



Sinte Gleska University

Program Review: SGU Lakota Studies Department

Responses to Key Discussion Questions

By Victor Douville

October 31, 2016

History

1. We believe that the “place” of the Lakota Studies as one of the first departments, established at Sinte Gleska College, was to be the core of the college and act as a hub of cultural knowledge for the programs and departments of SGU. This is what the founding father’s envisioned.
2. The initial goals and vision of the Lakota Studies was to restore, preserve and enhance the historical and cultural practices of our forefathers and mothers in the modern setting.
3. The historic enrollment and completion of student enrollment in Lakota Studies has been lower than all of the other academic programs.
4. The Lakota Studies graduates have worked at the RST Land Use, St. Francis Indian School, Todd County School systems, Black Hills Forest Service, SGU and other places such as Winner School systems, White River School systems that still to be confirmed.

Language & Cultural Practices

5. The past successes of the Lakota Studies Department included the graduation of at least two associate of arts degree from the department from 1974 to 1994 (the year of the creation of 2 four year degrees) and at least 1 from 1994 to 2015). At least 2 ½ graduated from the years 1998 to 2015.

These graduates went on to complete undergraduate studies in Lakota studies or other SGU studies while the majority of under graduates went on to be employed at St. Francis Indian School, Todd County School Systems, Winner school district, White River School system and other school systems.

Other graduates became employed in the Rosebud Lakota Tribal programs, some became council persons, some were hired in the Black Hills Forest Services, some graduates went on to complete their studies in the masters programs-locally and non-locally, some of these graduates were involved in amending the RST tribal constitution and other graduates became deceased while at least one holds a 4 year degree from Lakota Studies with no record of teaching in the area that this student graduated.

The challenges facing the Lakota Studies program are continuing problems that involve overcoming budget shortages; overcoming faculty and staff turnover rates, competing with other departments; recruiting appropriate staff and faculty; lack of time doing research, publications and technical tools to complete our mission; and lack of maintaining programs for the purpose of development to higher levels.

6. The challenges with the interpretation between the "oral-language base" of the Lakota culture vs. mainstream written language history began when societies expand and the communication systems expand with it, then the struggle to adapt to a different system of retention to convey information occurs. A society has to choose which form of communication to use, oral tradition or mainstream written language. Both could be retained but a society built on immense record keeping, like the United States, and engaging in paper work to ensure meeting their goals of business and other affairs on a daily basis uses the written form as the primary source of usage. The other form of communication, oral-language base, is used by mostly Native Americans.

This form of communication or information has a validity problem in the non-Indian world because it is built on trust and respect based on age-experience and wisdom to qualify a person to educate, lead or speak on behalf of a people, while the counter form of communication uses credentials based on certificates, diplomas, licenses, vouchers and other forms of documents that acknowledge qualifications of a person to educate, lead or speak on behalf of the people. The best way to convey the rejection of oral transmission of tradition and acceptance of written tradition is how the modern court systems address these issues: the court regards oral testimony as here say while written testimony as appropriate. The only way oral testimony can be accepted is to convert this to written with all supporting documentation.

Lakota language was taught in the oral tradition and remained so until the reservation system came along. Then in the late 1930s and early 1940s, written Lakota made its debut and was prepared to enter the classrooms, e.g. the development of the Buechal dictionary and grammar.

When the Lakota school systems were created on the reservations in North and South Dakota, Lakota studies programs followed in the early 1970s and the Lakota language became a goal for the curriculum.

The teaching of the Lakota language development was based on several orthographies and the two largest Lakota reservations accepted the Buechal method. Other orthographies followed and the ground work of the language, with *wasicun* orthographies, became the norm. A dozen or less orthographies were created and were heavily based on the alphabet system of the English language. This was the beginning of a huge mistake because guttural sounds, glottal stops and some grammar were not done in the alphabet English systems. English orthography was supplemented with dots,

slashes, squibbles and other symbols to represent guttural, glottal stops and other sounds to compensate for the lack of these sounds in the English orthographies.

