THE EFFECT OF DECOLONIZATION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA AMERICAN HISTORY I CURRICULUM FROM THE INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE

A Dissertation
by
HEATH RYAN ROBERTSON

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
At Appalachian State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 2021
Educational Leadership Doctoral Program
Reich College of Education

THE EFFECT OF DECOLONIZATION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA AMERICAN HISTORY I CURRICULUM FROM THE INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE

A Dissertation
by
HEATH RYAN ROBERTSON
May 2021

APPROVED BY:

_____
Barbara B. Howard, Ed.D.
Chairperson, Dissertation Committee

_____
William M. Gummerson, Ph.D.
Member, Dissertation Committee

_____
Kimberly W. Money, Ed.D.
Member, Dissertation Committee

_____
Freeman Owle, M.Ed.
Member, Dissertation Committee

_____
Vachel Miller, Ed.D.
Director, Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

_____
Mike J. McKenzie, Ph.D.
Dean, Cratis D. Williams School of Graduate Studies

Abstract

THE EFFECT OF DECOLONIZATION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA AMERICAN HISTORY I CURRICULUM FROM THE INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE

Heath Ryan Robertson
A.A., Southwestern Community College
B.A., Appalachian State University
MSA., Appalachian State University
School Leadership Graduate Certificate, Appalachian State University
Ed.D., Appalachian State University

Dissertation Committee Chairperson: Dr. Barbara B. Howard

This dissertation set out to determine the impact of infusing Cherokee history, cultural topics and themes within the North Carolina American History I curriculum in an effort to investigate the decolonization of the teaching of American history to Eastern Band of Cherokee Indian students. The methodology adhered to the theories of Indigenous and Decolonizing inquiry to address and discover the answers to the following questions:

1. What is the impact of studying American History through the specific cultural lens of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians on student perception of their own culture?
2. How does this approach impact student perceptions of American history, education, history as a whole and their own way of thinking?
3. What is the impact of decolonization of the North Carolina American History I curriculum through the specific cultural lens of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians on student world view?

4. How will this impact student achievement?

Through the chosen approach, this study sought to provide cultural and historical relevance, cultural knowledge to Eastern Cherokee youth, and voice to the Eastern Cherokee Community in the education of their younger generations. Indigenous knowledge and voice emerged as two priorities. This approach to teaching American History provides several discoveries that lead to interesting answers and intriguing, yet vital, areas for future research. However, the story of Eastern Cherokee students learning American history in conjunction with their own history and stories pertaining to their own land and people using techniques and methods derived directly from their own cultural practices tell a valuable story.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this dissertation could not have been accomplished without the guidance and support of the committee chair, Dr. Barbara Howard, and Dr. Willian Gummerson. Both have been instrumental in the development of this dissertation, the research proposal, and providing the encouragement I have needed throughout the entire process. I am truly grateful for you both. I would also like to thank Dr. Kimberly Money for serving on the committee and providing feedback and suggestions. My sincerest thanks to Mr. Freeman Owl for serving on the committee and for assisting me in the development of the curriculum and the incorporation of your knowledge of Cherokee culture and history. Your support and assistance cannot be overstated or thanked enough. I would also like to thank Dr. Vachel Miller for all of your encouragement and assistance during some of the more difficult points of this process. Your encouragement and support during those times came when they were needed and appreciated the most.

I need to thank my fellow Cherokee Central Schools teachers that participated in this research through the completion of the survey, providing me with your lesson plans or just your expressions of support. I would also like to thank the Cherokee Central Schools School Board and Superintendent, Dr. Michael Murray, for giving your blessing to conduct my research. A special thank you to Mr. Catcuce Tiger for your work on translations for the final paper. Thank you to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians community, it is because of you, this research was successful.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Amy, and my two daughters, Jasmine and Lily. It was you three who sacrificed the most during this process. I love and thank you most of all. Gv-ge-yu!

Dedication

The work is dedicated to my father (A-gi-do-da), the late James Stanley Robertson, Sr.; my great grandparents, the late Ray and Edna McMillan; my grandparents (Du-da and Li-shi), Charlie and the late Deanna Dills; my wife, Amy, and my daughters, Jasmine and Lily.

