe that welcomed the Mayflower pilgrims and continues to live and practice their culture on the selfsame land, most of which has been taken away from them, and a small remaining portion of which they have been in an ongoing struggle, since the 1600s, to keep under their feet. This account of loss as well as resiliency speaks to the legacy of the Wampanoag people and warrants a desire-based perception and portrayal of them, something I hope this research has achieved (Tuck, 2009; Tuck & Yang, 2014).

When I set out to do this work, I aimed to understand the ways that Indigenous families and community members as well as district educators were conceptualizing and practicing family-school-community engagement and to see whether or not their conceptualizations and practices were aligned and culturally responsive, sustaining, and/or revitalizing. More specifically, I focused on the following research questions.

1. How do Indigenous family and community members conceptualize family and community engagement or partnerships with/in schools, and in what ways have Indigenous family and community members engaged and/or partnered with district schools and their staff in the past and present?
 - a. What are Indigenous family and community members' educational priorities for their children?

2. What are district teachers' and administrators' conceptualizations of and practices concerning family-school-community engagement or partnerships in general and particularly as it relates to Indigenous families and community members?

a. In what ways have they engaged and/or partnered with Indigenous families and community members in the past and present and what does this reveal about their priorities?

3. In what ways, if at all, are district teachers' and administrators' priorities and practices aligned with and accountable to the priorities and expectations of Native families and community members?

a. Are family-school-community engagement and/or partnership practices in the district culturally sustaining/revitalizing? If so, how?

Though the questions have changed slightly, the purpose of this study has remained steadfast. Historically and contemporarily, US schools have served to dehumanize Indigenous families and their children while attempting to eradicate their languages and cultural practices. Family-school-community engagement has been touted in the research literature as a remedy to the problem of low achievement that prevails in many schools serving minoritized students, including Indigenous students. However, this dissertation has argued that a more pertinent reason to study this topic is due to the deep and enduring mistrust that Indigenous families and community members feel towards schools and their staff resulting from “ongoing legacies of colonization, ethnocide, and linguicide” committed against them and their children by colonial governments and their educational institutions (Brayboy, 2005; Grande, 2015; McCarty & Lee, 2014, p. 103). This study recognizes that family-school-community engagement in Indigenous contexts

must support Indigenous families and community members in reclaiming and revitalizing their language and cultural practices. This purpose has informed the research questions as well as the methodologies and theoretical frameworks used in this dissertation.

This research has foregrounded, privileged, and normalized Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing as a foundation or framework for examining family-school-community engagement or partnerships. I have done so through the utilization of Indigenous protocols such as relationality (self-locating myself in the research and being relational in all my interactions with participants) and relational accountability (exercising respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and answerability) (Louis, 2007; Wilson, 2008) and through the use of Indigenous methodologies that have included semi-structured conversations, talking circles, and participant observation which Wilson (2008) described as the scientific term for the watching and doing that epitomizes traditional Indigenous research (Kovach, 2009; Running Wolf & Rickard, 2003; Wilson, 2008). In my attempt to “gain a closeness or familiarity with a group, through taking part in their day-to-day activities over a long period of time,” I served as a participant observer in the district two to three full days per week over the course of the 2017-2018 school year (Wilson, 2008, p. 40). Also, to honor the oral traditions of Indigenous peoples and the significance of narratives and stories, semi-structured conversations and talking circles were used as conversational methods due to their open-ended nature which allows for more flexibility and free and open participation (Kovach, 2009). I conducted over 40 semi-structured conversations and interviews with 30 participants, 15 Tribal members and 15 educators, who were identified through purposive and snowball

sampling. Moreover, I facilitated two talking circles, one with five Indigenous parents and one with four educators.

All data was analyzed using a combination of Wilson's (2008) intuitive logic (which entails looking at the data as a whole and relying on intuition to determine what the data is saying) and a variation of Braun and Clarke's (2006) recursive six-phase process including familiarization with the data; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and writing up findings.

Last but not least, this study was conducted and analyzed using a decolonizing lens and culturally responsive leadership (Johnson, 2014), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2014), and culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy (McCarty & Lee, 2014) as theoretical frameworks. See Figure 1 which depicts the theoretical framework presented as a continuum.

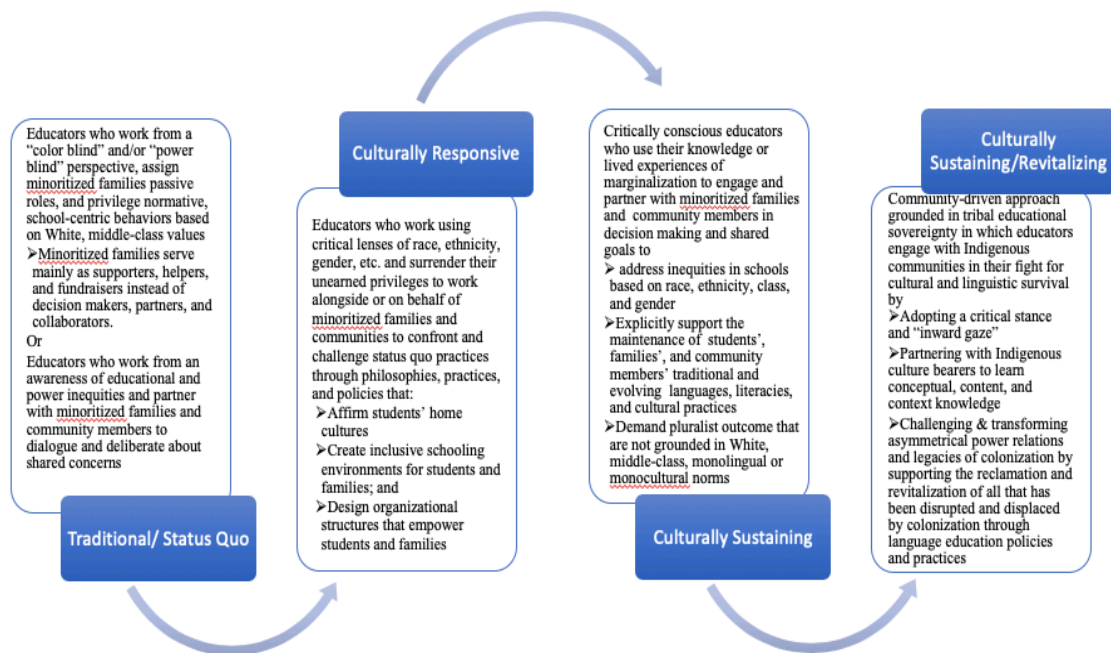


Figure 1. A Continuum Towards Culturally Sustaining/Revitalizing Family-School-Community Engagement/Partnership Practices

This chapter reviews the key findings from this study organized by research question and places the findings in conversation with the theoretical framework and the research literature on family-school-community engagement generally and Indigenous families and communities specifically. Moreover, the third research question is answered in this chapter and places findings from Indigenous family and community members in conversation with findings from district educators. The chapter concludes with a discussion of implications for practice, directions for future research, and how I have and will continue to practice relational accountability and answerability in my relations with participants.

Analysis of Key Findings

Research Question 1: Indigenous Family and Community Members'

Conceptualizations and Practices

Conceptualizing Engagement: A Multi-Space Model

While one of my objectives for this study was to understand conceptualizations of family-school-community engagement, in the process of hearing and rehearing (listening to), and reading and rereading the narratives of Indigenous family and community members, it became evident that they were sharing their educational and engagement priorities for their children. They were not interested in engaging with education in “traditional” school-centric ways that are school-controlled, school-determined, and based in White middle-class values (Fennimore, 2017; Ishimaru, 2017). Instead, in alignment with the findings of another study conducted in an Indigenous context (Hicks, 2014), they articulated a conception of education and educational engagement that is Tribe-centric in its focus on linguistic and cultural renewal and continuity, and one that

prepares their children for a successful life beyond high school through the acquisition of academic and life skills. Moreover, they envisioned this learning taking place in alternative spaces other than the institutional and colonizing structures of public schools. These alternative spaces included homeschooling and separate, Tribe-centric and Tribe-run schools.

Native participants' desires for culture-based education mirrored the wishes of Indigenous Elders and community members in some of the research literature on family-school-community engagement in Indigenous contexts who wanted their cultural knowledge and traditions to be included in the curriculum and pedagogical practices in the schools their children attended (Bond, 2010; Madden et al., 2013; Ngai & Koehn, 2016; Tunison, 2013). Also, like their counterparts in other studies, Indigenous parents and community members in this study expressed concern that the predominantly White educators in Wampum lacked the cultural awareness, proficiency, and sensitivity to effectively teach their children (Agbo, 2007; Bond, 2010, Madden et al., 2013). They similarly asserted the need to extend this learning (Tribe-centric or culture-based education) to all educators in the system (Agbo, 2007; Bond, 2010, Madden et al., 2013).

