Self Study – Critical Sections

SINTE GLESKA UNIVERSITY

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SELF STUDY REPORT FOR WINHEC ACCREDITATION WANIYETU, 2021

Self Study – Critical Sections

The Self Study Committee did a great deal of reflection on how 'Indigenous' and 'Higher Education' fit together for tribal students today. This effort led us to initiate further development of a post-colonial education based on pre-colonial Lakota learning values at SGU.

Our Self Study eflections on this topic have been put together into this shorter document. We consider this document to be the heart of the longer Self Study.

INTRODUCTION FOR READERS

The WINHEC Accreditation Handbook (First Edition, 2018) sets out the procedures to follow in a Higher Education Self-Study. The three main components for a Self-Study are:

I. Organizational Authority and Structure;
II. General Operations;
III. Educational Programming.

Each of these components has several sections asking for details from the college.

The Handbook strongly suggests that a WINHEC candidate "draw upon the wealth of knowledge, experience, and other resources that community members, particularly Native elders, possess and are able to contribute to a meaningful Self-Study." (p. 31.)

This directive to consult with elders proved to be very valuable in our work. We needed a trustworthy perspective on Lakota history to help identify Indigenous elements prior to European contact that might shed light on education today. Elders who had inherited pre-colonial Lakota values from their tiospaye (extended family) and, as well, had experienced Western forms of education, were primary sources for our understanding of Lakota history and education in transition. Their positive perspective on the past gave us encouragement to continue to promote an emerging Indigenous education for today's students.

Elders and Lakota Values

From the start it was helpful to recall that significant conflict and confrontation has occurred in SGU's fifty years of operation. Much of the conflict and research was accompanied by overt political events, often initiated by the American Indian Movement (AIM), including its Occupation of Wounded Knee (71 days in 1973, here in South Dakota). Like the earlier Occupation of Alcatraz Island (19 months from 1969-71), the Wounded Knee Occupation involved confrontations with the U.S. government.

These confrontational events occurred at the very beginning of Sinte Gleska University's founding and were influential in raising awareness of Indigenous identity and the abrogation of the treaties that originally set up the relationships between the US government and Indigenous

Nations. Many significant studies on the history of the various boarding schools followed, and these studies uncovered more and more incidents of cultural, physical and sexual abuse that occurred at the boarding schools.

Our discussions with Lakota elders enabled us to gain a historical perspective that included a wider view of the confrontational aspect of Native identity. This was possible because, in many cases, elders were greatly influenced by their grandparents, giving them connections that stretch back to the decisions made by the original signers of the treaties. Most elders also have their own experience of life in the boarding schools. While none of this history is simple or one-sided, our discussions with elders gave us two key messages and directions for our Self -Study. Their first message is presented here as it gave us a perspective to follow when conducting the Self Study. The second message on the spiritual aspects of Lakota identity is presented in the *Summary Reflection* (p. 95ff.) as it provided a direction and guide as the university moves into the future.

First, then, elders have seen and lived through many changes in their lives. Perhaps as a result of this, many look back to the time of the treaties, a time when so much was drastically changing for the Oyate (Lakota Nation), and they see the leaders at that time – their relatives – as people who chose wisely and well despite being faced with terribly difficult challenging decisions. As is often the case, the elders' comments focused both on past history and on the present need for people today to choose wisely and well in these challenging and difficult times.

The elders' perspective parallels a certain current in historical research. While today's stress on 'settler colonialism' presents a movement of history that overwhelmed everything – and everyone – in its way, this view tends to overlook the judgements and decisions of tribal leaders. As Fred Hoxie, a highly regarded historian of American Indian history, wrote recently - "And yet Native leaders from the seventeenth century forward were willing to negotiate treaties, learn new languages, travel to foreign capitals, publish broadsides, and adopt new religions as they struggled to force newcomers to recognize their humanity and sovereignty."

Victor Douville, tribal historian and member of our Self Study Committee, gave us a closer look at this history in his study of *Wolakota*, showing how the Oyate came to live among themselves (and then, where possible, with White settlers) in a way that placed a high value on peace and harmony. This attempt to follow the values of Wolakota in negotiations and treaties over many years also included a tenacious stance of resistance. This same combination of peaceful negotiations and resistance was present in the protectors at Standing Rock Reservation in their recent defense of water rights. Later on, in the Self Study section on Educational Programming, we discuss SGU's attempts to cooperate with standard accreditation agencies while resisting their pressure to "Be more like us!"

The inclusive and forward-looking aspect of the elders' views confirmed our notion that SGU's work, including its shaping of academic curriculum and content, is not to promote 'imitation' or 'copying' of Lakota ancestors' looks and material ways; rather, the university's responsibility is to help students learn to decide well and wisely, while rejecting 'victimization' as a primary identity, i.e., to do for their generation what their ancestors did for theirs. The elders' message to promote a decision-making identity in Lakota students receives clarity in the Self-Study's discussion of a genuine post-colonial curriculum.

Looking Ahead

The results of our further discussions with staff, faculty, students and administration are shared throughout the Self Study but especially in Section III: Educational Programming. There we offer certain subsections titled *Committee Reflection*(s). The *Committee Reflection* subsections discuss specific ways that the traditional Lakota values – and particularly that of relating children to learning rather than to a teacher – helps define Sinte Gleska University's identity as an Indigenous higher education institution. There, too, we look at ways that SGU is working to develop a post-colonial education based on pre-colonial Lakota values.

Miss SGU Winyan Sannita Blue Thunder

SECTION III: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Introduction to Educational Programming

Standard accrediting agencies tend to pay little attention to the cultural history of a learning institution. WINHEC, however, specifically asks us to reflect on the factors that constitute our identity as an *Indigenous* institution of higher education. This process of reflection on Sinte Gleska University's Indigenous identity led our Self Study committee to some unexpected results.

First, our Self Study committee noticed that the criteria for "Indigenous" differs among different organizations. Among non-educational organizations, the criteria for "Indigenous" often rests on the organization's relationship to a larger tribal or Indigenous group: Does the organization have administrators who are members of the recognized tribal group? Is there something in the general operating procedures that may be said to represent cultural procedures or values of the larger Indigenous group?

As noted earlier, SGU's organizational authority and operating procedures reflect cultural values and standards embedded in the history and culture of the Sicangu Lakota Oyate (Nation). But it seemed clear that our primary identity as a *learning* institution resides in educational programming. A primary focus for our Self Study committee, then, has been to determine whether and in what ways SGU's educational programming is Indigenous.

This process began by noting that courses at many public and private universities are sometimes taught by Indigenous/Native/Lakota instructors. This led us to consider that the Indigenous identity of SGU instructors might not be the defining feature of our educational programming.

We also noted that many public and private universities have Indigenous/Native/Lakota Studies departments or programs, and this suggested to us that our Lakota Studies department, by itself, does not identify SGU as an Indigenous Higher Education institution.