My father did not live to see his sons reach the age of ten and sacrificed many hours of work and took many layoffs in order to ensure that we were cared for and didn't have to go without. Do-da, your sacrifices were not in vain. My great grandparents Ray and Edna (Popaw and Granny), you cared for me and taught me when there was no reason for you to. You taught me lessons in our short time together that I have carried with me throughout my life. You also provided me with my cultural foundation and love for my people that, though contentious at times, is undying. You also taught me the value of hard work. My grandparents, Charlie and Deanna, took the lead in raising my brothers and I after our father's passing. You also taught me many lessons that have stuck with me throughout my life, even when it didn't look like it. You both taught me that I had to earn and work for everything in this life and that that was not a bad thing. You also gave me encouragement and showed me patience when I needed them the most.

Amy, you are my rock and my motivation. You saw something in me that no other person saw, myself included. You have stuck with me when I was at my lowest and believed in me when I had nothing. This is just as much your accomplishment as mine. Jasmine and Lily, I hope that you will one day understand why I had to constantly dedicate hours and many nights reading and writing. I hope that you understand the importance of dedicating those hours to study, driving, and Zoom meetings in order to provide a life that those before you were unable to have. Mostly, I hope that you know and understand, that you are capable of achieving anything, because of the sacrifices and love of those who came before you.

Content

Introduction

My education was a lie. From the day I started school in early August 1988, until the day I researched my own history as a junior at Appalachian State University in the Fall of 2003, I was lied to repeatedly. I was taught a very skewed version of history— a version that made me believe that my Cherokee ancestors benefitted from contact with Europeans and that, had it not occurred, they would have been wiped from history. I was taught to believe that my people were savages, uncivilized, and that the only reason the Cherokee survive to this day is because of the actions of the British and the U.S. governments. These were all lies.

In my experience, there are two kinds of lies—intentional and unintentional. An intentional lie is a mistruth made with the knowledge of the purveyor that what they are saying is not true. More often than not, their intent is to pervert, misdirect or even harm the person or subject of which they speak. Unintentional lies, however, are rooted in either an intentional lie repeated without the knowledge that what is being said is not true or sheer ignorance about the matter of which they speak. Both intentional and unintentional lies, however, have the same results—they are harmful.

Ekman (2009) argues that not only do liars know they are lying and choose to do so, but that people are more willing to label an untruthful person a liar depending on how they are perceived by others. If people see the untruthful person in a favorable manner, then they are less willing to label them a liar. However, if they are viewed unfavorably by other people, they will be labeled a liar quicker and more easily (Ekman, 2009). The federal government's abysmal track record on Indian education, makes it very easy to label it as a liar. When looking at the teachers and educators that perpetuate lies unknowingly, though there is hesitance, there is still reason and cause to reject Ekman's (2009) reasoning that these individuals are not liars. Though

unintended, the perpetuation of lies and other falsehoods are destructive and do not warrant an excuse from responsibility. There is a saying, “The road to Hell is paved with good intentions.” Those well intended lies still caused damage that will take a lifetime to repair. There is no magic solution that will fix the damage.

Growing up in the 3200 Acre Tract community, a community physically disconnected from main land holdings of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) known as the Qualla Boundary, I was taught many lessons about my Cherokee heritage. Until the age of four, my great grandparents, Ray and Edna McMillan, cared for me. Though I did not live with them, they were my caretakers. Most, if not all, of my memories from these years are of them and the many lessons I learned from them. Many people would scoff at this, but it is incredible how much a child will not only remember but will vehemently hold on to from their youth. I was taught the value of hard work, respect towards my elders and an appreciation, not only for my elders, but for my Cherokee heritage.

The remainder of my upbringing would see a drastic change in what was valued and what was deemed appropriate to learn. Though my parents were young, they tried as best they could. After the untimely death of my father, the connections to my Cherokee heritage had been severely damaged. Not completely cut but hanging by threads. My mother's parents provided the bulk of my upbringing. Though non-Cherokee, they were a major part of my life and were vital to the development of my values and the appreciation I have for my heritage, on both sides of my family. They never treated me like I was beneath or inferior to them. They also taught me many lessons that I hold dearly. I do not find it coincidental that I was raised this way. In fact, it seems that my upbringing reflects the traditions of the Cherokee, though slightly altered. I was raised by my elders, very much in line with tradition. I was taught there are things I can do,

things I should do and things I ought not do. I was raised to discover what I am to do with my life on my own and that my family was my support—a practice very much in line with Cherokee tradition and customs. I was also, though probably not on purpose, taught the importance of family pride. I represent many things: myself, my families, my community and my people. Each part of my upbringing taught me these lessons. However, my time in the public education system would teach me other things. I was taught shame for what I am. Shame for how my family came into being. Shame for being Cherokee and most devastatingly, because of my mixed race, shame for not being enough Cherokee (blood quantum).