It is interesting to note that Nordic students from Norway, Denmark and Sweden who took SGU Lakota language I, II and sometimes III went back to their countries speaking Lakota nearly fluently. When asked why they succeeded, they remarked that they used their own orthography which is vastly different from the English system.

The Lakota language took a huge hit when the language was forbidden to be spoken in the classroom (early 1880's to 1940s).

The Lakota language took another hit when the acculturation and assimilation policies were announced and practiced (1885-1934), the policy was to break the language and culture of the Lakota and other tribes and convert the Lakota into the image of the rural white man, so the stage was set to reinstate language and culture in the 1970s.

One of the axioms that are practiced in all societies worldwide is that languages and cultural practices are informally and initially taught at home then begin a change to an age graded system before adolescent. Non-Indians teach their children English home basic-skills until they are old enough, then they are sent to kindergarten. From kindergarten to twelfth grade all their language and written development take place in the classroom. The Lakota language had no chance to fully teach their children in the Lakota language at home because they were not allowed to speak it in the school systems.

The first Lakota generation parents, who were punished for speaking Lakota, did not wish for their children to go through what they experienced and started to speak to their children in English. They reasoned that when they go through the process of learning English from K-12, they will relearn the Language at home when they come home after they graduated. Another alternative was that often times the Lakota groups hung together and spoke to each other in Lakota in isolated locations.

One of the reasons why the Lakota language will probably never succeed to be spoken by most of the Lakota is because of this historical background of the degradation of language and culture that led to loss of identity. Moreover, this background of language persecution and culture has led the appropriate Lakota population to be ashamed of being Lakota and speaking Lakota. Although, presently, this trait has somewhat been lifted, the next hindrance that led to the choice of not speaking the language is that the first language has been replaced by English and this generation of children find no need to communicate in Lakota because almost everyone communicates in English.

Many Lakota who move away from their base communities on the reservation to the urban or rural areas off the reservations experience the lack of Lakota used as communication between the relocated family members and the youth born into these

families that lose their ability to speak in Lakota. Most of these families who move back to the reservations do not speak the language fluently.

One of the stumbling blocks of learning and speaking Lakota by the Lakota, who move away from the reservation systems, is the structure and practice of the Lakota family. Most of the basic language is learned in the family system and honed by the peer groups of the learners, who interrelate. It is frowned upon by parents to replace the peer groups as teachers of the language because of respect of cross gender at older levels. Older boys always go to their fathers for learning and the girls go to their mothers for the same purpose. Cross gender groups cannot go directly to parents of opposite genders to learn because of the respect of mother and fathers to their older children. Peer groups are ideal because of the same status that each possess. Peer group levels for the families to learn the Lakota language are too few in number to achieve the desired effect of honing the language as a group.

The Lakota language is not accepted in most higher learning systems as a language, but do regard Russian, French, English, Spanish, Italian and other language. This is disheartening because the Lakota language does not count as communication, while foreign languages are accepted as valid communication systems.

The success of learning and speaking Lakota fluently is to know the numerous issues and challenges as cited in the historical background of the Lakota language and culture and make adjustments to each challenge.

The learning of the Lakota language is entrenched in the culture. One cannot fully speak Lakota unless this person knows the traditional ways and practices. There are cases of learning to speak Lakota that became a reality, such as non-Indian interpreters, who learned to translate as a tool for employment. Those interpreters became fluent in a limited way but those who spoke Lakota and married into the Lakota family system and embraced the culture became Lakota at heart.

There are some affluent non-Indians who became fluent by integrating into the Lakota families, not to learn Lakota but to enjoy the company of their Lakota friends at an early age. They became fluent but were unable to fit into the society because they did not share the hardships of their Lakota friends.

Some Lakota who lived partially off the reservation and partially in the reservations from time to time became fluent. However, they lacked ceremonial life and experience of enjoying kinship values that led to becoming void of culture but able to still communicate in Lakota. This led them to seek ceremonial life, Lakota family values and learn how to practice and interpret them for their satisfaction. They were a shell of lacking culture until they learned and practiced the life ways of the Lakota. Lakota Language, culture and spirituality are keys to become fluent and development of a whole person.