In contrast, participants in this study differed from Indigenous parents and community members in other studies in their suggestions of separate spaces to achieve their educational objectives for their children. This may be due in part to their successful establishment of a Wampanoag immersion Montessori preschool and to their success in grant writing and securing federal funding to support their language and culture-based initiatives and projects.

All in all, their desire to be the drivers and enforcers of a language and culture-focused education for their children, in spaces within and outside the public schools, was an expression of educational sovereignty as defined by Moll and Ruiz (2005), McCarty and Lee (2014), Lee and McCarty (2017) and others. Tribal educational sovereignty entails communities initiating and directing the development of their own infrastructures to educate their children in ways that foreground their language and culture (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; McCarty & Lee, 2014, 2017; Moll, 2002; Moll & Ruiz, 2005) which can exist within and outside institutions of education (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; Moll & Ruiz, 2005). Exercising educational sovereignty was not just an aspiration for Tribal members but something that was partially achieved, at least in the case of Native community leaders.

Practicing Engagement: Advocating for Equitable Policies and Cultural Continuity

Contrary to their counterparts in the research literature on family-school-community engagement in Indigenous contexts, Indigenous parents and community members in this study practiced ardent advocacy for their children. Native parents mainly engaged in individual advocacy for their children and others regarding inequitable and exclusionary policies and practices while Native community leaders engaged in collective acts of agency to achieve their priorities for more language and culture-based education in the public schools. This shows that there was alignment between Native community leaders' conceptualizations regarding education and educational engagement and their actual practices but a misalignment in Native parents' conceptions compared to their practices.

Native community leaders' practices were an enactment of educational sovereignty and culturally sustain/revitalizing pedagogy (McCarty & Lee, 2014, 2017; Moll, 2002; Moll & Ruiz, 2005), and their advocacy efforts were fairly successful. Outcomes of their collective efforts include the addition of Wôpanâak language classes at the middle/high school; language and culture-focused afterschool programs for Native students at the elementary schools; and a 10-week professional development module on Wampanoag and Pan-Indigenous history, culture, and governance for educators in the district. Their success was likely due to their status as leaders in reputable and enduring organizations, their collective advocacy, the focus of their advocacy, and their initiative and agency in securing funding to support their initiatives.

Chapter Six describes the collective work and advocacy of Native community leaders who work for the Indian Education Program, the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project (WLRP), and/or the Tribal government. This includes their successful attainment of federal funding and the fruitful outcomes of their collaboration. Their focus on improving language and culture-based education for their children and to increase all students' and educators' knowledge of Wampanoag and Pan-Indigenous history, culture and governance aligned with the expressed desires of some teachers and nearly all the administrators who participated in this study. These factors may be reasons why Native community leaders were better received by educators and more successful in achieving their language and culture-focused priorities in the public schools.

In contrast, Native parents' engagement with/in the schools entailed advocating for their children and other Native and non-Native students of color regarding policies and practices that they deemed unfair and inequitable and excluded their children. Their

advocacy was mainly reactive and included individual ventures that addressed disciplinary, attendance, and opportunity matters which excluded their children based on race, gender, and dis/ability. Their demand for inclusive schooling environments for their children and their tenacity in confronting and challenging status quo philosophies, policies, and practices orient them with culturally responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogies (Johnson, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014, 2017; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2016).

The issues that they tackled, questions they raised, and/or accusations they made (i.e. accusing educators of being biased, racist, sexist, and ableist) may be a major reason why their advocacy was resisted. According to the research literature, minoritized families are often resisted by educators for their failure to comply with institutional or racialized scripts or rules and expectations of engagement (Horvat et al., 2003; Ishimaru, 2014; Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Milne, 2016). Native parents in Wampum were clearly out of compliance with racialized institutional scripts in their practice of challenging inequitable and racist, sexist, and ableist school policies and practices, factors that are not accounted for in the more popular and influential models of family-school-community engagement. Critiquing the US Department of Education's Family Engagement Framework, Ishimaru (2017) noted its failure to "center family engagement in the pursuit of systemic and institutional change for educational equity, or explicitly address the power, race, class, language, citizenship status" (p. 5).

While the focus or purpose of their advocacy is a likely reason why they were resisted by educators, parents' failure to mobilize and work collectively to achieve their goals may be another reason. They engaged in advocacy on an individual basis instead of

joining forces and organizing in parent activism to strengthen their agency and collectively hold schools accountable, which is a more successful strategy for minoritized families (Dyrness, 2011; Fennimore, 2017).

Despite their failure to collaborate in their advocacy efforts, Native parents in this study did achieve mixed results. Those with more cultural capital (Lareau & Weininger, 2003) tended to have more tangible and favorable results. Like the middle-class families in Milne's (2016) study, middle class Wampanoag parents in this study such as Absolom, Debby, and Shani demonstrated "a high degree of sophistication when confronting educators, accessing resources, and advocating for their children," and were mainly able to achieve the goals of their advocacy (p. 284). Absolom's status as a university professor and his knowledge of IEP laws allowed him to successfully advocate for his son, a student with a dis/ability, on many occasions. Likewise, Debby's position as a Council Woman for the Tribe and her health background gave her the confidence and expertise to stand up for her family and secure appropriate services for her daughter in a meeting with nearly a dozen school district staff who accused her daughter of truancy and exhibiting a mental illness.

In contrast, Athena, who works multiple jobs to provide for her two children, and engages in a very complex schedule of kinship care with her sister and cousin to care for each other's children when they have to work, is a bit of an anomaly in the parent group. Though she would not be considered a person with cultural capital as conceptualized by Lareau and Weininger (2003), she has not submitted to the subordinate role that schools often ascribe to less economically stable parents (Ishimaru, 2014; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). Though her results were less tangible than her middle-class counterparts,

she possessed a high degree of confidence and sophistication in confronting and challenging educators regarding disciplinary issues involving her son that she believed were inappropriately handled and wrongfully placed her son at fault. Moreover, Athena's advocacy, unlike her middle-class counterparts and most other Tribal members in the community, extended into town politics. Despite her busy work and kinship care schedule and her regular presence in the schools to advocate for her own children, Athena attends nearly all of the town hall meetings to advocate for her Tribal community, noting, "When you go to the town meetings it's like 60 old white folks, that's who's making the decisions for our town. I'm not cool with that, because they're certainly not making the decisions for the benefit of me or my children" (Transcript, 6.28.18). Athena also frequently calls town hall, "100 times this year alone" to ask questions, air grievances, inform them of "trash on the back roads," and to demand that they "open the damn gate at 7:00" the time they are supposed to (Transcript, 6.28.18). [Note: Gates have been erected around Wampum to restrict Tribal members from accessing lands and waterways to freely exercise their Aboriginal Hunting and Fishing Rights.] So, despite her lack of "cultural capital" (Lareau & Weininger, 2003), Athena, a young parent who considers herself a traditional Wampanoag due to her firm knowledge of and grounding in Wampanoag culture, is arguably the fiercest advocate for her children and the Wampanoag community. She possesses the knowledge, indignation, and fearlessness to potentially lead a parent activist group or become a community organizer to collectively challenge and change hegemonic, school-controlled (and town-controlled) scripts and to foster educational (and community) equity (Ishimaru, 2014; Shirley, 1997; Warren et al., 2009).

Concluding Thoughts on Tribal Members' Conceptualizations and Practices

Throughout this dissertation, I have referenced Lomawaima's (1999) four tenets of colonial education which include attempts to (1) civilize Indigenous peoples through (2) Christian conversion, (3) subordination, and (4) pedagogical methods of control with the aim of erasing and replacing all aspects of the Indigenous identity including their language. I have also argued that in order to undo the effects of colonial education, Indigenous languages and cultural traditions must be revitalized and sustained.

Though their engagement practices in the district are different, Native parents and community leaders are addressing key elements of their cultural heritage and rights that have been disrupted and displaced by colonization. Native leaders have been working to decolonize education through language and cultural revitalization efforts within the public schools and in their own Tribal controlled school. This priority and their active work to achieve it through a focus on curriculum, programming and instruction addresses the erasure and replacement components of the colonized school system.