Given this faculty and curriculum parallel between some tribal and some non-tribal colleges, we were led to consider that our academic content and curriculum in general, despite a focus on Lakota history, culture and language, might not be the primary defining feature of SGU's Indigenous identity either. At the same time, however, while examining our curriculum and talking with elders, we discovered that a set of Lakota pre-contact/pre-colonial values, values still very present in Lakota homes, suggest that relating students directly to learning rather than to a teacher may be at the heart of a genuine Lakota education. This awareness was a significant breakthrough and one we were excited to follow.

There still remained the important fact that Lionel Bordeaux, President of Sinte Gleska University, has been an outstanding leader in tribal and Indigenous education for almost half a century. In fact, Lionel's 47 years as president of SGU makes him the longest serving president of any college or university in the country. Lionel also was a founding member of WINHEC in 2002 and has received numerous national and international awards for his work in tribal education. In 2018 he was inducted into the United States National Native Hall of Fame.

In light of these accomplishments – and the fact that SGU was the first tribal college accredited to offer bachelor's degrees (1982) and master's degrees (1988) –, it clearly made sense to highlight the many SGU achievements of Lionel in our WINHEC Self Study. But how to fit this into our decision to investigate ways of teaching and learning as the heart of the university's Indigenous identity?

Lionel provided the direction we needed. During the past two years he has addressed the SGU staff and faculty many, many times, and at each gathering he not only has reviewed the past but he especially has addressed the question of the future. SGU is celebrating its 50th Year Anniversary in 2021, and the president has asked us all to seriously consider what a redefined and restructured tribal education will – and should – look like for the next fifty years.

As a result of the President's leadership, the Self Study committee undertook research and a series of discussions with faculty, staff, community members and elders over the past two years. Our goal was to identify traditional Lakota practices of education rooted in pre-European contact – values that might provide a more robust Indigenous foundation for a post-colonial education.

Our investigation uncovered aspects of traditional Lakota teaching and learning that (we feel) have the potential to redefine and restructure development of an Indigenous/Lakota university and, in the process, further promote tribal students' Indigenous identity. Our reflections and forward-looking results are included at the end of sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and are titled *Committee Reflection.* A final forward-looking discussion is presented in a *Summary Reflection*.

***Committee Reflection #1*: Educational Programs for a Post-Colonial Education**

In completing the section on Educational Programs, the Committee was reminded of SGU's recurring experience with the standard accreditation agency for this area of the United States. As mentioned in the Introduction to this Section, standard accreditation agencies in the United States do not concern themselves with the cultural history of colleges or the cultural background of students. We need to add now that this 'neutral' approach implicitly presents standards of the dominant cultural group as normative for all cultural groups.

In SGU's experience, standard accreditation comes with the unspoken pressure to "Be more like us," where "us" refers to the dominant public and private universities in the country. In response to this, SGU President Bordeaux has had talks with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The President has also initiated serious discussions with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) on the need to establish a separate accrediting agency for Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). Two SGU faculty also led a discussion with tribal college faculty on WINHEC accreditation at the American Indian College Fund's *Research Convening* in Summer 2019. These discussions follow from principles of self-determination and sovereignty.

If tribal colleges are to do more than simply accommodate to the standard accreditation style, our Self Study Committee realized that it is not enough to say – "We are different!" Instead, our differences from mainline colleges will need, at some point, to be stated in clear terms. There remained, then, a distinct question to pursue: *How are tribal colleges – Sinte Gleska University, in particular – different from mainline non-indigenous colleges and universities?* This same question is assumed, though not stated, in the WINHEC accreditation process that asks colleges to articulate their Indigenous identity. Our Self Study team felt it important to look into this issue in some detail as SGU pursues a path for the future.

To begin our search into apparent differences between tribal colleges and mainline colleges, our research noticed that the term 'university' has long been applied only to educational institutions with distinctive structural and legal features that first developed in Europe. For example, Western history places the University of Bologna, founded in 1088, as the earliest university. But higher education existed throughout Africa and Asia centuries before. The Alexandrian museum of Egypt was a research institution noted for its scholarship on science and literature, and it was established about the 3rd Century BCE. The University of al-Qarawiyyin Fez in Morocco was founded in 859 CE and later designated a university in modern times. It appears that even the initial definition of a 'university' may be shaped by a limited set of standards.

If institutions of higher learning outside Europe served as preeminent intellectual centers and contributed much to our understanding of the world, might Indigenous colleges and universities follow a similar path? Our conclusion is that we can and that the best route for redefining

tribal/Indigenous higher education identity is to locate and utilize pre-colonial Lakota educational values and determine whether they might serve as a foundation for a post-colonial university. These Indigenous values are not subject matter to be taught in an anthropology course but underlying guides to redefine and restructure our Educational Programming. A tall order, but one that made sense to us.

Further research showed us that the U.S. Congress has prohibited the federal Department of Education from exercising any direction, supervision or control over curriculum, program of instruction, administration or personnel of any educational institution or school system. Instead, Congress assigned the role of overseeing the quality and academic adequacy of programs to accrediting agencies. But these agencies' job is not to ensure that all institutions accredited are identical or that all students or program reach for the same goals or the same outcomes. The accrediting agencies are to ensure that students have access to qualified instructors and an adequate curriculum and necessary support services.

Of course, many additional regulatory requirements have been developed over the years, and these in turn tend to constitute an accrediting orthodoxy of the day – an orthodoxy that has few roots in tribal communities. The inadequacy of accreditation models for tribal communities shows up in related ways. So, for example, accrediting scores for colleges include counting the percentage of recent graduates who are successfully employed. How does this apply fairly to tribal colleges whose students live in an area with an unemployment rate of 70%-85%.

Just as concerning, research finds that linking a college's success to the employment rates of its graduates reveals a shift over the last sixty years from a focus on education to a focus on credentials. Credentials are linked with employment, as parents and students are often reminded, and adopting a business-based model of education has both shaped the design of current higher education institutions and moved accreditation standards further away from the social and cultural milieu of tribal colleges.

Closely related to a too-easy acceptance of economics as a measure for progress, we see the ever-expanding online "surveillance capitalism" that is responsible for increasing divisions in society today. Surveillance capitalism's mixture of constantly tracking personal interests and presenting enticing social media options, including fake news and variations of propaganda, now targets everyone for the sake of increased profit.

But tribal members already suffered greatly in the 19th and 20th centuries from false narratives, especially the American myth of Manifest Destiny which was used to justify unregulated expansion, wholesale killing of the buffalo herds, and the taking of tribal lands.

The 19th Century Story of Manifest Destiny

The well known Native actor Floyd Westerman (Kanġi Duta) commented that many Americans saw Native tribes as cultural roadkill in the sweep of Manifest Destiny. However, that historical experience also developed a hermeneutic of suspicion among tribal people that is not typically found in mainstream America. As Philip Deere, an Indigenous spiritual leader, said in 1981 – "The time is coming. Multinational corporations don't care what color you are; they're going to step on you. They're going to slap you in the face like they did the Indians." Sinte Gleska University believes that tribal education can offer its students a critical-minded antidote to the greatly increased proliferation of false narratives and to larger society's failure to see excessive profit as a social rather than an individual dividend.