I was taught to believe that the education I would receive at a tribal school would be subpar. That I would have been two or three years behind everyone else in the state; lies. As a teacher at a tribal school, I was told not to expect much from my students because they were not used to having to do a lot of work; lies. I was told that I was too hard on my students and that my expectations were way too high; lies. I was told that my students were incapable and unwilling to put in the work for higher level courses; lies. I was told that our school (Cherokee High School) promoted and encouraged the teaching of Cherokee history to our students, but that too is a lie.

Many of the things I was taught and told throughout my education and career as a teacher, I have found also to be untrue. Many of the lies that I was taught as a child, I could almost forgive and possibly excuse because many of my teachers had been taught the same lessons and unknowingly passed them on to me. It is almost unfair to expect someone to teach what he or she does not know themselves. However, the unforgivable lies are the ones that were and continue to be promoted by the very people claiming to want to help. They are the ones that

have both the position and access to power to help, yet they continue to perpetuate the lies. This is not limited to people in the federal government, but Indigenous leaders, as well.

Where do these lies originate, and who benefits from them? Why is there a need for lies in the first place? All these are questions that deserve answers, but they are merely a small part of the story of Cherokee education. The school system on the Qualla Boundary has existed since the 1890s, and in that time, there have been many policies and rules along with generations of Cherokee students that have been both educated and "educated." There is a distinction between those students who were educated at tribal schools and those who were not.

Students that have been "educated" are students that went to school at the tribal school. EBCI students attending schools other than the tribal school, outside of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)/Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) control, are considered by many among the EBCI to have received a real education. Though it should be asked, has anyone received a real education? When it concerns American History, can you make the claim that you are indeed educated about the history of this country if you do not learn the stories of all the diverse cultures that make up America? History, even when broken down, is still complicated: it's *His-Story*, which means it is from the perspective of the one telling the story. It is the story of the United States of America, a complicated nation composed of multiple cultures and perspectives. Yet, students today are only getting part of that story. If we are to truly teach the story of America, we need to teach more than just one cultural point of view. Therefore, the richer we can make the story from more perspectives, the better view we will get of the whole story.

It is the people of America who make it great. Why do we limit ourselves and our students to just one perspective - one point of view? For Cherokee students, why do we as educators continue to keep the voices of their ancestors silent? Why do we continue to act as if

their people did not play a role in the development of this country? More importantly, if students learn better when the material they are being taught is made relevant to their lives, why do we continue to deprive them of that very relevancy? Why do we treat our students as if they are incapable of understanding the truth? Are we, as educators, afraid of the truth? Are we afraid that our students may not agree with us? Or, is it possible that with our jobs as educators, being difficult already, will be made even harder?

As educators, it is our job to teach our students and provide them with the intellectual tools to be successful and think critically. As a history teacher, I have always felt it was my job to achieve these objectives, while also first and foremost teaching them the truth (the facts and evidence). I have never felt that it was the job of educators to make students think a certain way. My job has always been to provide the facts and evidence and encourage the students to form their own opinions. Allow students to think critically about the information and then formulate *their own* opinion. With all these things in consideration, Indigenous students in an Honors American History course, in a school controlled by an Indigenous nation, located on sovereign Indigenous lands within the United States, should be taught American History not only from the traditional "American" perspective, but also through their own Indigenous nation's perspective. Thus, providing students with a wider view of a much larger picture, giving them more of the facts and evidence, more of the story and a better, more relevant foundation from which to formulate *their own* opinion.

It is also pertinent that these students be taught their own history. Talking about the actions of individuals and groups that have had a direct impact on their people, their ancestors, and their families makes the material more relevant when presented to them not only from the perspective of those who committed them, but also from the perspective of their people. It

doesn't get more relevant than seeing the names of your family members, seeing the name of the community you live in, the names you see around town and the names that adorn the memorials dedicated to, for, and by your people in the history lessons. There is a deeper, more personal level of relevance in *those* types of lessons.

Context for Research Site

Cherokee High School (CHS) is part of the Cherokee Central School System (CCS), located on the Qualla Boundary, the largest of the land holdings for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI). The school campus is located in the town of Cherokee and the school system was originally established as a government run boarding school. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) ran the school until 1990 when the EBCI was able to successfully seize operating control from the BIA. Although the ECBI took over operating control of CHS, the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) still provides important funding for the school, and CHS is therefore required to abide by BIE education policies. This makes Cherokee High School unique in that it not only must abide by the education policies of the state of North Carolina, but it also must abide by BIE policies.