Native parents are also addressing the colonized school system and have been working to decolonize it through advocacy efforts. Their advocacy focuses on inequitable and exclusionary policies and practices which challenge and seek to eradicate the subordination and pedagogical methods of control practiced within the schools. Native parents' advocacy essentially challenges the culture of power (Delpit, 1988) that exists in the schools in which minoritized students and families must conform to the rules of the culture of those who have power (i.e. white, middle class values, behavioral and engagement expectations).

So, together, Native parents and Native community leaders are responding to the overall objectives of colonial education as conceptualized by Lomawaima (1999). However, their efforts and results might be more successful if they were working together instead of separately. Native parents' exclusion from the Tribe-district partnership and other collaborative efforts is an omission that may be hindering or at least slowing down their efforts. Another hinderance may be the absence of student voice in the decisions that are being made regarding language and culture-focused programming in the public schools. As noted in Chapter Six, though Native community leaders have had success in improving language and culture-based programming in the public schools, enrollment in the Wôpanâak language classes and participation in the afterschool Indian Education Program at the middle/high school is significantly lower than expected. Though leaders interviewed attributed low enrollment and participation rates to discouragement from educators, time changes in program offerings, and Native students' other commitments, they may not be considering other potential factors.

The primary goal of WLRP, Indian Education, and Tribal government leaders is to revive and ensure the survival of "traditional" Wampanoag language and culture, and while their efforts extend out into the community and Tribal adults as well, they believe that the best strategy for achieving this goal is through Tribal children. However, as Clara, the youngest participant in this study, duly noted, "I think the problem is that all these programs are being created, but I don't know how much they're actually asking the kids 'what do you want'? You should ask the kids" (Transcript, 5.2.18).

Paris & Alim's (2014, 2017) culturally sustaining framework emphasizes the importance of supporting the maintenance of students' and families' traditional and

shifting or evolving languages, literacies, and cultural practices. Community leaders are trying to recreate and revitalize a Wampanoag past and may not be considering youth culture and its contribution to a Wampanoag culture and language that is shifting. Indigenous youth may not be taking advantage of what is being offered due to disinterest because program offerings do not include evolving languages, literacies, and cultural practices.

In conclusion, to decolonize all aspects of the school system, including policies, practices, curricula, programming, and educators, efforts must merge. Native community leaders, parents, and students need to work together to strengthen their advocacy and strategy for creating an education system that meets all of their wishes, including educational spaces that are separate from the colonizing structures of public schools.

Research Question 2: Educators' Conceptualizations and Practices

Conceptualizing Engagement: An Open-Door Model

Educators mainly conceptualized engagement as an open-door model, similar to Henderson's (2007) Open-Door School. They defined open door as cultivating a welcoming environment in which families feel comfortable, connected, part of the community, and have many opportunities to get involved. Their open-door conception was comprised of three main components: (1) exercising open-mindedness in terms of showing empathy for struggling families while acknowledging their own inadequacies and the need for learning and diversity among staff members; (2) engaging in open-communication with families that involves re/actively listening and being responsive to parents, encouraging reciprocal communication by embracing parents' initiative to reach out first and advocate for their children, and pro/actively seeking input from families with

the goal of improving engagement practices; and (3) having school doors that are always open to families through a plethora of service offerings and engagement opportunities. Some educators proposed an open-door model that mirrored community or full-service schools, suggesting that in addition to addressing students' and families' educational needs, schools should be providing them with health and human services which impact student learning (Dryfoos, 2002; Galindo, Sanders & Abel, 2017; Sanders, Galindo, Allen, 2018).

Practicing Engagement: From School-Centric/School-Based to Tribe-Centric/ Tribe-Based

Open-minded? The need for educators to be empathetic towards families, particularly those who have challenging home lives that make it difficult for them to meet school expectations, was a common refrain among educators. Family challenges such as working multiple jobs to survive and a history of alcoholism and drug abuse, were used to explain students' missing homework and families' absences from school events and/or their lack of involvement in their child(ren)'s education. While some educators suggested ways of supporting these families (e.g. providing support services in the schools or directing them to support services in the community), and others shared actual practices by the district to address family challenges (e.g. food and clothing drives and parenting classes), most appeared to use family histories and challenges as an excuse or justification for their lack of involvement in school events and school related activities thereby excusing educators from blame and, possibly, responsibility.

While most educators used color-blind and culture-blind language in their conversations about struggling families, some explicitly named Native students and

families as examples of this characterization. A few educators referenced town history and school history as reasons for some of the ongoing challenges that Tribal members are facing and as the cause of their disengagement from school. This distinguished them from other participants in this study and also from their counterparts in other studies who have been guilty of making indictments against Indigenous families with no awareness or acknowledgement of the history of schools as colonizing institutions for Natives (Agbo, 2007; Ives & Sinha, 2016) or of “the deep, colonial history that undergirds many of the ongoing challenges that Indigenous families and students have faced, and continue to face, in the contemporary (post)colonial society and educational system” (Kaomea, 2012, p. 1).

Though a few Wampum educators acknowledged town history and the loss of the Tribe’s land as a contemporary barrier to engagement, no educator identified it as a product of colonialism. Unlike Native parents, these educators mainly talked in the past tense about injustices against the tribe, apparently unaware of the contemporary barriers that discourage parents from getting involved in schools or engaging with staff (Agbo, 2007; Ives & Sinha, 2016). Educators seemed oblivious to or chose not to believe Native parents’ claims of contemporary acts of injustice against them and their children which take place in district schools and the town. Arguably, like many people in contemporary schools and society, most educators who participated in this study considered colonialism and/or its products as finished business, something that happened in the past that may still be affecting Indigenous families and community members today but something that, nonetheless, no longer persists in the town and public school system (Kovach, 2009; Lomawaima, 1999; Patel, 2016; Smith, 2012).

I suspect that educators' emphasis on empathy was/is an attempt to be noble and compassionate. However, by and large, conversations about empathy came across as pity and revealed deficit-based perceptions of families in general and Native families specifically, which aligns with the research literature on family-school-community engagement in Indigenous contexts (Friedel, 1999; Mander, 2015).

Another way that educators exercised "open-mindedness" was through the practice of redirecting their gaze to focus on their own and/or organizational shortcomings. A handful of educators (Robyn, James, Thelma, Roxanne, Jessica, Elizabeth) acknowledged and named ignorance, White privilege, bias and prejudice in themselves and/or the organization as barriers to fostering a warm and welcoming school environment in which families, particularly Native families, are willing to engage. These participants expressed that learning opportunities are key to remedying ignorance and combatting bias and prejudice. As a result of its partnership with the Tribe, the district is now providing educators with opportunities to learn Wampanoag and Pan-Indigenous history, culture and governance. Also, in response to acknowledged shortcomings in the organization, two educators of color were hired in the past two years to increase diversity, though one will not be returning to Wampum in the upcoming school year because his contract was not renewed.

It is important to note that although some educators were redirecting their gaze to an organizational focus and critique, they were not gazing inward in the way that Paris & Alim (2014, 2017), Tuck and Yang (2014), and Roth (2017) describe. Though they acknowledged individual and organizational ignorance, White privilege, prejudice and biases, they were not delving deeply enough in their examination of the implications of

these attitudes and behaviors nor were they proposing more robust solutions. Merely admitting to organizational deficiencies related to ignorance and bias and proposing learning as a solution does not equate to being introspective or closely examining practices. In fact, some downplayed deficiencies in the organization claiming, “I think we do a much better job now of cultural sensitivity in our hope that there is not a single racist person in this staff” (Elizabeth, Transcript, 3.22.18); “I think we're lucky, here, because I think the staff is ... When you're talking about culturally responsible, I think the staff has always been very respectful of the Native Americans in Wampum” (Kimberly, Transcript, 5.8.18); and “Like you guys are saying, everyone is super ... appropriate and friendly. It doesn't matter what color your skin color is, we don't have that issue in our district” (Jessica, Talking Circle Transcript, 11.20.18).

These quotes further confirm that, over all, Wampum educators were not closely examining or being introspective and critically conscious about their practices, which are characteristics of culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy and leadership (Johnson, 2007; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2016). Critically conscious educators consider and challenge issues of “race, ethnicity, gender and/or difference” and place issues of social justice and equity at the forefront of their practices (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2016, p. 3). Their insistence that racism is nonexistent in their school system prevents them from even considering how they or the organization are perpetuating “ongoing legacies of colonization, ethnocide, and linguicide,” which is a major requirement of inward gazing” (Roth, p. 169 citing McCarty & Lee, 2014, p. 103). So, while the Wampum school district’s efforts to better educate ignorant and biased teachers about Wampanoag and Pan-Indigenous history, culture, and governance is noteworthy, their failure to consider

contemporary institutional policies and practices that expect all students and families to conform to White middle class values and ways of knowing, being, and doing serve to preserve legacies of colonization.