Along with the increasing social conflict stimulated by surveillance capitalism, there are huge social changes underway as a result of climate change and the vast income inequality in the United States. The need for innovations in higher education could hardly be greater. To its credit, HLC, the standard accrediting agency for SGU, commissioned a study in 2019 called *Innovation: Beyond the Horizon and the Future of Higher Education*. The study raises the key question – "Can accreditors be the calculated, purposeful risk-takers necessary to be the first voice, rather than the last, when change is essential?" They then go on to specify their key area for innovation: "How can HLC provide leadership as accreditation becomes more student-centered and relevant?"

Our committee welcomes the questioning posed by the HLC *Innovation* study. President Bordeaux's call to redefine and restructure our educational programming centers on an innovative form of Indigenous student-centered education. We reflect on the details for this restructuring in the *Committee Reflection* sections to follow and look forward to a combination

of self-determination resistance and *wolakota*-guided discussions with the Higher Learning Commission as SGU moves forward.

The 21st Century Story of Indigenous Kincentric Ecology

***Committee Reflection #2*: Curriculum and Programming for a Post-Colonial Education**

The Self Study Committee found a great deal to reflect on in this Curriculum and Programming section. The last sentence of the WINHEC section statement turned out to be the starting place for our reflections. That sentence asks about an "*Indigenous pedagogy that promotes the distinctive spiritual, cultural, and social mores of the community"*.

The notion of an *Indigenous pedagogy* is very much in line with the Committee's earlier statement that, since public and private universities also have Native/Indigenous/Lakota departments and faculty, SGU's indigenous identity cannot rest primarily on a Lakota Studies department, faculty or curriculum. However, what these other institutions do not have is a pedagogy or set of teaching and learning values that reflects the distinctive spiritual, cultural and social mores of the Lakota community. It remained for us to better describe the outlines of a distinctive Lakota pedagogy.

A first clue came from a Self-Study Committee member who was invited by the South Dakota Department of Education to help develop a Native curriculum for K-12 public schools in South Dakota. While working on that project, this elder also joined a working group for a new science curriculum. There he found an intriguing pedagogy which echoed his Lakota childhood.

The teaching approach being developed by the science group was named the 5Es, an approach that takes the central focus off the teacher and invites students to directly *engage, explore, explain, elaborate* and *evaluate* some particular topic or area of investigation. Our Committee member found that this absence of direct teaching strongly echoed his own traditional Lakota upbringing. As our further research and our discussions with elders revealed, Lakota spiritual, cultural and social values in pre-European days clearly placed emphasis on children (and adults) exploring on their own without direct teaching. Observations of family and community settings show that these Lakota pre-contact values clearly persist today.

Research studies also provide direction as they confirm that children in hunter-gatherer societies from pre-industrial days (as well as those still active today) were brought up with constant security and stimulation. This was primarily a result of the long nursing period, sleeping near parents for several years, the extensive social models available to children through village-parenting, the instant caretaker responses to a child's crying, and the minimal amount of physical punishment. Committee members and elders gave many examples to show that each of these conditions continue in Lakota tiospaye (extended families) today.

Further, hunting and gathering require creative and diverse methods, as well as on-the-spot judgments, to meet the unpredictable, ever-changing conditions of nature. So, too, the permissive parenting style of Lakota parents today seems designed to promote creativity and independence. In contrast, Western society has developed a stratified, hierarchical social structure where obedience can be essential to survival. Industrial society greatly increased both the routines and the hierarchical nature of work, so it makes sense that families and schools are motivated to both teach children directly and to train children in lessons of conformity and obedience.

Research tells us that direct teaching began to be especially promoted at roughly the same time humans began to settle, grow crops, and raise livestock. That is, ranching and then agriculture brought with it a new kind of attention to detail and responsibility as crops, in particular, are both stationary and predictable. If certain activities and details – planting, watering, weeding, harvesting – were not closely attended to, the family and society would suffer. This introduced humans to a new kind of work, one that brought a discipline and adult oversight of children that was a foreign concept to hunter-gatherer groups.

When children became important to a family’s livelihood and economic outcome – true in parts of rural America today as in ancient Mesopotamia —it was critical that they be taught the needed skills and how to behave responsibly by employing the skills as directed. As children tended crops and cared for animals, more discipline was needed because, as noted, these activities involve recurring needs that are predictable.

The move from an agricultural society to an industrial society greatly increased the values of direct teaching, correction and oversight discipline. Schools today incorporate these practices in their attempt to prepare students for the society that needs them. But Lakota children find these values odd, confusing and in conflict with the values in most of their homes.

> "If a child…is continuously forbidden to do things it wants to do, continually told 'don't do that,' 'stop your noise,' etc., their ears become like dog's ears and they are stupid throughout life. If a man has big ears, or is stupid, people know he has been forbidden to do what he wanted to do when a child. …[I]t is better to run the danger of a child pricking his eye out with a sharp knife than to forbid him the knife if he wants it and thus have the certainly of making him stupid." (Indigenous Elder)

In contrast, survival, rather than predictive work and recurring chores, was a present reality in hunter-gatherer societies, and promotion of a strong self-reliance from early childhood was key to raising individuals who could make the sound critical judgments needed to find their way through unexpected but ever-present life-threatening situations.

The value of self-reliance came with a serious spirit of equality and personal autonomy that, as in Lakota culture today, applied as much to children as to adults. Lakota adults view children as complete individuals, with rights comparable to those of adults. Their assumption is that children will begin contributing to the economy of the group when they are developmentally ready to do so. There is no desire to make children or anyone else do what they don't want to do.

To be sure, the physical and social environment has changed a great deal as a result of more than a hundred years of colonialization. Yet Lakota adults today still tend to not initiate, direct, or interfere with children's activities. Generations of experience have proven to them that children can do well at educating themselves.

How do children learn what they need to know to become effective adults in a hunter-gatherer culture? The evidence suggests that they teach themselves through their observations, play, and exploration. Occasionally an adult might offer a word of advice or demonstrate how to do something better, such as how to shape an arrowhead or design a moccasin, but such help was given only when the child clearly desired it.

But when schools adopted the mores and values of agricultural and industrial societies, this led to schooling based on the assumed ideal – "The more I teach, the more you learn." In time, this approach led to setting academic standards for all students regardless of background, language or culture. When poor results followed and drop-outs increased among Indigenous and other students, the results were often attributed to lack of parental involvement, previous teachers,

poverty, IQ, lack of interest, etc., and the poor results led to what mainstream educators have called an 'achievement gap' for certain groups of students. Some educational organizations have voiced their concern that this term promotes biased conversations about race and equity, and they are instead referring to an 'opportunity gap' for students, many from Indigenous communities, who are losing out on opportunities for self-reliance in today's complex society.

In all these changes in schooling, higher education retained a certain freedom in the midst of the limited models of teaching, and so we see the direct teaching assumption – "The more I teach, the more you learn" – taper off in graduate school. In graduate school students are expected to begin their own investigations and follow the rules of research. The Indigenous pedagogy and curriculum that SGU is exploring in its ongoing professional development with faculty looks to extend the 'subordinating teaching to learning' pedagogy to its undergraduate students, and, by extension, to Indigenous elementary and high school students via the training provided by SGU's teacher education department.