As of the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, the overall number of students at Cherokee High School was 374. At the conclusion of this study, that number had increased to 384, 90% of whom are enrolled members or descendants of the EBCI. The number of certified faculty at Cherokee High School is 44. Of those 44 certified teachers, only 12 are ethnically Eastern Band of Cherokee Indian.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) findings, the racial breakdown of Cherokee is: Native American, 75.3%; White, 15.1%; African American, 0.7%; Asian, 0.5%; Some other race, 1.5% and Two or more races, 6.8%. The number of people that identify as Hispanic is

6.3% of the overall population. The breakdown of age groups in Cherokee are very similar across the board. The median age is 31.6. The percentage of the overall population under the age of 19 is 33.5%. The age group with the highest percentage is ages 15-19-year-old group, 8.9%, while the lowest is the 80-84-year-old group, 0.8%.

The average annual income in Cherokee is $27,813 (EBCI, 2018). Due to the average annual income of the population, Cherokee is considered a high poverty area. The poverty rating in 2010 was 36.7% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Eighty-three percent of the residents of Cherokee have attained at least a high school diploma (EBCI, 2018). Only 12% of the population on the Boundary completed a bachelor's degree or higher compared to the 43% of the population within North Carolina who obtained the same degree (EBCI, 2018). Enrolled members of the tribe have the privilege of being able to attend any institute of higher education they can get accepted to.

When an enrolled member graduates from high school or attains a GED, the tribe will fully fund them going to a school of their choosing as long as the person meets certain qualifications established by the EBCI Office of Education and Training (Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, 2021). If the students maintain a GPA of 2.0 or higher, they will continue to receive funding. If they do not maintain a GPA of 2.0, then they are placed on probation for one semester. If they fail out, withdraw, or quit before they receive their degree, they are required to reimburse the tribe for the full amount of their tuition. Sadly, many students either do not take advantage of this opportunity or end up having to repay the debt to the tribe due to dropping out. Historically, CHS has performed below other schools in the state of North Carolina. State testing scores have consistently ranged well below the state average, however, when compared to other schools that fall under the supervision or direction of the Bureau of Indian Education,

Cherokee High typically performs well above others. Though, these schools take tests from different states which have different curriculum standards.

Research Questions

It is due to the consideration and attention paid to the previously stated ideas and concepts that the following research questions were established for this study:

1. What is the impact of studying American History through the specific cultural lens of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians on student perception of their own culture?
2. How does this approach impact student perceptions of American history, education, history as a whole and their own way of thinking?
3. What is the impact of decolonization of the North Carolina American History I curriculum through the specific cultural lens of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians on student world view?
4. How will this impact student achievement?

In order to address and answer these questions, several steps and methods were utilized in order to gain the necessary knowledge and insights needed, to effectively and proficiently integrate Cherokee history and culture into the North Carolina American History I curriculum. Essentially decolonizing it and allowing the research participants the opportunity to learn through an Eastern Cherokee lens. This study was an exploratory study into how American history can be taught to Indigenous students by one of their own, while incorporating ideas their community feels are important. Essentially telling a multi-layered story about community voices and the impact of the curriculum in the lone Honors American History I class.

These methods included interviewing and surveying the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) community to determine how they feel about the goals of the study, what is currently being done within Cherokee schools in regards to history and culture, and what is important for students to learn about their history and culture. This pool of information was then used to develop an integrated American history course that included all North Carolina required standards, but also the ideas and concepts that the EBCI community feels their students should be taught about Cherokee history and culture.

During the implementation of the course, students were given several assessments to determine the impact the new curriculum was having on their opinions of their history, culture, worldview and achievement. Each participant was given a pre-test, post-test, journal prompts, to give them a space to share their thoughts and feelings about the course and the content, and an end of course survey. The students were given the opportunity to tell their story of how the class impacted them.

The course was a continual work in progress throughout its implementation. The initial steps that were taken to develop the course in its new form involved extensive research. A foundation had been laid previously through the teaching of a Cherokee history unit in the years prior to the study. However, in order to fully integrate Cherokee history into the full curriculum, more information and historical details were needed. The driving force behind all integration of information was the question: “What were the Cherokee doing during this time?” This question was asked during every major event and era in American history.