Open-school? Educators mainly conceptualized and practiced “traditional,” status quo models of family-school-community engagement through their focus on typical or common school-based activities that are planned for and intended to engage all families in the schools. The district offered many opportunities for families to get involved but most were school-centric and school-based (Ishimaru, 2014; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001) activities that included open houses, community picnics, spaghetti dinners, curriculum nights, and sporting, drama, and music events. Communication was the main way that educators sought to engage families and this entailed reaching out to families using various technological tools to keep them informed about their child(ren)’s progress and the many opportunities to get involved. These ways of engaging families and community members align with mainstream literature (Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Shumow & Miller, 2001) and are examples of engagement activities that assign families a passive or “token” role in which they are expected to just be present and support school activities and events (Friedel, 1999; Ishihara-Brito, 2013; McWilliams et al., 2011; Ngai & Koehn, 2016).

Similar to the conversations that most educators expressed about empathy, they mainly conceptualized and practiced an open-school model of engagement and engagement activities that was/is colorblind and culture-blind. With the exception of Indian Education programming and outcomes of the Tribe-district partnership, such as the one day and 10-week professional development module for educators on Wampanoag

and Pan-Indigenous history and culture, all engagement activities were planned and executed for all families.

Tribe-based and Tribe-centric engagement. The examples of Tribe-specific initiatives and programming that educators described included the aforementioned professional development opportunities for teachers and Indian Education programming such as the Wampanoag language classes at the high school and the lunch bunches at the elementary schools, all of which are school-based. A few educators also shared some examples of school-centric but Tribe-based activities that were hosted at the Tribal government building, including several school committee meetings and high school basketball games. Only one example of a Tribe-centric and Tribe-based event was mentioned during one of the Tribe-district partnership quarterly meetings. As a result of the partnership, educators are able to learn about the Wampanoag immersion pre-school and Wampanoag history and governance through tours of the Tribal government building that are led by Tribal members.

For Tribal members, however, Tribe-centric and Tribe-based educational programming means something drastically different. It means having their own schools in which Wampanoag traditional knowledge, language, and culture are the foundation of curriculum frameworks. It also means having curricula that contributes to the revitalization and continuity of language and culture, and that prepares students for a successful life beyond high school through the teaching of academic, career, and life skills. This perspective differs drastically from the culture-based activities and programming that are taking place in the Wampum Public Schools which resemble solely additive approaches that add “content, concepts, themes, and perspectives to the

curriculum” and/or programming “without restructuring the total curriculum” and/or programming (Banks, 1988, pp. 37 & 38).

The Tribe’s more progressive articulation of Tribe-centric and Tribe-based is not to negate what is happening in the Wampum Public Schools as a result of their partnership with the Tribe. Though Tribe-centric activities have been in the public schools for decades through the Indian Education Program and Native parents and community members as guest speakers and presenters, the Tribe-district partnership offers an expanded notion of engagement that other school districts locally and nationally can learn from.

Concluding Thoughts about Educators’ Conceptualizations and Practices

It must be reiterated that educators mainly conceptualized and reported to practice a model of family-school-community engagement that falls under the category of “traditional” or status quo. They envisioned and articulated an Open-Door Model; however, their practices did not always align with this conceptualization, particularly as concerned with open-mindedness and Native families. Also, absent from their conversations was power sharing with Tribal parents and community members as decision-makers, which is one of the components of Henderson’s (2007) “Open-Door School.” Although some educators talked about community building and wanting parents to feel part of the team or community, and others actively sought parents’ input and/or feedback, no educator mentioned including families and community members as partners in decision-making.

Irrespective of educators’ omission of power sharing in their conception of family-school-community engagement, the school councils and Tribe-district partnership

are evidence that power sharing exists in the district. As noted in one of the findings chapters, each school has a school council which consists of parents, teachers, and administrators who share power and decision making. However, school councils have historically and contemporarily consisted of a small group of teacher leaders and a group of affluent White parents who are not representative of the majority of families in the district. This makes Wampum no different from other districts in which White and privileged parents are given an elevated and privileged role and are heard, while minoritized families are censored or silenced (Dyrness, 2011; Fennimore, 2017).

Native families (and district teachers) are also excluded from the Tribe-district partnership which is partly the blame of Native community leaders who have not thought to or elected to include them. Consequently, while Native leaders' priorities are being addressed and supported through the partnership, the concerns and priorities of Native parents are not. Native parents are perpetually fenced or shut out of involvement, participation, and/or decision making in their child(ren)'s schooling experiences in the Wampum Public Schools (Agbo, 2007; Bond, 2010; Friedel, 1999; Mander, 2015).

In conclusion, educators' claims of wanting and working to cultivate a school environment that is open and inviting to all families, makes them feel part of the community, and ignites their desire to get involved are contradicted by the policies and practices that exclude Native parents from serving as partners, collaborators, and decision makers (Auerbach, 2012; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001).

Research Question 3: Are Priorities and Practices Aligned and Culturally Sustaining/Revitalizing?

Alignment?

There was limited alignment between district educators' and Tribal members' conceptualizations and enactments of education or engagement. Native parents and community leaders neither mentioned nor praised the communication and engagement activities or events that educators referenced as ways that they were exercising family-school-community engagement and fostering an open and inviting school environment. Likewise, although a few educators talked about their desire to see Wampanoag history and culture taught in all grades to affirm Native students' identities and benefit all students, and others emphasized the importance of developing all educators' knowledge and awareness of Wampanoag history and culture, no educator listed language and cultural reclamation for Native students as a priority. Also, few educators emphasized academics as an important component of family-school-community engagement. In fact, operating from the belief that the main goal of engagement is to build community and bring parents into the schools, at least a handful strongly promoted and supported engagement activities that were mainly nonacademic in nature.

One of the major findings from the literature on family-school-community engagement specific to Indigenous contexts was the need to decolonize education through the dismantling of beliefs and structures that inhibit family and community engagement and that prohibit the inclusion of Indigenous voices, knowledge, and values within schools and classrooms. The desire to decolonize education was also a key finding in this study that arose from the conversations with Tribal parents and community

members. They mainly agreed with Grande's (2015) assessment that colonial education persists in contemporary schools and must be dismantled through aggressive moves to make Indigenous traditional knowledge and values "the foundation of teaching and learning" (p. 36). As argued in the previous sections, this was clearly not a perspective that most educators in the district subscribed to. In fact, Robyn, based on her long history of working with Tribal communities and her desire to see Wampanoag history and culture everywhere in the town and district, might be the only educator who believes that colonialism is not finished business (Kovach, 2009; Lomawaima, 1999; Patel, 2016; Smith, 2012).

Nevertheless, whether district administrators intended to or not, through the Tribe-district partnership they are supporting Tribal leaders in their decolonizing plight and fight for 'cultural and linguistic survival' (Jester, 2017; McCarty & Lee, 2014). Based on the very different, and in some cases, dissonant conversations from Tribal members versus district educators, it is conceivable that their views regarding the mission and outcomes of the partnership are not aligned. While it is evident that Tribal leaders view the partnership as a strategic move on their part to expand their language and cultural reclamation and continuity objectives, district administrators' perception of the partnership may be that it helps them achieve their goals of improving relations with the Tribe while supporting their desires to be more culturally responsive. Regardless of each party's intent, the partnership is supporting the language and cultural reclamation objectives of the Tribe.

Conversely, by and large, Native parents' concerns about equity, fairness, and equal opportunity are not being addressed by the partnership or by district teachers and

leaders in their day to day practices. With the exception of Thelma and James, none of the educators who participated in this study appeared to be challenging status quo policies or practices related to race, class, gender, and ability, or were involved in creating an inclusive environment by tackling these issues, which were the main concerns of Native parents. Thelma, a culturally responsive teacher in the district with 24 years of experience, portrayed herself as an advocate for students who are discounted in the schools and experience bigotry and bias on a regular basis. During my interview with her, she shared a story of ways that she addresses racism and exclusionary practices.