The Lakota language and culture are being taught to help the student to become a spiritual person to make them wholesome but being successful depends on the course the University is willing to take to achieve the goal of enhancing language, culture and history for the students to become wholesome. We cannot afford to take half measures and expect the program to attain its goals. It will be expensive and time consuming to accomplish these goals.

7. SGU addresses the variations and differences of methodologies in teaching the Lakota language by understanding the different methodology systems and using one that best suits the language instructor and the Lakota Studies program. One method called immersion is proven to be the best way of teaching the language. Tools to enhance this approach or a combination of methods that enhance this method are used. Some other tools that must be used are the home method approach and this entails what basic skills of learning Lakota are taught by the family systems. The family systems are what skills are learned at the lineal family level, at the nuclear family level, at the collateral family level and at the affinal family level. Some instructors used this methodology, but at minimal levels.

Home approach method can be carried out at the study skills level at the University with close coordination with the families and communities.

8. The validation of the Lakota language accuracy and correctness is done by Lakota studies instructors with inputs by knowledgeable-experienced faculty and elders. A Lakota Studies elder advisory council was once used but most couldn't meet regularly because of budget restraints.
9. The Lakota Studies Department absolutely should be involved with certifying teachers as Lakota language instructors. This should be accomplished by creating an elderly Lakota language certifying council that must be qualified by the highest standards. Those who graduate in the Lakota language, with proper methodology in the course, automatically should be reviewed by the teaching certificate council and given a teacher certificate in Lakota Language.
10. The Lakota Studies could promote, within the University, Lakota culture in institutional activities by setting up a Lakota club consisting of community members, students, Lakota studies staff and working closely with this group. Projects such as Lakota studies star knowledge activities embracing solstice ceremonies and preparing for the establishment of an observatory could be accomplished. Other projects that often need community promotion like making posters for events in the community and University levels. Other projects such as hand games and traditional Lakota games could be sponsored by including Lakota to describe the paraphernalia.

11. During the Founder's Day, the people wanted the Lakota Studies do things in relationship to treaties, traditional government and thoughts on Lakota language development. The Lakota Studies have responded to this challenge by doing such topics and will focus on health care issues based on what the treaties have to say on these issues and what we are teaching on health care. The Lakota Studies will present a health based subject on curriculum and how we could build a viable health program system by using traditional based health care in the modern setting.
12. The Lakota Studies has cultural resource management for the communities, e.g. community histories, steps in acquiring traditional items that can be restored through NAGPRA and photo search for significant traditional leaders. We are presently working on cultural items such as Lakota shirts that need to be brought back by archivists, museums and private collectors throughout the country.
13. The cultural services by the LS Dept. for the tribal communities and other organizations, are cultural expertise in the area of history and culture and language. Some requests by the community and education programs are asking information about the organization and functions of the *Oceti Sakowin*. Cultural services are also extended to helping individuals and community about ceremonies. We have aided some community members in translating Lakota into English and Lakota.
14. Research has been done in Lakota language, history and culture, particularly in social-kin systems, Lakota star knowledge, traditional tribal government, *ogle tanka un* (Lakota shirt wearers shirts), tribal law, treaties, past tribal leaders, Lakota origins, climate changes impacting Lakota culture and other areas. The research was done by Lakota staff and faculty (Victor D. in history and culture), Francis Cutt (language) and former staff members Rain Marshall, Duane Hollow Horn Bear and Lone Quigley. The latter faculty members, who don't work here anymore, nevertheless, are still involved in research. The evidence of research produced is in the courses that are taught and papers that are occasionally handed out in projects and appropriate subject matter that come up.
15. The SGU CRM interfaces with the THPO by offering archaeological field survey work instruction and doing actual fieldwork, NAGPA documentation and interpretation of finds in the field. In short SGU offers the technical and education to the tribe and the THPO.

The tribal NAGPRA committee consists of two SGU members that sit on this committee and they are responsible for paper work on NAGPR related topics. These two representatives are Terry Grey and Victor Douville who are responsible for paper work on NAGPRA requirements only if the tribe and the THPO request this.