(More information on this professional development for SGU faculty is discussed in the *Committee Reflection* #5.)

Committee Reflection #3: Language Teaching for a Post-Colonial Education

As noted in the main section on Native language, SGU students usually come to the Lakota language with interest and enthusiasm. Some of this interest is generated in elementary and high school, and some students come from families where parents and grandparents speak Lakota at home. The primary difference for this generation is that speaking Lakota is now considered an honorable and valuable thing to do. The previous generation had a very different experience in schools, many being punished or mocked by some teachers and fellow students for speaking the language.

Still, this *Reflection* section proved to be challenging. This is due to the fact that the Self Study Committee posed the central question of whether students are not only learning to value the language but also are learning to *speak* it. Here is the question we asked in discussions with faculty, students and staff: *Do the college's Lakota language classes follow the conventional linguistic approach that teaches students about Lakota language, or does the college require instructors to get students actively speaking and communicating in Lakota?*

There has been no clear consensus in the responses to the question. SGU has a proud history of exceptional language and cultural experts in the Lakota Studies department – people who have been well-known and respected in the Indigenous communities. Some, like Albert White Hat and Ben Black Bear, Jr., have authored and co-authored nationally recognized books on Lakota

language and culture. (cf. Appendices: *Lakota Language Publications*.) However, there also has not been a clear requirement that students who complete the required or elective Lakota language classes be able to speak the language to a certain and/or proficient degree. SGU's movement to redefine its tribal education is considering how best to make changes to this situation.

A key issue here is that department faculty and faculty councils have control over the curriculum. However, given that Lakota language lies at the heart of the tribe's Indigenous identity, the concern for language loss also fits into the center of SGU's concern for Nation Building. The question has arisen then: Should the administration, together with the faculty council, require that Lakota language classes include an active assessment of students' progress in actually speaking Lakota? Key suggestions and recommendations in response to this question are described below.

Our discussions on Lakota language loss and revitalization began by pointing to recent history, a history when Native language programs may have adopted a questionable language learning approach. Starting in the 1970s Native Studies departments in the United States, eager to bring Native languages into the curriculum, looked to linguists for assistance in designing language learning lessons and Native language courses. The result was most often a conventional academic approach that treated language as a subject to study rather than a skill to develop and speak. In many places, this way of proceeding continues today, and the loss of language continues.

Losing a Language
A breath leaves the sentences and does not come back
Yet the old still remember something that they could say

But they know now that such things are no longer believed
And the young have fewer words

The children will not repeat
The phrases their parents speak

Someone has persuaded them
That it is better to say everything differently

So that they can be admired somewhere
Farther and farther away

Where nothing that is here is known

-W.S. Merwin

As highlighted in the Committee's question to faculty and students, there is a distinction between learning about a language and learning to speak a language. This key distinction is often

overlooked, textbooks and instructors apparently assuming that students will move from learning grammar and rules of syntax to then speaking the new language. Unfortunately, there is little or no evidence that this transition happens. There is, however, clear evidence that most students in the United States have a strong resistance to doing the things needed to actually speak another language. Language classes that use English to teach about Lakota inevitably support that contradictory but dominating resistance by allowing students to remain in their first language comfort zone.

Untangling successful and unsuccessful language teaching pedagogy is important, and the Committee started with the difference between linguists studying a language and children learning to speak a language. In linguists' work, a language is broken into its many parts in order to understand how the language functions. This deconstruction of a language results in defined rules of grammar and the complexities of word order; on the other hand, babies use a very different constructive process to learn to tell what they see and know. A review of these differnces showed us some of the serious missteps involved in many Native language courses.

For example, the Committee was quick to note that English grammar and syntax rules are taught in elementary schools in the United States. However, it was also clear that students in these grade school classes already speak English. Grammar and syntax lessons are designed for students to learn more about the language they already speak; they are not used to help students learn to speak another language.

We also reflected on the fact that linguists use an orthography for the languages they study. But we found that orthographies to mark the sounds of a language were designed so linguists can communicate with each other without anyone having to actually speak the language. Additionally, mastering an orthography in a language class too often does the same as studying grammar and syntax in English; rather than promoting speaking, an orthography, especially when added to a study of complex grammar rules in English, tends to give students a sense of 'knowing' the language despite not being able to speak it.

Our conclusion is that knowledge of orthography, grammar and syntax, when not subordinated to a corresponding language learning approach based on how language learning works, not only plays into the resistance already mentioned, but also may slow the process of language revitalization for the Nation. This occurs when academic study of the language provides credentials for college students or fluent speakers to then go on to become "teachers" of the language. Currently we often see fluent speakers or second-language Lakota learners in school settings pass on cultural and/or linguistic information about Lakota without effectively knowing how to get the students to speak the language.

In discussing indigenous pedagogy earlier, we referred to the mistaken assumption in schools - "The more I teach, the more you learn". We did not express the corresponding side of that assumption – "The more I teach, the less you learn". But based on research and practice in language learning, we find that a reversal of this type does apply – "The more I talk, the less you learn".

This admonition for instructors to speak less may seem a contradiction, especially as it is obvious that babies learn to speak when everyone else at home is talking. But studies of language development show that in fact babies do not begin by imitating and learning directly from others. Rather, babies first learn to make, then hear and distinguish the sounds they are making themselves before they can distinguish or pay attention to the sounds being made by others. Babies in fact first make all kinds of sounds, with all kinds of pitches and intensity, including sounds not in the local language of the family. They then begin to notice the similar sounds being made by others and drop the sounds not made in their environment.

Students learning a new language are in a very similar position and cannot adequately hold in their ears or form in their mouths the sounds and words a teacher is making in the language. That language may be Lakota and part of their valued cultural heritage, but it remains "foreign" in their throat and ears unless an adaptation of babies' playing with sounds is provided for them. If this does not happen, teachers experience the same hard lesson: "The more I talk, the less they learn."

All this presents a challenge to the Lakota language instructor. While Lakota students may honor the language, still, like practically all students in the monolingual culture of the United States, they avoid making any new sound or set of sounds (words) that are different or 'foreign' in their throat and ears. Along this line of resistance, we observed language instructors in K-12 schools, including fluent Lakota speakers, who, stymied by the lack of imitation and participation in classes, soon revert to instruction in English. Many of these lessons are interesting, lively and culturally relevant, yet Indigenous students are not learning to speak.

The Committee also observed some SGU Lakota classes and saw that the common habit of providing English translations was common. Our discussion and research suggest that this practice also may rest on an additional mistaken assumption. The assumption is that since language primarily carries meaning, translating meaning from one language (English) to the other language (Lakota), or vice versa, is legitimate and makes things easier for students. However, it appears that this assumption can undermine the way language is learned.

While meaning is certainly carried by language, we found that, like the sounds of the new language, the meaning needs to come not from translation but from the students themselves. This can be accomplished by an instructor setting up situations where students see something

happening, understand what they see, and then, like advanced babies, begin to use the sounds and words of the new language to "tell" what they see and understand.