I've had to have an actual conversation with a couple of people about the concept of white privilege, that they don't get that. "It's not that your life is easier. It's just that your life wasn't made harder because you have a different skin color, or ethnic background. (Transcript, 6.1.18)

In addition to addressing explicit acts of racism, Thelma also challenges implicit bias and the tendency of teachers in the district to exclude students of color from educational opportunities. During the talking circle with teachers, Thelma, like some Native parents, noted that students of color in the schools are often overlooked for opportunities, and how she fights to ensure that they are included. "I do tend to do that, when I see a list, and there isn't anybody on there that has more melanin than I do, I make a comment about it. 'How come this child wasn't thought of, or that child wasn't thought of?'" (Transcript, 6.1.18). Thelma attributes her ability to empathize with marginalized students and her determination and intentional efforts to defend and advocate for them to her own schooling experiences where she was bullied over her Jewish heritage and because she was considered poor by her classmates' standards.

James is another educator who could be considered culturally responsive based on his practices. He grew up in a diverse community where he had a lot of interaction with people of color, which at least one Indigenous parent noted contributes to his success with parents of color. James was the only administrator that Native parents consistently spoke positively about, commenting that he engages with and listens to them and takes and implements their feedback. I later learned that he is a strong supporter of and leader in the “I am My Brother’s Keeper” (IAMBK) program that Absolom and Andrew started. Additionally, under James’ leadership the high school graduation rates for Native students have increased to 100%. So, although James did not talk about issues of race during our interview, parents shared what he is actually doing to tackle these issues.

Overall, conversations that district teachers and administrators engaged in about family-school-community engagement were very different from my conversations with Native parents and community leaders. A teacher and a Native parent shared the following reflections about engagement activities offered by the schools which may help to explain the disconnect.

“I think the school makes an effort to support the community...I definitely don’t think it’s bad. ...they’re doing a lot in terms of having a lot of events and welcoming families in...but do the families like the events? Do they even know about them? (Allie, Transcript, 5.15.18)

They do a lot of programming, a lot of parent nights, a lot of open house nights, a lot of activities where they encourage parents to come. So, there is a lot of that. Here again, the issue comes down to the actual input of parents. (Absolom, Transcript, 6.1.18)

So, one reason may be, as Allie and Absolom noted, the district's failure to ask or consult families. District educators claimed that they were/are open-minded and believe in open communication and responding promptly to families' inquiries and concerns, and though some administrators have proactively sought input from parents through family opinion surveys, Native parents who participated in the talking circle contradicted these claims.

Differences in educators' priorities may also be due to their values and expectations that conflicted with those held by Indigenous family and community members (Agbo, 2007; Kaomea, 2012; Madden et al., 2013; Tunison, 2013). This is not surprising given the fact that the predominantly White educators lack the lived experience and inherited knowledge of being Indigenous (Madden et al., 2013). Native parents in this study, similar to Indigenous Elders in the research literature on family-school-community engagement, expressed their concern that the mainly White, non-Indigenous educators who taught their children lacked the cultural knowledge, competence, and sensitivity to effectively teach their children (Agbo, 2007; Bond, 2010; Madden et al., 2013). They thus demanded that all teachers in Wampum be better prepared. Scholars who have written about Culturally Sustaining/Revitalizing Pedagogy as it pertains to educators have noted the importance of non-Native, mainly White, teachers having conceptual, content, and context knowledge about Indigenous communities. Jester (2017) argued that "conceptual and content knowledge" would allow teachers "to view current educational practices in light of colonization and Indigenous Peoples' inherent right to self-determination" through required readings (p. 142). Similarly, Vinlove (2017) believed that in order to support and sustain both the heritage and evolving/living

community-based practices of Indigenous students and their communities, educators must gather this information at the local level and from the communities themselves. Roth (2017) also advocated for “Indigenous culture bearers” from the community to partner with educators in and out of the classroom” (p. 181) as a way of building their knowledge and capacity to work with Indigenous students and their families.

Culturally Sustaining/Revitalizing?

Culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy (CSRP) is a framework that is specifically “designed to address the sociohistorical and contemporary contexts of Native American schooling” (McCarty & Lee, 2014, p. 103). As an expression of educational sovereignty, CSRP is a framework by and for Indigenous peoples that is community-based, community-driven, and aims (1) to challenge asymmetrical power relations; (2) transform legacies of colonization; and (3) reclaim and revitalize all that has been disrupted and displaced by colonization including language and culture (McCarty & Lee, 2014).

Native leaders in Wapum were clearly aligned with culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy in both their conceptions and practices. They have been the drivers, directors, and enforcers of language and cultural renewal in the district and community and are responsible for creating the structure and securing the funding to sustain their initiatives and projects. They are challenging and working fervently to transform legacies of colonization through reclaiming and revitalizing key components of their Indigeneity that have been disrupted and displaced by colonization. Furthermore, through their leadership role and work in the Tribe-district partnership, they are shifting asymmetrical power relations. District administrators have clearly taken a deferential

role in Tribe-district partnership meetings ceding power to the Tribe to be the originators and drivers of partnership initiatives.

By serving as supporters, district administrators are unknowingly fulfilling one of the requirements of CSRP. Applying CSRP to educators, scholars have noted that educators serve in a supportive role in Indigenous Peoples' fight for cultural and linguistic survival. They also emphasize the need for educators to take an "inward gaze," adopt a critical stance, and learn from culture bearers in order to be effective supporters of community-driven initiatives (Coulter and Jimenez-Silva, 2017; Jester, 2017; Roth, 2017)

As critiqued earlier, most educators gazed outward at the deficiencies in families, especially Native families. Although some educators redirected their gaze to an organizational focus, they fell short in taking an inward gaze because they were not being introspective or delving deeply enough to uncover the ways that policies and practices in the district may be perpetuating ongoing legacies of colonization. Moreover, most educators' denial of racism, their un/intentional avoidance of race, gender, and dis/ability related conversations, and their failure to place issues of social justice and equity at the forefront of their practices underscored their lack of a critically conscious stance.

Most educators also opted out of contributing to additive approaches to increasing Tribe-centric programing in the schools and/or their classrooms. Teachers, in particular, adopted a cautious stance. As one of these teachers shared,

I sometimes think that as teachers, if we were not really proficient at something, sometimes we just don't teach it. It's 'cause we don't wanna do it wrong... because

people didn't wanna be offensive, or teach something culturally incorrect, is why they just don't do it anymore. (Jessica, Talking Circle Transcript, 11.20.18)

Lastly, only recently has the district enacted the practice of learning from culture bearers through the 10-week professional development module for teachers. However, only a small percentage of district educators have taken advantage of these learning opportunities. Nonetheless, Elizabeth expressed high hopes for these opportunities to learn from Tribal leaders.

It would be great to eventually have everybody cycle through that [10-week PD module on Native history and culture] because, just think of the wealth of understanding that they would absorb. That would be game changing if everybody were able to do that. (Transcript, 3.22.18)

Concluding Thoughts about Alignment in Culturally Sustaining/Revitalizing Practices

The exclusion of Native parents and district teachers from the Tribe-district partnership hampered their ability to be culturally sustaining/revitalizing in their practices. In addition, it revealed leaders' un/conscious bias and/or un/willingness to cede or share power with those who are viewed as having a greater role and responsibility in enacting family-school engagement or partnerships. Denying Native parents and district teachers a seat at the table and a voice and vote in decision-making, hampers the entire system. Because the partnership is not equal or does not have representation from the individuals who matter most in family-school-community engagement, substantive issues are not being brought to the table or addressed (Ngai & Koehn, 2016). Moreover, teachers and parents are being denied the opportunity to engage in dialogue about and

collective agency against policies and practices that perpetuate inequities and unequal opportunities. Lastly, the exclusion of Native parents and district teachers from the partnership prevents “cross-cultural understanding” and the elimination of “power inequities” (Freeman, 2010, p. 195).

Sadly, most teachers who participated in this study seemed unaware of or unconcerned about the partnership. Many thus lacked initiative in planning and implementing their own culture-focused curriculum and/or activities, and their lack of knowledge and initiative was critiqued by several administrators in the district. In contrast, Native parent participants in this study were aware of the partnership and annoyed that they were not included. And when they confront and challenge status quo philosophies, policies, and practices by district educators related to fairness and equity, because their voices are not heard or represented in the schools, they are censored, silenced, and critiqued (Dyrness, 2011).

