Generational Resilience: Strategies for Reproducing Native Student Success
Pathways Conference 2010
Justin Guillory
Northwest Indian College
Workshop Objectives

• Provide background and overview of dissertation on Native student success
• Discuss the definitions of Resiliency
• Discuss Five R’s Model of Generational Resilience
• To develop strategies for institutions and tribal communities to work together to promote Native student success.
Question asked by William Tierney in 1991

Native American recruitment and retention is not an issue that will evaporate or be solved overnight. THIS IS A GENERATIONAL ISSUE, and we need to think about it in this manner.

How well equipped are we to deal not only with our Indian students today, but also with Native American students who are now in the first grade?
Brief overview on dissertation of Native American Success

• Paradigm shift in the scholarship surrounding N.A. students from a deficit perspective to success/persistent factors
Tribal Community

Leadership skills

Strong identity

Culture

Language

Humor

Family

Education

Relationship to Land/Water

Indigenous Knowledge/Teachings

Spirituality

Support system
Examples of persistence factors found in the literature:

– Strong family support
– Positive interactions with mentors
– Clear educational goals
– Institutional support
– Ability to function biculturally
– Desire to “give back” to tribal community
Population

• 3 generations; 12 total participants
  – Group One: Recent Graduates (RG)
  – Group Two: Experienced Workers (EW)
  – Group Three: Respected Elders (RE)

• All participants had at least a bachelor’s degree and were enrolled members of federally recognized tribes.

• Participants represented nine different tribes from five different states.
## Participant Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Year graduated with Bachelors</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recent Grad’s</td>
<td>Three were between 23-30 years old; one was between 30-40 years old</td>
<td>Between 2002-2005</td>
<td>2 males; 2 females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced Workers</td>
<td>All between 30-40 years old</td>
<td>Between 1992-1994</td>
<td>2 males; 2 females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respected Elders</td>
<td>All were 55 years or older</td>
<td>Between 1961-1984</td>
<td>2 males; 2 females</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examined Educational Pathway in 5 Stages

1. K-12 experience
2. Transition to college
3. College life experience
4. Transition after college
5. Defining giving back
Overarching Themes

Persistence Factors:
1. Positive family influences and expectations
2. Resilience, ability to overcome adversity

Barriers:
1. Academic difficulties
2. Encountering racism
Parents level of education

Highest level of education:
- Graduate dgr.
- 4-year dgr.
- 2-year dgr.
- Some college/ No dgr.
- No college ed.
- HS Diploma
- No HS Diploma or GED

Total:
- RG's
- EW's
- RE's
Resilience

• Narratives suggested that resilience is being passed down from generation to generation.
Group Activity #1

• Identify someone in your educational experience who was a role model or contributed to your success.

• List one or two positive characteristics of this person and discuss how this person impacted your life trajectory.
Definition of Resilience

Masten, Best, and Garmezy (1990) defined resiliency in three ways:

1) good outcomes despite adversity
2) sustained competence under stress
3) recovery from trauma
Resilience: What we have learned

- Resilience is a capacity all youth have for healthy development and successful learning.
- Certain personal strengths are associated with healthy development and successful learning.
- Certain characteristics of families, schools, and communities are associated with the development of personal strengths and, in turn, healthy development and successful learning.
- Changing the life trajectories of children and youth from risk to resilience starts with changing the beliefs of the adults in their families, schools, and communities.

(Bernard, 2004)
Resiliency: Personal Strengths

1. Social Competence
   • interpersonal communication, flexibility, empathy

2. Problem Solving
   • ability to find alternative solutions to challenges

3. Autonomy
   • Self-awareness, ability to act independently

4. Sense of Purpose
   • sense of meaning, achievement motivation, hopefulness

(Werner and Smith, 1992)
Characteristics of Schools

1. Caring Relationships
2. High Expectations
3. Opportunities for Participation and Contribution
5 R’s Model of Generational Resilience

- Relationships
- Relevance
- Reciprocity
- Reproduction
- Reframing
Reciprocity

Giving back is a strong persistence factor
– Service oriented programs
– Sense of obligation, responsibility
– Volunteers
– Internships
Reciprocity

“I think with education, when you obtain a degree, a lot of times, you go to college to get a degree and go back and help your people. I think that a lot of times, Indians are motivated to go to college because they want to go back and help their community. When I think of giving back, I think of always giving back to the community.” RG1