In fact, this dynamic appears to be the one that Lakota ancestors used in developing the language in the first place. That is, the history of language shows that ancestors of every language observed the many events and differences occurring in their environment, e.g., 'running' versus 'walking, 'taking' versus 'giving,' etc., and together found sounds/words to express the meaning of their constant awareness and insights. The agreed upon words (and word order) over a long period of development became the language in question.

Although students, like each of us, are born into a society where language already carries the accepted meanings of our community, as babies (and now students) language learning only takes root when each of us first <u>notices</u> the difference between, say, 'happy' and 'sad' on others' faces, and then begins to use the sounds/words developed in our community to tell what we notice. Speaking, based on our own insight into meanings, leads to fluency; translations alone lead to a kind of cultural 'know-how' and acceptance, but they most often serve as hurdles to actually speaking.

The Committee came to the conclusion that the discovery of meaning in students' own observations and feelings can work for effective language learning in classrooms. For example, a language instructor in class might perform the actions of picking up simple pieces of wood slowly, then very quickly, knowing that students will observe the difference. The task then is to find simple and indirect ways for students to join their unspoken awareness to the sounds and words and rules used in the Lakota community to express that meaning. The instructor, without translation or without direct teaching, i.e., as just another member of the class, can use the Lakota word, words, and word order in a planned and progressive way that students can – and are expected to – begin using the words to talk to each other. Simply put, they get behind their English sounds and words and instead begin using the Lakota sounds and words to simply tell what they see and know – "Can hena oh'ankoya icu."

Lakota word order and grammar can be worked out in the class through this kind of active communication in Lakota, students telling each other what they see and know, while hearing the instructor doing it now and then. Once the students are doing some talking, the instructor's well planned and infrequent talking allows the students to pick up the Lakota syntax and grammar and self-correct their own talking by comparing their speech with other and, at times, with the instructor.

Translation, like orthography, has its place, but that place doesn't seem to be in language learning classrooms. Students need to discover meaning in their own perception and then support each other as they use the words and now the 'grammar' of Lakota to tell what they

see and know and are doing. This type of planned immersion relies on an understanding of the language learning issues discussed, as well as on a developed understanding of the difference between ‘vocabulary’ and language.

The Committee was aware that there are successful Indigenous language programs in place around the world, and particularly in Hawaii and Aotearoa (New Zealand). The Te Ataarangi program in Aotearoa has a special significance for SGU. In 1979 Dr. Katerina Te Heikoko Mataira and Ngoingoi Pewhairangi observed a quite different way of teaching language; the approach used no English or translations and no direct teaching, and the women found it especially suited to Maori cultural ways. This became the beginnings of the Te Ataarangi program which then led to a number of people speaking Maori rather than learning to talk about it. These new speakers went into communities and taught more adults to speak Maori. Te Ataarangi has been credited with teaching te reo Maori to over 30,000 learners. The remarkable revitalization of Maori language had begun in earnest.

The well-known language nests for young children followed soon after. According to a personal communication from Graham Smith, Maori leader, the driving force behind the language nests didn’t come from fluent speakers of Maori but from the adults who learned to speak Maori through Te Ataarangi. Being able to speak the language, he said, released many years of ‘shame’ from these adults, and the resulting energy and enthusiasm of self-discovery moved the second-language learners to carry language learning to the very young children. While many visitors to Aotearoa view the Köhanga Reo (Language Nests) and come back with an enthusiasm for ‘immersion’ programming, they often miss the fact that the effective language teaching with adult learners was the driving force for their success.

Although we were not aware of the 1979 Maori language teaching experience at the time, two members of our Self Study Committee (and also the late Albert White Hat) observed Caleb Gattegno, the originator of the language approach, lead a Silent Way teaching workshop in South Dakota in 1983. The experience was quite remarkable. After working with Dr. Gattegno to learn the approach and then to develop the materials for Lakota, testing was done over several years at Black Hills State University (Rosalie Little Thunder), in small groups of interested participants (Ben Black Bear, Jr.) and at South Dakota State University (Jim Green).

The resulting Lakota *Ainila* approach was presented at Indigenous Language Conferences around the United States and adopted by individual instructors at some tribal colleges. In general, though, it may be fair to say that many tribal colleges, while offering exceptional cultural information and interactions for students, have tended to stay tied to the more academic and linguistic style described above.

The urgency of the loss of Lakota speakers strongly suggests to us that an SGU focus on Nation Building needs Lakota language classes where students learn to speak the language. This will require the administration and faculty council working together to ensure that SGU language classes prioritize Lakota language proficiency assessments as well as the current cultural appreciation for the language. It also points to Lakota language instructors and fluent speakers receiving teacher training based on the human science of language learning.

Committee Reflection #4: Assessment for a Post-Colonial Education

In the earlier Committee *Reflection #2* on cultural pedagogy, we noted the lack of 'correction' that occurs between adults and children in Lakota society. Self-correction was the norm, and it remains the norm in Lakota homes today. This practice seems to us to fall into the conceptual category of formative assessment, whereas forms of "correction," depending on the intensity, often fit into categories of summative assessment. As SGU faculty today work closely with students, often knowing their families and the personal variables shaping their performance, formative assessment continues to play a key role in shaping a post-colonial Lakota education.

Summative assessment implies a 'final' judgment of one's progress in a certain area. While such judgments or grades may be temporary and part of a longer process of achievement, elders pointed out that this kind of interaction is a form of correction and is always done very indirectly in Lakota society if at all. So, too, 'praise,' a direct form of summative assessment is not at all a common practice in traditional Lakota homes. The summative assessment approach of 'praise,' even when intended as motivation, can devalue effort with its implicit meaning – "I sure didn't think you could do it. Somehow you did. Wow!" Praising a Lakota student from a traditional home tends to be counterproductive and undercuts the self-reliance and ongoing self-correction promoted at home.

Summative assessment aims to give a report on intermediate or final progress toward achieving a goal or competency. If traditional Lakota culture prefers ongoing and indirect formative assessment, part of the reason is that, as with most indigenous societies, a potential crisis of survival was always on the horizon. Survival was the existential version of a final summative assessment. If or when the threat to survival showed itself, individuals needed to trust themselves and make judgments that would allow them (and others) to survive. Ongoing "permissive" patterns of child-raising and Wolakota social interaction displaced the frequent summative assessments typical of agricultural and industrial societies in favor of promoting responsible tribal members who would take accountability for and learn to trust their own learning and judgments.

Authentic assessment as developed in schools today may be one way to adapt Indigenous values to formal education settings. Authentic assessment provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate behaviors and performance in "real-life" and applied situations. Authentic assessment tools try to measure the knowledge and abilities expected by professionals in the students' respective fields, while doing it in a manner that fits Indigenous ways and eliminates the usual hierarchical aspect of an assessment.