Implications for Practice

I'm glad that your school [university] that you passed to be a teacher, but... Did you really just tell me we are in Massachusetts where the fucking curriculum is Wampanoag history in 3rd god damn grade. You have a job in the fucking town where the Wampanoag live and you don't know nothing about Wampanoag [history and culture]. How the fuck did you get a job? Who hired you? Who was on this hiring committee? ...That to me is insanity. (Athena, Transcript, 5.10.18)

This quote from Athena is a revelation about the necessity for teachers to be better educated and prepared to teach Native students, especially Indigenous nations who are included in the state curriculum and have a long-standing history and legacy in the

communities that they have called home for millennia. In this dissertation I have argued that the aim of education for Indigenous students should be to decolonize the education system and that family-school-community engagement is a structure for achieving a decolonized educational system. This study revealed distinctions in the priorities and engagement practices of educators versus Tribal members. Also, both educators and Tribal members acknowledged that educators lack cultural awareness, sensitivity, and proficiency. Furthermore, most teachers lacked initiative and chose to be cautious onlookers instead of proactive participants in language and culture-based outcomes of Indian Education and the Tribe-district partnership. This raises a critical question: How can we develop critically conscious and culturally sustaining/revitalizing educators and inspire them to be active agents of change?

Implications for Teacher and Leadership Preparation Programs

Programs that prepare and/or provide ongoing learning opportunities for teachers and administrators must do a better job of developing them to be critically conscious and culturally revitalizing and/or sustaining educators. Jester (2017), Roth (2017), and Vinlove (2017) all emphasized that educators' ability to support the revitalization and/or sustaining of students' traditional and evolving cultural practices is contingent upon them acquiring content, conceptual, and context knowledge. Jester (2017) suggested that such knowledge could be gained from textbooks or course learning while Roth (2017) and Vinlove (2017) asserted that this knowledge is best obtained at the local level, from "Indigenous culture bearers" in the community. Roth (2017) contended that Indigenous culture bearers should partner with educators in and out of the classroom" (p. 181).

Schools of education and other programs that prepare preservice and in-service teachers should reconsider course requirements and, at a minimum, ensure that there are courses that teach the history, culture, and governance of local and state Tribes. These programs should also be intentional about finding Native educators and/or community culture bearers to teach and/or co-teach these courses. Moreover, the courses should be a mandatory requirement for all students.

To complement course work, teacher and administrator preparation programs should consider forming partnerships or working in solidarity with local communities (Guillen & Zeichner, 2018; Zeichner, Bowman, Guillen, & Napolitan, 2016). These partnerships entail community-based organizations working with teacher education programs by providing community mentors to “give teacher candidates greater access to the knowledge and expertise that exists in local communities served by their schools” (Zeichner et al., 2016). Such partnerships are important in “preparing teachers who ‘get it’ and are able to address “historical and current injustices in schooling” (Guillen & Zeichner, 2018, p. 150). This model can be extended to administrator preparation programs as well as programs that support the ongoing development of teachers and administrators.

Implications for School Districts

Similarly, school districts should consider ways that they might develop their novice and veteran educators’ knowledge and expertise of the local communities that they serve. It is essential that they make it a priority to equip teachers to recognize and effectively address historical and contemporary inequities and injustices and to be culturally sustaining and revitalizing in their practices.

School districts must first be more thoughtful and strategic about who they are hiring. Athena asked three legitimate questions in her narrative: “How the fuck did you get a job?”, “Who hired you?”, and “Who was on this hiring committee?” School districts may need to reconsider their screening process for recruiting and hiring new educators. One way to build a community of critically conscious and culturally sustaining/revitalizing educators is to make these competencies a requirement for prospective candidates. Moreover, districts may need to think outside the box and explore and implement new strategies for recruiting more educators of color, particularly those who are critically conscious and share the lived and cultural experiences of students in district schools. Lastly, hiring committees should consist of critically conscious educators as well as underrepresented families and community members.

School districts may also need to reconsider their induction procedures. New employees should receive professional development opportunities that assist them in becoming acclimated to the local communities and the families and community members who live there. Wampum Public Schools provide all of their new employees with a bus tour of the town. This tour should be led by culture bearers from the community. Professional development should be focused on building educators’ expertise about the local community of students and families that they will be serving while also developing or strengthening their critical lenses and ability to be effective inward gazers who are culturally sustaining/revitalizing in their practices. Professional development that addresses these areas should be offered prior to the start of school and throughout the school year. Local culture bearers should be asked and compensated to serve as partners, collaborators, and instructors in the development and teaching of these PDs as well as

mentors to new employees and veteran employees who lack the competencies necessary to be effective educators of students from the local communities.

In addition to reconsidering recruitment, screening and induction procedures, districts must not forget the educators who are already working in their school system. They should be afforded the same opportunities for professional learning and development as their novice or new colleagues.

Implications for Local Indigenous Communities

Coulter and Jimenez-Silva (2017) asserted, “community members have a huge stake in classrooms – their children! – and therefore must be the center of decision-making at all levels” (p. 15). They agree with McCarty and Lee (2014) that efforts “must be community-driven – local cultural communities must be the driving force in articulating the ways in which ways of knowing, epistemologies, languages, and traditions will manifest in the classroom” (Lee & McCarty, 2017, p. 14). The agency and ingenuity of Indigenous community leaders and the ardent advocacy of Native parents in Wampum prove that it is possible for local cultural communities to be the drivers of changes for the furtherance of their educational priorities for their children and for the betterment of their children’s schooling experiences. We also learn from their siloed advocacy in the school district that Indigenous parents and community leaders must join forces and work together to more effectively decolonize all aspects of the educational system, including policies, curricula, and educators (Coulter & Jimenez-Silva, 2017). Moreover, Indigenous parents and community leaders must see their children as valuable knowledge holders who should be consulted and listened to in matters that concern and impact them. Ultimately, as both Native parents and community leaders in this study

declared, the best strategy for attaining a completely decolonized educational system may be by disengaging completely from the public schools and establishing their own Tribe-centric and Tribal-run schools for their children.

Relational Accountability and Answerability

At the outset of this study, I resolved to exercise relational accountability (Wilson, 2001) and to be answerable (Patel, 2016) in all of my relations with research participants and in my ways of engaging in or doing research. Relationality requires respect, reciprocity, and responsibility while answerability requires stewardship, not ownership, over the knowledge that participants have entrusted me with. Now at the culmination of this research, I consider how I will remain accountable to the Native community and teachers and administrators who so graciously welcomed me into their communities, entrusted me with their perspectives and experiences, and without whom, this dissertation would not exist. One way is by returning the research results back to participants in a way that is culturally appropriate, is accessible to them, and is considerate of their time (Koster et al., 2012; Smith, 2012). In November and December 2018, I conducted a talking circle with teachers and Indigenous parents who participated in this study as a way of sharing findings and receiving their feedback and approval to move forward. In January 2019, I met with district and school administrators to report back research findings and to offer recommendations for improving engagement practices. On the same day, I visited one of the Tribal Elders who participated in this study and shared with her the same handout of findings and recommendations that I gave administrators. In March, I emailed all participants to share my writing progress and to inquire if any were interested in reading strong drafts of the finding chapters in advance of my final draft and

submission on ProQuest. Roughly a third responded affirmatively, so in May, I emailed these participants a strong draft of the entire dissertation. Furthermore, in May 2019, I visited each of the three schools and greeted most of the teachers and administrators (some were absent or on field trips during the time of my visit) and shared with them that I was done writing and asked those who did not respond to the email that I sent in March if they were interested in reading (and providing feedback if they wished) the near final draft of this dissertation. Last but not least, as a steward over ideas, knowledge, and a context that I stake no claim over, I aim to have participants serve as co-authors on publications that are forthcoming from this work. This ensures that the research not only “reaches the people who have helped make it” but also that it achieves participants’ purposes and reaches the audiences that they deem important (Smith, 2012, p. 16).

Final Reflections and Future Directions

Now that I have reached the culmination of this particular study, I pause in this moment to consider what this research has taught me, the limitations of this study, and what is required of me in terms of future work in the field of family and community engagement and Indigenous education. Foremost in my mind is the essentiality of Indigenous families and community members being consulted about their educational goals for their children and their preferred ways of engaging and/or partnering with public schools and the educators that comprise them. As is evident in this dissertation, educators’ priorities and many efforts to engage families neither aligned with or met the expectations of the active and outspoken Indigenous parents who participated in this study. This key finding is both a revelation and limitation of this study. Convenience and snowball sampling provided a group of Native parents who may not be representative

of all Native parents in the community. It is thus important that intentional efforts are made to find and convince less active and outspoken parents to participate in research focused on family engagement so that findings are more representative of parent groups as a whole.