16. The LS Dept. is entrusted with the role of identification and preservation of sacred sites when requested by the tribe and communities and on special occasions when the department has developed or receives a grant for sacred sites or if an emergency arises on a site that has been compromised. The department has a joint responsibility with the tribe to preserve sites in question.
17. The SGU CRM program of the LS Department has the primary responsibility of protecting sensitive areas when the Lakota culture and spirituality come into play. The CRM will decide if it is a sensitive site and produce information as to why it is sensitive, is it sacred and other information. Data for such an event of coming across a sensitive site will be collected, stored and have GPS identification if requested by the community or tribal program.
18. The potential challenges with bringing technology into the Lakota Studies roles and services are to maintaining costs of the technology, up gradation every 3 or 4 year, the quality of the technology and training the faculty and staff when newer technology comes into play. The supreme challenge is to apply this to research and development of the program.

Other challenges are applying technology such as computers and accessories, super computers to store massive data, large screens for students to observe and other electronics. Technology can also be viewed as an activity that forms or changes culture and application of math (Lakota math), science and arts.

Technology is vital to the Lakota studies because it can change what we can do in a significant way. We have yet to understand and interpret the language of the old Lakota system that deduce what a black hole is, what it heaven is or what hell is. We are just beginning to fathom star knowledge and find that in the Lakota language such concepts are there but we have to research to arrive at an understanding. Moreover, to understand how we developed our culture may lead us to opening the door of knowledge of how our past society worked out problems and changed them for better life.

Academic

19. The department informs and recruits students about the value of Lakota studies as an academic program by demonstrating that oral tradition can make a difference when this can be interpreted and applied to match the academic equivalence of oral knowledge subject matter. An example of this is in the social context of interpreting what grandfather means. In order to best understand this concept we have to examine this social term. In a literal sense *Tunkasila* (tunka-rock, si (respect) and la-endeared) means an endeared-respected rock. Another word for rock is *Inyan*, an esoteric word. *Inyan* is a title or name and is regarded as one of many manifestation of god-that is why it is an esoteric word for

rock that is rarely uttered, except by medicine men. Rock is regarded as the oldest known property on this earth, therefore if one were to personify rock, then it becomes grandfather, the oldest known person of a family. *Unci Maka* is the second oldest property on earth, therefore she is called grandmother, wife of grandfather.

What you are observing here is how oral tradition and academics interrelate through an examining or researching process. One of the significance of adding oral tradition to academics is firming up knowledge. Converting appropriate oral knowledge to written forms can only enhance academic tradition. The Lakota Studies attempts to strengthen subject matter by attempting to match oral tradition to academics or vice versa. Combining two methods or equivalents, such as oral and written traditions, that come up with the same solution strengthens arguments in a significant manner.

20. The Lakota Studies should be held accountable to academic standards if it is required to do so or should not if it changes the traditional ways in a significant manner that endangers the culture. One has to understand that non-Indian academics were first implemented to acculturate and assimilate the Lakota and other indigenous nations. In the past, the whole philosophy of the United States was to "...take the Indian out of the man and save the man." This was all in accordance with Captain Pratt, who envisioned the boarding school system for the nation. Although this concept and practice has changed, it still lingers in the minds of the elders and transcends to last of the elders of the second generation that learned the white ways. We, the baby boomers, are the last of the descendants who see traditionalism ending and struggle with retention of the culture. It is still believed that certain elements of the culture can still be saved but the great agent of change, the Higher Learning Commission, is requiring some standards that might make or break the culture.

The University along with the tribe must decide on what part or parts of the culture is worth saving. Should we take academics out of Lakota Studies and create an institutional approach to Lakota Studies teachings. Both systems will be expensive in terms of money and hard work.

21. The assessment model for cultural learning coincides with the mission of Lakota Studies and SGU. This assessment model is built on what the student learns based on the course syllabus requirements and what and how the student carries out what is learned. If the student learns about tribal government and attains graduation based on tribal government, then the student, if true to his or her goal of being involved in tribal council, will run for tribal council or be involved in tribal government. The tools to use his or her skills will include ability to speak and persuade, knowledge of history of the tribe and leadership, ability to create a tribal resolution, ability to do research on topics that are needed, ability to work or collaborate with people, get along with people, respect of people and other requirements. The assessment model for the student does not end here and continues to be assessed on the accomplishment of goals of the student. The end

assessment will be to see if the student has remained true to the mission of the Lakota Studies and SGU.