Once this question was answered, anticipating potential questions drove the search for more information and details. The course was constantly changing because new and unanticipated questions would emerge during the lessons and answers were expected. The

search for those answers proved to be difficult, yet rewarding when achieved. The search for those answers became a driving force for the course itself. No one individual can know everything about any one subject, Cherokee history and culture is no different. Taking the first steps and simply asking the questions, opening up books and speaking to elders was the most difficult, yet rewarding part of the curriculum development. Asking the questions and listening to the answers, or searching for the answers is a continual process.

The study consisted of eight students in the only Honors American History I course at Cherokee High School (CHS) during the fall semester of 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Cherokee High School started the school year with 100% remote instruction. This was to be a temporary arrangement, but ended up being permanent for the fall semester. The course was offered completely online, which limited the types of instruction that could be realistically conducted, yet none the less, yielded noteworthy results.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Foundation

In the southwestern mountains of Western North Carolina, there sits a unique community. This community is unique because of its longevity and its close relationship with its location, as well as its cultural makeup. The community I had the privilege of being born and raised. This community can trace its origins to before Rome and Greece. The Cherokee people have occupied what now makes up the Qualla Boundary for thousands of years. The Qualla Boundary is one of the last remnants of land possessed by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI).

Eastern Cherokee Education

The EBCI are the descendants of the Cherokee people that resisted removal to what is now Oklahoma during the infamous Trail of Tears. The EBCI also manages, in conjunction with the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), a school system. This school system has a long and troubled history, mainly due to its long-standing relationship with the federal government.

Despite the ECBI having majority control over the school system, there are several restrictions. These restrictions are in place by the BIE in order to dictate the type of education that EBCI students receive. Along with their own restrictions, the BIE also requires that the Cherokee Central School system follow North Carolina State standards. This includes the requirements for state testing. Some argue that this makes many things easier for the school system and since the school system receives a majority of its funding through federal grants, this should be acceptable. However, as with many things in this world, there is much more to the story. If the school system is required to follow federal and state requirements and mandates, what say does the EBCI have in the education of their own children?

The truth is, the EBCI has little say in the education of EBCI students. The school system began as a Government-run boarding school. The goal, like other government-run Indigenous schools, was to "Kill the Indian, save the man!" (Yu, 2009). Children were forced to attend, often against the wishes of their parents. Once on the school grounds, these students were stripped of their tribal heritage, language and identities. They were taught how to be productive *Americans*, or how to act white. While being harshly punished for not following the rules, speaking their native language was the worst offense. Their mouths would be washed out with soap or they would be forced to chew it (soap), which would be the best-case scenario (Lajimodiere, 2016). Often, they would be brutally beaten for speaking Cherokee or for eating traditional foods, such as ramps (a small, very powerful smelling onion found throughout the mountains of the area).

Currently, the Cherokee Central School system is allowed to teach Cherokee students the Cherokee language, but they have certain requirements that must be followed in order to do it. Activities in pre-kindergarten through high school are dictated by hefty compliance regulations. Regulations are set by the BIE and, if not met, impact language education funding. While the state mandates do not expressly prohibit teaching Cherokee history, having to follow explicit state curriculum standards makes teaching Cherokee history virtually impossible because of the emphasis on state testing for determining, not only student achievement, but teacher effectiveness. This is true for not only curriculum standards in North Carolina, but many other states as well. A report by the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) published in 2019, concluded at least "eighty-seven (87) percent of state history standards do not mention Native American history after 1900 and twenty-seven (27) states make no mention of a single Native American in their K-12 curriculum" (NCAI, 2019, p. 8). Here is

where the true problem lies and the real problematic questions arise. Why is there no Cherokee voice in the curriculum decisions in the Cherokee Central school system? Where is the acknowledgement of Cherokee beliefs? Why is the very entity that attempted to eradicate the Cherokee language and culture still the primary decision maker for what is taught and how it is taught today?

Cherokee Central Schools are not alone when it comes to this problem. There are many Indigenous schools throughout the United States that have this problem. If they are able to teach their culture or language, they can only do so if they adhere to the educational mandates instituted by the BIE and the federal government. These mandates ignore and denigrate the history and culture of the Indigenous People. John Hopkins has described the process that created these mandates as "a deliberate attempt by the federal government to create 'its national self-image as an exceptional, divinely ordained democracy by juxtaposing its civilization against its assumptions of an Indigenous primitive (Carter & Vavrus, 2018, p. 20, as cited in Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). This is why the use of an Indigenous and Decolonizing theoretical framework is important.