When we looked up the English word *assessment*, we found that it comes from the Latin *assidere*, which means "to sit beside." This meaning fits well with the fundamental Indigenous principle in our *Reflections*, i.e., the principle and pedagogy that would have us purposely and consistently relate students to learning rather than directly to a teacher. This approach or Indigenous pedagogy removes a hierarchical status for teachers, displaces the priority on summative assessment and allows an ongoing formative assessment that has teachers "sitting beside" rather than directing from the front.

We have heard that some Maori universities that use achievement-based performance to assess students' learning are iallowng students to repeat tests and other summative achievement or competency markers as many times as needed, for as long as they choose until successful or they choose to move on. While this approach has its difficulties and challenges, and would be resisted by government and accreditation authorities, it is meaningful from a cultural standpoint as there is a significant difference between an institution failing a student and a student choosing whether to continue or not. As in Lakota culture, an assessment that emphasizes the importance of self-reflection looks to develop students who are motivated, responsible, and accountable for their own learning and progress.

Finally, the Committee reflected on the significance of Nation Building for SGU and how forms of assessment shape our identity as an Indigenous university. If an ongoing and indirect 'formative' assessment in pre-colonial Lakota society looked to promote individual initiative and innovation along with self-reliance in order to survive, it's clear that survival remains a primary concern for the Lakota Oyate today. Today, academic competencies may lead to skills and credentials that assist economic survival for some individuals and families; but along with this horizontal and more individualistic approach, there is the vertical or spiritual logic of Nation Building where survival has a wider vision that includes healing and maintaining human dignity during (and after) the man-made crises of colonialism, as well as strengthening preparedness for similar situations. We take a closer look at integrating this spiritual or vertical aspect of Nation Building in the *Summary Reflection* at the end of the Self Study.

***Committee Reflection #5*: Faculty Qualifications for a Post-Colonial Education**

In the Introduction to Educational Programming section above, we reflected briefly on standard accreditation agency criteria which tend to convey the implicit message to tribal colleges – "Be more like us!" This message comes across in several places, including the emphasis on academic degrees as the simple and primary source for qualifying faculty to teach tribal students.

In SGU's last interaction with the standard accreditation agency, the college chose to follow the words of an accomplished Indigenous lawyer and entrepreneur (Lance Morgan) who advises Indigenous Nations to take the path of "preemption" rather than to look or ask for an "exemption" when interacting with various authorities. The college did this by writing a *Tested Experience Narrative* for faculty qualifications that includes a section titled "SGU and Tribal Sovereignty". (cf. Appendices: Faculty *Tested Experience Narrative and Approval Form*.)

The Tested Experience section on tribal sovereignty notes that "The Rosebud Sioux Tribal Government has the power and duty to exercise its inherent authority over formal education on the Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation, by enacting and implementing a tribal education code applicable to local schools, other educational institutions, and chartered educational programs and chartered schools." Our narrative goes on to state that the tribal Education Code stresses the need for all faculty to have an understanding of Lakota culture, government, economics, language and environment. Following the SGU *Tested Experience Narrative* there is a *Tested Experience Approval Form* where departments consider cultural knowledge and experience as accepted and recommended areas for faculty qualifications. Accordingly, we advise SGU departments to carefully consider this requirement when hiring faculty and to look to Lakota Studies and the Institute for Indigenous Teaching (IIT) for professional development assistance as needed.

To help expand this awareness of an indigenous pedagogy among SGU departments and faculty, IIT and Lakota Studies are doing professional development with faculty to better focus the Indigenous pedagogy of *subordinating teaching to learning*. Following is an exciting example of a professional development session closely focused on exploring a pedagogy in line with pre-colonial and current Lakota learning approaches.

Hole in the Wall Experiments

To more closely examine an indigenous pedagogy as SGU transitions into the future, the Self Study Committee looked to the *Hole in the Wall* experiments, a series of educational interactions with children in rural areas of the world. These experiments gave us confidence that an Indigenous pedagogy, grounded on pre-colonial Lakota values, can be successfully adapted to meet student needs today.

Briefly, the *Hole in the Wall* experiments focused on the response of children who found a computer built into a wall in their rural community. In every case the children began

engaging and exploring the computer's function and uses. Their spontaneous interactions were filmed, and the videos showed the different age groups figuring out together how to browse the Internet.

The experiments were repeated in several areas of the world where formal schooling and direct teaching were not yet a dominant reality for children. In each case, children taught themselves how to browse and search on the Internet. Then a further step was taken in the experiment: When experimenters came to take the computer out of the villages, and when, as expected, the children resisted, the researchers asked children if they would be willing to explore a certain question or topic in exchange for not taking the computer out of their villages. This ongoing experiment was repeated, with additional questions being posed to the children each time. In turn, the children found they needed to learn English on their own and also to learn the background information needed to pursue the "big" questions they were asked to explore.

The experiments continued to show the children's remarkable learning, all without direct teaching, and the "big" questions advanced all the way into the area of DNA science and other complex topics. The experiments were then moved to more industrial areas, including a city in England. Here small groups of students explored information in small groups of four, did presentations on their findings and, for the sake of the experiment, were then given standardized tests to assess their learning. Their scores on the tests were shown to be equal to the test scores of a nearby private school well known for its high performance and qualified teachers.

Our Self Study Committee repeated a version of the *Hole in the Wall* experiment with SGU faculty. We did this in an attempt to both familiarize them with the approach and to test whether it might be used on college students or adults. Our approach copied the latest development in the *Hole in the Wall* experiments, a development that, much like hunter-gatherer societies, has students in small groups as independent and engaged learners. These latest groups are called Self Organizing Learning Environments (S.O.L.E.) and consist of groups of four students and a computer. We asked faculty to form themselves in SOLEs and to explore the "big" question – *What is the current state of Finnish education?* – that they knew little or nothing about. After twenty (20) minutes online, they were then asked to present their understanding of the topic.

The faculty were extremely active and lively in their small groups. Some used their cell phones to search, while others stayed on their laptops. There was constant discussion and sharing and correction going on in the groups for the twenty minutes, and their short presentations showed that their learning and critical thinking on the topic was much greater than might have been delivered directly by an instructor. The faculty expressed their

feelings of elation coming from their experience as independent learners, and Indigenous faculty members in particular identified the approach as consistent with the 'pedagogy' they experienced as children. (cf. Appendices: Faculty Professional Development *Hole in the Wall* Experiment.)

The assessment of the Self Organizing Learning Environment (S.O.L.E.) experience for faculty indicated that its pedagogy of subordinating teaching to learning highlights that there are viable ways to adapt Lakota pre-colonial education for today. Our Committee member's exposure to the 5Es (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate and Evaluate) further endorsed this lively reality. As the university moves to develop an indigenous pedagogy in contemporary forms, SGU will be implementing the President's vision for the future and pursuing the radical self-determination of creating a post-colonial education for its students.

COVID-19 Pandemic

SGU's increased focus on adapting the indigenous pedagogy of subordinating teaching to learning was affected when the COVID-19 pandemic reached the United States. While the pandemic has slowed further faculty experiments and group learning sessions, the pandemic has also provided an opportunity to raise further questions about the current and conventional form of education. So the SGU Provost has questioned whether the changes in education caused by the pandemic are in fact a temporary exception that will be reversed, and he encourages us to consider the current changes in higher education as opening a door for Indigenous education to redefine and restructure education as directed by President Bordeaux.