I also consider the missing voices and input of Native students in this study, perhaps this study's greatest limitation, and the fact that decisions regarding their education and cultural development are being made without consulting them. Without their voices, there is a danger of community-driven initiatives and projects being or becoming un-sustaining due to disinterest on the part of Indigenous youth resulting from their evolving/living cultural practices not being accounted for in language and cultural reclamation programming. Similarly, my failure to include the perspectives of Indigenous youth/students in this study unintentionally silenced the voices of the very group that family-school-community engagement is purposed to support. They are key participants in the family/community structure, and no study about them or that implicates or impacts them should be conducted without their perspectives and experiences privileged in the research. I thus aspire to not simply include them in future studies but to privilege or center their voices, priorities, and experiences as a starting point and/or foundation of future research endeavors on the topic of family and community engagement and Indigenous education that I will pursue.

Another important learning is the need for Indigenous family and community members to serve as experts, advisors, instructors and leaders in the education of their children and in the ongoing development of non-Native educators to effectively support the priorities of local cultural communities. While Native community leaders in this

dissertation were perceived and permitted to act as advisors and instructors in the development of educators in the district, Native parents and students were not. I am thus interested in continuing my exploration of family and community engagement with a more robust definition of families and community members that includes student participation and voice. Moreover, I am interested in exploring family/community-school partnerships and family/community-university partnerships in other contexts (including local, national, and international locations), that prepare aspiring and developing teachers to become culturally sustaining/revitalizing educators of Indigenous and other students who have experienced schools as colonizing institutions.

A final reflection pertains to the lessons that remain and are forthcoming in the Wampum Wampanoag community's work to dismantle policies, structures, and practices that perpetuate "ongoing legacies of colonization, ethnocide, and linguicide" in the community and the public schools (McCarty & Lee, 2014, p. 103). Their battle is not over, and I would love to continue our relationship by working with the Tribe to learn and share the longitudinal results of their advocacy. At the same time, I hope to establish and engage in relationships and research with other Native Tribes who are at the beginning of and/or deep in the process of linguistic and cultural revitalization and survival.

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APPENDIX A

Semi-Structured Conversation Protocol Indigenous Family and Community Members

Hello. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and for being available for this conversation. If at any moment during the conversation you don't feel comfortable answering a question, please don't feel obligated to do so. Also, know that your anonymity will be ensured throughout the process, so feel free to answer honestly and openly. Are you okay with me audio-recording our conversation? Do you have any questions before we proceed? Okay. Let's begin.

The participant will be asked ahead of time to bring in an item that represents who they are (their identity, family, culture, and/or where they are from). I will also come with an object that represents who I am and where I come from and will start the conversation by sharing my object and telling a story of how it represents who I am and where I am from.

Please start by stating your name, preferred pseudonym (if you have one), and role or positions in the town (parent, grandparent, community member, leader, teacher, longtime resident, etc.).

Part I: Background Information

1. Please tell me about the item that you brought today and how it represents who you are, where you are from, your family, and/or your culture.
 - a. Describe the object.
 - b. What is the significance of the object?
 - c. What does it represent?
 - d. How does it represent who you are and/or where you are from?
2. What is your connection to this town? What brought you here and what keeps you here?
 - a. Is this town your home or place of work?
3. Please reflect on your pre-K-12 schooling experience. Share a memory (tell me a story) that captures your experience as a student.
 - a. Describe the school (public or private; elementary, middle, or high school; racial or ethnic demographics)
 - b. Why does this memory stand out the most to you and how is it reflective of your schooling experience?
4. Now try to recall a memory of your schooling experience that involved your family and/or community members. What do you remember about their role or involvement in your schooling experience?
 - a. Why does this memory stand out the most to you and what does it tell you about their type and level of involvement?
 - b. How would you describe the relationship between your family members and your teachers or administrators?

Part II: Conceptualizing Family-School-Community Engagement

5. When you think about or hear the term “family and community engagement,” what comes to mind?
 - a. What is it?
 - b. What does it look like?
 - c. What purpose does it serve?
 - d. Does this conception apply to all families and communities? Please explain.
6. When you envision the role of families, community members, and school staff in schools and in the education of your children, what do you see?
 - a. What do you believe is your role as a parent or community member in the school system?
 - b. What do you believe is your role as a parent or community member in the education of your child or children?
 - c. What is the role of the school system and staff in the education of Indigenous students?
 - d. What are your expectations of the school system regarding the development of your children?
7. Where does this definition or conception of family-school-community engagement and the roles of the different participants come from?

Part III: Family-School-Community Engagement Practices and Changes Over Time

8. What does family-school-community engagement look like in the district or school(s) that your child(ren) or grandchild(ren) or students attend? Please provide examples of ways that you have seen the school(s) or district engage families and community members?
 - a. Are the same engagement strategies used with all families? Please explain.
 - b. What role do families play or have in these actions or practices? What about Indigenous families and community members?
 - c. Who is responsible for family-school-community engagement in the district or schools?
9. How would you describe the types of engagement and level of engagement of Indigenous family and community members?
 - a. Why do you think this has been the case?
10. How has the school’s or the district’s work around family-school-community engagement changed over time (if it has)? As it pertains to Indigenous families and community members?
 - a. What role have educators and families played in this change? Indigenous families?
 - b. Have you been involved in this work? If so, how? If not, why?
11. Do you think the school is doing a good job engaging Indigenous families and community members?
 - a. What do you think the school is accomplishing? Please provide examples.
 - b. What is failing or missing in the school’s work around family and community engagement as it relates to Indigenous peoples? Please provide examples

- c. What would you change or do differently if you had the time and power to do so?
- 12. Which barriers make it difficult for or prevent you and other Indigenous families and community members from engaging with the schools and their staff? On the contrary: What helps you and other Indigenous families and community member to become engaged?
- 13. Please share a story of a time when you witnessed or participated in a successful engagement or partnership between the schools and Indigenous families and/or community members. Or, share your vision of what a successful engagement or partnership would look like.

Part IV: Closing remarks

- 14. Is there anything else that you would like to share or add related to family-school-community engagement that we have not discussed?
- 15. Any final thoughts about what we've been talking?

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and experiences! If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at any point."

Within two weeks after the conversation, I will mail or hand deliver a thank you card to participants as a way of expressing gratitude.

APPENDIX B

Semi-Structured Conversation (Interview) Protocol District Teachers and Administrators

“Hello. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and for being available for this conversation. If at any moment during the conversation you don’t feel comfortable answering a question, please don’t feel obligated to do so. Also, know that your anonymity will be ensured throughout the process, so feel free to answer honestly and openly. I will audio-record our conversation. Are you okay with this? Do you have any questions before we proceed? Okay. Let’s begin.

The participant will be asked ahead of time to bring in an item that represents who they are (their identity, family, culture, and/or where they are from). I will also come with an object that represents who I am and where I come from and will start the conversation by sharing my object and telling a story of how it represents who I am and where I am from.

Please start by stating your name, preferred pseudonym (if you have one), and role or positions in the town (parent, grandparent, community member, leader, teacher, longtime resident, etc.).

Part I: Background Information

1. Please tell me about the item that you brought today and how it represents who you are, your family, and/or your culture.
 - a. Where are you from? (nationality and ethnicity)
 - b. Where did you grow up?
 - c. Please tell me one thing about your family or culture
2. What is your connection to this town? What brought you to this town and school district, and what keeps you here?
 - a. What is your current role/title in the district? How long have you served in this role?
 - b. How long have you worked in this district?
 - c. What other titles or roles have you had in the district? For what duration?
3. Please reflect on your pre-K-12 schooling experience. Share a memory (tell me a story) that captures your experience as a student.
 - a. Describe the school (public or private; elementary, middle, or high school; racial or ethnic demographics)
 - b. Why does this memory stand out the most to you and how is it reflective of your schooling experience?
4. Now try to recall a memory of your schooling experience that involved your family and/or community members. What do you remember about their role or involvement in your schooling experience?
 - a. Why does this memory stand out the most to you and what does it tell you about their type and level (turnout and frequency) of involvement?
 - b. How would you describe the relationship between your family members and your teachers or administrators?