22. Currently, the credentials for Lakota Studies staff and faculty for Lakota cultural learning should include a four year degree in Lakota tribal government, Lakota history and culture, Lakota language in teaching emphasis, traditional Lakota arts and crafts or equivalents in the related areas tribal governments, tribal history and culture, Lakota Language (fluent speaker) and tribal arts and crafts.
23. The connection between the SGU Lakota Studies and the State Curriculum Essential - Standards Understanding is working together to ensure that the Indian Studies component of the State Indian Education is accurate. Four five years ago, the state started work on Indian Studies Curriculum and commissioned a work group called OSEU to help develop a curriculum. State curriculum in Indian Studies will be required of all members of the school associations across the state. Two Lakota Studies faculty are involved in the development and updating the necessary connection.
24. The Lakota Studies needs the assistance of the SGU departments because the curricula and learning assessments includes the other departments. Lakota Studies curriculum impacts all of the departments of SGU.
25. If not a “stand alone academic program” or an institute, Lakota studies curricula could still be integrated into the other departments by inserting Lakota studies topics in the course syllabus and a faculty member of Lakota Studies will make the presentation or special papers or readings could be submitted to the instruction for assignments.

Tribal Accreditation

26. The application of the Tribal Education Code in the Lakota Studies Department activities occurred five years ago when the tribe needed to update its educational code. Some of the Lakota Studies faculty members were involved. The department is still involved in this effort and fruition of the efforts paid off when the Tribal Education Department nominated certain Lakota Studies faculty, who were working on upgrading the tribal code, to work with the state on behalf of the tribe.
27. The LS Dept. is involved with professional development at SGU attending conference (the Indian Education Summit), the conferences on upgrading assessment for the SGU and is engaged in the Founders Day activities. The Lakota Studies Faculty is also involved in partaking of orientations at high school levels. Lakota Studies faculty has participated in the Oceti Sakowin Horse Nation conferences at Pine Ridge twice.

28. There are models for K-12 grade accreditation that incorporates, integrates and takes into consideration the uniqueness of Native culture education as developed by the Oceti Sakowin Essentials and Standards. These will be implemented in the school systems presently.
29. The modes for post-secondary accreditation that incorporates, integrates or takes into consideration the uniqueness of Native culture education exist in the Indian community colleges in South Dakota.

Future

30. The concept of an institute for Lakota History and Culture and Language studies would be a better fit or a downgrade from academic studies. This was not envisioned by the founding fathers because some members of the founding fathers thought that Lakota Studies, given the proper resources, could compete with the academic programs world over. It's a tough sell-this will have to be explored by the Oyate. There are good arguments for both.
31. The goals and functions of the institute might be the same that we have today, with the exception that our programs will not be accepted if a transfer occurs to other higher learning programs. Schools systems on the reservation will not have goals for advancement to colleges with Lakota Studies curricula.
32. The future of the employability of Lakota Studies graduates is excellent when compared to those who graduate from the program today, we have almost all that graduate from Lakota Studies are sought after and employed by the school systems on the reservation.
33. The department becomes involved with cultural diversity, racism, prejudices and other appropriate negative attitudes almost on a daily basis and when local and non-local events regarding one of the above occurs, one of the mission and values of the Lakota Studies Program is to become patient and seek out a well thought out process by focusing on differing view- points and making final judgment based on patience as a virtue. This is in good keeping with *wolakota*.
34. The attributes and credentials of the department leadership today should be based on *Waohola* (respect), *Waonsila* (care and compassion), *Wokskape* (wisdom), *Wowahwala* (humility and peacefulness), *Wacantognaka* (generosity), *Wowacintanka* (fortitude) and *Woohitika* (bravery). Additionally this person should be able to have management skills and experienced with background of culture. All of these are considered to be part of *Wolakota*.