Similarly, many faculty around the world appear to be struggling to more or less duplicate their in-person classroom sessions by transferring lessons and lectures online; but there are also discussions in higher education circles that point to a revised or even a new form of education being developed through this pandemic experience. Along this line, we see that current studies during the COVID-19 pandemic show, contrary to conventional expectations, that students working at home without direct teaching have not fallen behind in their reading scores. The Indigenous principles of education are very much in line with the possible changes being discussed for education as a result of the pandemic. The unlimited resources available through the Internet loom large as a primary field for the Lakota learning value of relating students directly to learning rather than to a teacher.

Perhaps similar to African and other nations that have, as it were, jumped over the industrial age and embraced the digital age of communication, SGU's plans to move ahead and employ its own Indigenous pre-colonial values – a lack of 'correction' or 'praise,' assessing by "sitting beside," relating students to learning rather than to a 'teacher' – point to a post-colonial education for its tribal students and a potential leadership role for Indigenous colleges and universities in post-pandemic higher education.

FINAL SUMMARY REFLECTION

The main sections of this Self Study provided information on SGU's past and present history. The five *Committee Reflections* in the Self Study focused more directly on SGU President Bordeaux's directive to move into the next 50 years in an innovative and creative way. This *Summary Reflection* reviews and highlights the vision and key steps the University is taking to move into the challenging future.

The *Committee Reflections* began by identifying the persistent Lakota learning values that enabled the tribe to move through centuries of change and to adapt quickly to the new learning environment of the Plains (*Committee Reflection #1*). As powerful relationships were developed with the Horse and Buffalo Nations, the tribe lived by these key learning values and a healthy Lakota Nation prospered.*

Elders pointed out that these same Lakota learning values persist in today's families. The invitation, then, has been to identify and shape the persistent Lakota learning values into an Indigenous way of teaching and learning for today. But it became clear from the beginning that a Lakota pedagogy is not primarily about teaching more Lakota history and culture courses. Lakota learning values are concerned with *how* teaching and learning take place rather than with *what* is being taught. In this way, a Lakota Indigenous pedagogy applies to all fields of study and all departments at the University.

As discussed in *Committee Reflection #2*, an Indigenous method based on persistent Lakota learning values clearly subordinates teaching to learning. This approach contrasts with conventional Western education and may explain much of the conflict experienced by tribal students in the U.S. school system. The standard schooling approach prioritizes teaching over learning and typically operates with the (unquestioned) ideal: "The more I teach, the more you learn". In contrast, an Indigenous Lakota education will have SGU students doing direct exploratory learning designed to promote the critical skills needed in today's complex world.

Still, the notion of relating students directly to learning rather than primarily to an instructor can be very challenging to appreciate. As suggested, this difficulty comes from the fact that most of us spent years in colonial schooling where mastery of subject matter, directed by a teacher, was the primary mode of operation. But, while college faculty may have "successfully" navigated the colonial system, the great majority of tribal students do not. As a tribal college, it is our responsibility to better understand the colonial educational system and move to a more

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* See the four-minute video of an Elder telling how the Buffalo adopted the Lakota as a younger brother: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33zB7JhKkpg&spfreload=10.

Indigenous and Lakota style of education on our campus. In time, too, these changes should be extended to the K-12 system.

As noted in *Committee Reflection #5*, the Self Study Committee designed introductory training with SGU faculty to promote this shift of focus in schooling. In professional development sessions we presented the *Hole in the Wall* experiment, an international project demonstrating remarkable learning by young students working together, via the Internet, without direct instruction by a teacher. As we all know, the Internet has unlimited academic content, available in seconds, and in our experiment with SGU faculty we had them form their own small groups to directly focus on active learning and exploring. The result generated a great deal of excitement, with Indigenous faculty expressing their feelings that this type of ‘schooling’ was much more consistent with their own family experience.

Another strong example of this shift from teaching to learning came in *Committee Reflection #3*. This section focused on the need for a serious redesign of current Lakota language teaching. The discussion recommended moving forward with the Indigenous *Ainila* language learning approach. The conventional language teaching approach relies on a linguistic study of the language and assumes this type of academic learning provides a transition for students to begin speaking the language. This assumption has been shown to be seriously mistaken, and Lakota language loss has greatly increased rather than being reduced. The Lakota *Ainila* approach, coming from the same ingenious source that initiated the *Te Ataarangi* approach and the revitalization of Maori, is based directly on how language learning works and quickly opens a pathway for students to relate to the language rather than to a teacher. This approach has proven to enable interested students to begin a genuine form of Lakota fluency.

The Committee’s vision for educating tribal students contrasts as well with culturally responsive interventions in tribal education that have been attempted during the last 40-50 years. Culturally responsive approaches in education have attempted to use cultural resources to reinforce resiliency and make schooling more amenable to Indigenous students; but typically the cultural resources and cultural content have been imported into mainstream educational models, models that, as pointed out, conflict with the learning values found in Lakota families and homes. The Committee’s recommended Indigenous Lakota approach, in contrast, does not attempt to place ‘exceptions’ within the conventional model of education but instead looks to a post-colonial model of education guided by Lakota learning values that have endured from pre-European contact to the present day.

Healing and Creativity

An earlier example of a small project based on actual Lakota cultural practices took place in the early 2000s. This Health and Wellness project was called *Naġi Kicopi*, *Calling the Spirit*, and, like our Self Study, *Naġi Kicopi* consulted tribal elders and spiritual leaders in its planning and

implementation. Dr. Gerald Mohatt, University of Alaska (and a former SGU administrator), led the project research; Richard Moves Camp, a consultant on this SGU Self Study, was a consultant and spiritual leader for the project.

As in the *Naġi Kicopi* project, we were helped by elders who offered their perspective on healing from forced assimilation and the colonialism that came with it. Their approach to this terrible topic centered on their experience of the boarding schools. Once again, we learned a lot.

Elders most helpful for our task reflected on the 'horizontal' logic that prevailed in boarding school. Horizontal logic, one elder said, was the main message in boarding school: "Do all these things – dress like us, speak English, cut your hair, organize your day by the clock, pay attention in class to teachers – and at the end you will be successful and treated in society like one of us."

Many students didn't find that logic very compelling, but many who did, often because of their family's encouragement, found their way to graduation. Yet many who adopted the horizontal logic, with its change in language, appearance and management of time, found that once off the reservation, away from the cultural understanding of life among the Oyate, they were not treated at all as promised. Instead, they experienced the deep racism and bias that has no care for a person's character or ability or credentials. This experience of racism in society was different from the physical or sexual abuse some endured in the boarding schools, yet it also had a life-changing effect on many.