Part III: Conceptualizing Family-School-Community Engagement

5. What comes to mind when you think of or hear the term “family and community engagement”?
 - a. What is it?
 - b. What does it look like?
 - c. What purpose does it serve?
 - d. Does this definition apply to all families and communities? Please explain.
6. When you envision the role of families, community members, and school staff in schools and in the education of students, what do you see?
 - a. What is the role of the school system and staff in the education of students? Indigenous students?
 - b. What is the role of families or community members in the school system?
 - c. What do you believe is the role of parents or community members in the education of their children? Indigenous parents?
 - d. Do these roles apply to all families and communities? Please explain.
7. Where does this definition or conception of family-school-community engagement and the roles of the different participants come from?
8. If participants are parents – ask how their own role as parents informs their beliefs about family-school-community engagement and the role of each party?
 - a. How would you describe your own role in your child(ren)’s education?
9. What is your vision or mission for family and community engagement in this school or district?

Part III: Family-School-Community Engagement Practices and Changes Over Time

10. What does family-school-community engagement look like in your school or district? Please provide examples of ways that you personally and/or administrators and other teachers in your school or district have engaged families and community members?
 - a. Are the same engagement strategies used with all families? Please explain.
 - b. What role do families play or have in these actions or practices? What about Indigenous families and community members?
 - c. Who is responsible for family-school-community engagement in the district or schools?
11. How would you describe the types of engagement and level (turnout and frequency) of engagement of families and community members in general and specifically Indigenous family and community members?
 - a. Why do you think this has been the case?
12. How has the school’s or the district’s work around family-school-community engagement changed over time (if it has)? As it pertains to Indigenous families and community members?
 - a. What role have educators and families played in this change? Indigenous families?
 - b. Have you been involved in this work? If so, how? If not, why?
13. Do you think the school is doing a good job engaging families and community members in general and particularly Indigenous families and community members?

- a. What do you think the school is accomplishing? Please provide examples.
 - b. What is failing or missing in the school's work around family and community engagement as it relates to Indigenous peoples? Please provide examples
14. Which barriers (if any) make it difficult for or prevent your Indigenous families and community members from being engaged?
- a. *Are those barriers in themselves, in the school, or outside the school?*
 - b. On the contrary: **What helps your Indigenous families and community members to become engaged?**
15. Please share a story or example of a time when you or your school or district successfully engaged Indigenous families and/or community members or set out to engage Indigenous family and community members but fell short. What led to its success or failure?
16. What would you change or do differently if you had the time and power to do so?

Part V: Closing remarks

17. Is there anything else that you would like to share or add related to family-school-community engagement that we have not discussed?
18. Any final thoughts about what we've been talking?

"This has been an enlightening conversation. Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and experiences! If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at any point."

Within two weeks after the conversation, I will mail or hand deliver a thank you card to participants as a way of expressing gratitude.

APPENDIX C

Talking Circle Protocol Indigenous Parents

“Hello. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and for being available for this talking circle. Talking circles are based on the sacred tradition of sharing circles which comes out of Indigenous communities. Talking circles involve participants sitting in a circle, which symbolizes completeness, and passing around a sacred object in a clockwise direction. The holder of the object gets to speak freely and uninterrupted, while other participants listen in a nonjudgmental way. Everyone in the circle is equal and has an equal chance to speak and be heard. The speaker is free to express him or herself in whatever way she or he is most comfortable. For examples, speakers may use stories, share personal experiences, use examples or metaphors, etc. If at any moment during this talking circle you don’t feel comfortable answering a question, need time to process what was said by another participant, or simply do not have anything to contribute to a particular question, please feel free to pass by simply passing the sacred object to the next person. Silence is welcomed and acceptable, and all participants are encouraged not to respond negatively to participants’ decision to pass. As we participate in this talking circle, let us speak freely, listen to hear one another’s point of view and without judgment or interruption, and feel free to opt out when desired.

Please know that your anonymity will be ensured throughout the process, so feel free to answer honestly and openly. I will audio-record our conversation. Are you okay with this? Do you have any questions before we proceed? Okay. Let’s begin.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the fact that we are on Wampanoag land and by taking a few seconds to silently reflect on, give respect and show gratitude to the people of the First Light whose sacred land we are meeting on today.

I will now ask __ (one of the indigenous family or community members) to share the sacred object and to describe its significance.

1. You were asked to bring an artifact that represents your experiences with the [Wampum] public schools and staff. Please share your artifact, telling the story behind it and your reflection on the experience.
2. During this second round, I want to give everyone an opportunity to respond to what you’ve heard and/or to share additional information about your artifact and experience that you forgot to mention during the initial round.
3. For the next round, consider the findings on the handout. What is your response to the findings? What do you agree with, disagree with, and what’s missing?
4. For the fourth round, does anyone have anything that they would like to add to what you said or heard during the third round?
5. For the fifth round, stand up and read and respond to the quotes that are posted around the room, that address the questions of whether or not the schools are

- being culturally responsive and sustaining of the belief, values, and expectation of Native families and community members.
6. See posted on the wall (or in the middle of the circle) a combined collection of quotes that come from earlier conversations with Indigenous family and community members. This collection of quotes expresses shared beliefs about the role of Indigenous families and community members in the school system and in the education of Indigenous children. I will now read aloud the collection of quotes. Please listen closely to hear the joint voices and view of the speakers. Please start by stating your name and the grade level(s) of your child(ren) if relevant. Then share your response to what you heard? What do you agree with? Disagree with? What's missing? What would you like to expand on?
 7. During this fourth round, I want to give everyone an opportunity to respond to what others have said and/or to share additional information about the role of Indigenous families and community members in the school system and in the education of Indigenous children.
 8. For this next round, think about what you heard and learned from all the conversations we've had about your experiences with the school system and beliefs about the role of Indigenous families and community members in the school system and in the education of Indigenous children. Think about the barriers as well as the successful bridges to family-school-community engagement in the district. What needs to happen to build stronger relationships or partnerships between the school system and Indigenous families and community members? What might your role be in this process?
 9. For this last round What message, if any, would you like me to share with administrators and teachers in the district regarding family-school-community engagement, particularly how the district and/or schools are doing engaging Native families and community members? How are they doing in terms of being culturally responsive and sustaining in their practices?

APPENDIX D

Talking Circle Protocol District Teachers

“Hello. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and for being available for this talking circle. Talking circles, and alternative to focus groups, are based on the sacred tradition of sharing circles which comes out of Indigenous cultures. Talking circles involve participants sitting in a circle, which symbolizes completeness, and passing around a sacred (talking) object in a clockwise direction. The holder of the talking object gets to speak freely and uninterrupted, while other participants listen in a nonjudgmental way. Everyone in the circle is equal and has an equal chance to speak and be heard. Talking circles necessitate a safe environment in which participants feel comfortable sharing their point of view without fear of judgment. The speaker is free to express him or herself in whatever way she or he is most comfortable. For example, speakers may use stories, share personal experiences, use examples or metaphors, etc. If at any moment during this talking circle you don’t feel comfortable answering a question, need time to process what was said by another participant, or simply do not have anything to contribute to a particular question, please feel free to pass by simply passing the sacred object to the next person. Silence is welcomed and acceptable, and all participants are encouraged not to respond negatively to participants’ decision to pass. As we participate in this talking circle, let us speak freely, listen to hear one another’s point of view and without judgment or interruption, and feel free to opt out when desired.

Please know that your anonymity will be ensured throughout the process, so feel free to answer honestly and openly. I will audio-record our conversation. Are you okay with this? Do you have any questions before we proceed? Okay. Let’s begin.

Let’s begin with a moment of silence to respect and show gratitude to the Indigenous people whose land we are meeting on.

The sacred object today is a _____. It comes from _____ culture and is significant because _____

1. You were asked to bring a story and an artifact that represents something you personally did or that your school or district did, that you participated in, to engage families and/or community members in general but with a specific goal to build stronger relations with Indigenous families and community members. Please start by stating your name and role in the district and how long you’ve served in the district. Then share your story/artifact, telling the story behind it and your reflection on the outcome of the outreach.
2. During this second round, I want to give everyone an opportunity to respond to what you’ve heard and/or to share additional information about your artifact that you forgot to mention during the first round.
3. For the next round, consider the findings on the handout. What is your response to the findings? What do you agree with, disagree with, and what’s missing?

4. For the fourth round, does anyone have anything that they would like to add to what you said or hear during the third round?
5. For the fifth round, stand up and read and respond to the quotes that are posted around the room, that address the questions of whether or not the schools are doing good work engaging (or being culturally responsive to) families in general and Native families in particular.
6. Sixth round, please share your response to one or two of the quotes that you read.
7. For this last round, think about the findings and quotes from educators in the district. Think about the barriers as well as the successful bridges to family-school-community engagement. How might you as a school system build stronger relationships or partnerships with Indigenous family and community members?