“We always have that mindset of always giving back to your community. If you happen to hunt and you have more, you have a lot of extra meat, you give that to families that don’t really have a lot of meat and food. If you come across money and you know some people in the community who are falling on some hard times, you’ll lend them some money so, community is always giving back and we’re always supporting each other.” RG1
Should I go back home?
Relevance

New and existing academic degree programming designed to meet the critical needs of tribal communities--education has to be *meaningful* for Native students.
Relationships

Internal
- Faculty/staff—students
- Relationships on campus
- Supporting Native student centers—peer mentoring programs are so helpful
- Recruitment/retention
- Resources

External
- Partnerships
- Tribes—higher education institutions
- Tribal Colleges and Mainstream Institutions
- Recruitment/retention
- Resources
“my brother always said you can’t push our Native youth to succeed; you have to pull for them. And it resonates well within our communities because we’re all canoe pullers. So if you understand canoe pulling, you understand how you can pull for your community wherever you’re at. Whether you’re at [K-12 level] or here at [at the college level], we know that we’re pulling on the same team. So, that’s what I would suggest to somebody that is coming out [of college]. . . just maintain that connection….you just make your community stronger that way.” EW4
“Giving back is the way that the culture is, that is the way our cultures are. Everything is a gift to you, so it’s just part of your culture, your nature that you should be able to replace it, you give that back. I was blessed with gifts, my intelligence and some of my writing abilities, and I need to use that for the community. It’s not mine just to keep it and hoard.”
Reframing

Reframing is:

- If you can’t change your circumstances then change the way you look at your circumstances.
- To think differently about and construct alternative meanings of one’s life experiences. (i.e., cognitive restructuring) (Wolin and Wolin, 1993).
- Recognizing students’ existing strengths, mirroring them back, and help students see where they are going.
## Reframing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pessimist</th>
<th>Optimist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>&quot;This is my fault.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;We're doing the best we can.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pervasive</td>
<td>&quot;My whole life is rotten.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;School is a challenge, but I love to write.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>&quot;I'm never going to graduate from college.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I'm going to make it if I keep trying.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Bernard, 2004)
Reproduction

• Based on the concepts of social capital and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977)
• Social reproduction
• Cultural capital is defined as the general cultural background, knowledge, disposition, and skills that are passed from one generation to the next.
• Acquired in two ways: from one’s family and/or through formal schooling.
A Vision for a Better Future

“...when you go away as a young person, a lot of times people are afraid to even leave the reservation, they’re afraid to leave home, leave their friends. . . I did that at a young age and I did that for good reason because my grandma said that you have to leave the reservation just like a vision quest. She said they would always send their young people away knowing that they would come back. But... in terms of them going away...they’d have to do something, go up to the highest mountain or go somewhere they weren’t familiar with and they would have to be out there for so long...a certain amount of days and they’d come back with a vision. But that also meant that if there was a man that came into their manhood and a woman into their womanhood, so that’s how it is for us young people these days. We go out to college, we leave the reservation, we leave our comfort settings and we go to the school and the university and whatever it is. It could be vocational training, just being able to leave the reservation, to leave your comfort zone and go off and learn something and to be able to bring that back... that in itself is like a vision quest because you come back with a certain knowledge and a certain direction that gives you this vision to do something good or do whatever you want with it to help your people and that’s our basic ideology is that we come back to help our people as our one community or village. We’re all related. So, that’s what I tell our young people and I hope that they do hear this because that’s something that needs to be taught. We have to have a vision and share that and bring it back to our people and try to do good with it.”
“We’re famous for giveaways . . . people don’t understand that, they think they have to give you something right away. No. You’re giving something of value…and to make them feel good that you have respect for them. Like for this elder who stood up for me and my uncles, now they have grandchildren and they have great-grandchildren, and I have a responsibility. To me, if I could give back to what they taught me, to them, I think that would be something. I would really enjoy the opportunity. And when I speak at home, I would refer to the elders and I always want the children to understand that they have to promote their identity, and see how we were raised and to have more respect and be thankful for what we have. That is so vitally important…” RE 2
Generational Resilience

- Generation
- Individual Self
- Community
- Family
What does generation resilience look like to you?

Going back to Tierney’s question,
– what can we do today to create a positive future for our Indian students of tomorrow?
Group Questions

What strategies can the group suggest that can promote and maintain generational resilience?

Identify the barriers to implementing some of your ideas on building relationships.

Now reframe them and strategize steps you can take to overcome them.
They’re Coming!
Commitment Ceremony
References