Elders who had observed the horizontal logic in boarding school and then experienced the racism and prejudice in larger society offered their reflections for today. One commented that often the more militant responses to conflict over the past fifty (50) years have led to a reversing of the horizontal logic of the boarding schools. That is, in place of the boarding school mantra – 'Be like us and you will be successful,' some tribal members adopted this logic in reverse – 'Look and act more like what Indians are supposed to look and act like – long hair, beadwork, feathers, warrior-like – and you will be a successful Indian'. Some elders commented that this was still a form of 'horizontal logic' and did not address the deeper question of Lakota identity for today: "…you can't live forever off the deeds of Sitting Bull or Crazy Horse. You can't wear their eagle feathers, freeload off their legends. You have to make your own legends now. It isn't easy."

In contrast to horizontal logic, vertical logic was described as an identity that a person inherits and is born with. This identity is something he or she has to come to terms with and affirm as they grow in a multi-cultural society. Such a discussion of identity parallels research on whether Indigenous identity is 'ascribed' (given) or 'achieved' (earned). In many Native communities this question of identity being 'given' or 'earned' is implied in the distinctions between "full blood" and "non-full blood" individuals and tiospaye (extended families). Speaking Lakota has

been a significant marker of an ascribed Lakota identity, but the distinction of full blood Lakota as having their identity *ascribed* by birth, while non-full bloods have to *achieve* their identity, may be losing some of its force with the rapid loss of Lakota speakers across the reservation. Similarly, there are studies that show 'ritual tiospaye' have formed on the reservation – groups of individuals, unrelated by family, whether 'mixed' or 'half' or 'full,' who find their Lakota identity in learning about and practicing traditional ceremonies.

Our committee very much appreciated the elders' response to the question of Lakota identity as the need for a vertical or spiritual logic to counter a strictly horizontal logic of ordinary cause and effect. The central element in SGU's proposed educational model links healing with creativity based on the belief that the Lakota way of relating students to learning and exploration releases a spirit of confidence and understanding that brings healing and a sense of Lakota and personal identity.

The Lakota educational model, along with its essential priority on effective Lakota language learning, includes a central focus on stories, as stories mirror both indirect teaching and the healing that traditionally moves from above downward. To promote this approach the Committee designed a Participative Research grant for interested faculty to explore the use of traditional and current Indigenous stories to help students recognize and then resist oppressive forces shaping their lives and communities.

As with elders who typically tell stories rather than present direct teaching, the stories used in the classroom research purposely formed a larger story, a story that told the loss of a special place – a Golden Age, a Garden, Pre-colonial life, Childhood – and went on to tell how we are all now involved in a perilous journey to recover the secret of life and that special place. The research question for participating faculty asked: Might situating racism and much else within this larger story of loss and recovery provide students an opportunity to sense their role primarily as actors rather than as victims? (cf. *Appendix*: Faculty *Participative Research with Indigenous Stories.*)

Lakota Sovereignty

Adapting a pre-colonial Lakota teaching approach for a post-colonial (and post-pandemic) higher education will require serious effort and commitment. To help promote this effort and commitment, the Self Study Committee looked to the notion of Lakota *sovereignty*. Lakota sovereignty has always been a primary value for the college, and we believe it can help inspire the serious effort required to move ahead in ways recommended here.

The Tribal College Act of 1968 resulted from discussions, protests and debates on American Indian and Alaska Native sovereignty. Over the years, this legislative action has led to thirty-plus Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU), each choosing their own administrative leadership and boards of directors, all joined together in the American Indian Higher Education Consortium

(AIHEC). At the same time, however, TCUs have been required to follow the accountability standards set by regional and state accreditation agencies in order to receive needed funding.

Here, the reader may recall our earlier discussion on resistance to standard accreditation's implicitly pressuring tribal colleges to – "Be more like us!" * This need to adhere to the educational standards of the non-indigenous accrediting agencies has been questioned by tribal colleges as compromising and impinging on tribal sovereignty. SGU President Lionel Bordeaux has taken the lead in much of this questioning, and he has recently initiated a discussion with administrators from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the main accrediting agency for SGU. His interaction with HLC leaders has opened up a mutually cooperative relationship, a relationship somewhat like the original treaties with the United States government were intended to be.

The Self Study Committee was quick to note that President Bordeaux's interaction with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) resembles a path of *educational sovereignty* rather than the moe common *political sovereignty* which is guided by legal and historical precedents and favors the federal government and its affiliates. In a relationship of mutual respect with the accrediting agency, discussions of educational sovereignty can be guided by Wolakota, the central value by which the Oyate (Nation) came to live among the several Lakota bands in peace and harmony, and later, where possible, with White settlers. President Bordeaux follows Chief Spotted Tail in choosing to take the path of Wolakota in his discussions with the Higher Learning Commission.*

Negotiating Educational Sovereignty

Now that the President has opened a path of mutual respect with the accrediting agency, a strategy is being developed to introduce the accrediting agency to the significant role the proposed Lakota educational model will play in the lives of tribal students. While the Indigenous education model is based on pre-European Lakota learning values, the model itself is shaped for contemporary higher education. This shaping of the Indigenous model for contemporary

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* **Early Lakota Song**:
"Tunkaṡilayapi heya keyapi: Lakota ki waṡicu po! heya keyapi,
tka tamunke ṡni. Lakota ki tewaḣila yelo epe ca wawowakiye."

("The U.S. President has said, 'You Lakota, be white men now,' they say.
But I can't accept that. I cherish my Lakota ways. I continue helping, *giving away as our custom*).")

* To be sure, the attempt to follow the values of Wolakota in negotiations and treaties over the years also included a tenacious stance of resistance – the same combination of resistance and peaceful negotiations demonstrated by the Water Protectors at Standing Rock and in Lakota lives every day.

education will allow the accrediting agency to be invited to support (or partner with) SGU to 'test' a version of the model.

The heightened sensibility to White supremacy in the United States also may work to make a public partnership with a tribal university an inviting opportunity for the mainstream accrediting agency. Additionally, the post-pandemic environment is expected to bring a number of changes to higher education, and this may also strengthen an invitation to HLC to join SGU in an innovative research experiment to meet the new situation of higher education in the post-pandemic world of higher education.

Once on an innovative higher education pathway, particularly one supported by or in partnership with HLC, the topic of educational sovereignty and a distinct accreditation for SGU (and other tribal colleges who may choose to follow a similar path) may be proposed. A discussion of a distinct accreditation with the accrediting agency for this area of the United States could then take place before the next renewal of SGU's standard accreditation.

The official Education Department of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe can offer its political identity in support of SGU educational sovereignty. And the supporting documents of UNDRIP and other international organizations need to be presented in discussions with the accrediting agency. Perhaps, too, following the Teacher Education College at the University of Hawaii-Hilo, it could be proposed to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) that they accept the WINHEC accreditation process in place of their own standard accrediting process.

Still, the Committee feels the primary argument should come from an SGU Indigenous educational model itself. This model will show that pre-European educational values and practices persist in Lakota families today and that these values can be creatively adapted to provide a post-colonial, post-pandemic Indigenous education for students at SGU.

The SGU Self Study Committee now looks forward to the (online) visit by the WINHEC accreditation team and to possible further discussion of educational sovereignty with the international WINHEC community.