Indigenous Theory takes the characteristics of any Indigenous group of people and applies them to research and knowledge. This theory is also group-specific, which means that it recognizes the individuality of the various groups of Indigenous people throughout the world. In this work, an EBCI theoretical framework will be applied. However, the group-specific nature of Indigenous Theory does not mean that there are no commonalities among Indigenous peoples or concepts. There are, but they must be applied and viewed in a unique way based on the cultural beliefs and teachings of the individual groups.

Foundations of Indigenous and Decolonizing Theory

Critical Theory

Indigenous and Decolonizing Theory has its foundations in the traditions and cultures of every current Indigenous community and group of people around the world. From the Eastern Cherokee in Western North Carolina to the Maori of New Zealand, every Indigenous group of people has a claim and a role in the foundations of Indigenous Theory. Academically speaking, Indigenous and Decolonizing Theory has a strong foundational connection to Critical Theory. Critical theory has allowed the existence of Indigenous and Decolonizing Theory by allowing the inclusion of voice, representation and the acknowledgment of multiple truths (Kovach, 2009).

Kovach (2009) has a great deal to say about the impact of Critical Theory on the formation and foundations of Indigenous Theory. She states that when Indigenous Theory is combined with decolonization, the foundations within Critical Theory really shine through. Decolonization indicates how colonization impacts or reflects the power being held over groups through colonization and attempts to change that dynamic. In relation to power, Kovach (2009) believes "knowledge is power" (p.53). Critical Theory helps to expose power and who wields it, as well as, creates the opening for the recognition of multiple truths. This grants Indigenous and Decolonizing Theory, through Indigenous voices and knowledge, an opportunity to be acknowledged and valued by the academic world as one of those multiple truths.

The importance of Critical Theory for opening up the academic mind for Indigenous Theory cannot be overstated. Critical Theory, through its analysis of race, gender and class has opened up the possibility for the analysis of power dynamics of who gets to decide what

knowledge is considered truthful and who decides what is social justice. All of these concepts and products have led to the opening of Indigenous Theory and Indigenous knowledge to academia, all through its connections to Critical Theory (Kovach, 2009).

Kovach (2009) throughout her writings acknowledges the thoughts and writings of Graham Smith, a Maori Indigenous theorist and scholar. When defining Indigenous theoretical characteristics, Smith states that, Indigenous Theory is critical in its analysis of society and focused on change (Kovach, 2009). Indigenous theory analyzes how colonization and governments have impacted the practices and thinking of Indigenous groups and works to reverse these effects by using traditional teachings and ways of thinking. Thus, Indigenous theory utilizes two defining characteristics of Critical Theory (Crotty, 1998). Smith's focus on change is a ray of positivity. It gives hope to Indigenous Theory that pairing Decolonizing Theory with a solid Critical Theory foundation with structural change, and through small successes, there can be an avoidance of a "purist tendency towards an all-or-nothing approach to social transformation" (Kovach, 2009, p. 80). Hope for change is also one of the biggest foundational contributions that Critical Theory offers Indigenous and Decolonization Theory.

Indigenous and Decolonizing Theory, which has been influenced heavily by Critical Theory, has allowed Indigenous scholars to identify and expose the historical wrongs that have been perpetrated against Indigenous people, as well as the exploitive actions of many individuals and entities against Indigenous people; this includes educational institutions (Kovach, 2009; Madden, 2015). An Indigenous theoretical framework should move those using it to action in the form of reclaiming Indigenous knowledge and customs, as well as instituting their use. Madden (2015) also states that evidence of Critical Theory is shown when Indigenous names, stories, and plants (medicine and food) are used rather than the non-Indigenous or

modern names; thus, making Indigenous knowledge or perspectives more accessible. Decolonization of educational practices and educational institutions within Indigenous communities and Indigenous community government structures is demonstrated when traditional names, spaces, practices and language are used rather than the English or Western societal equivalents.

Critical Theory is also reflected in Critical Indigenous Pedagogy (CIP). CIP is used in the educational setting; it focuses on several things. One focus is decolonization and transformation, which values Indigenous people, their knowledge, languages, cultures and land (Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). Decolonization is the elimination of modern and or Western societal control and influence over groups of people that were subject to invasion and conquest by Western European, Canadian and or American governments. Transformation is actively making changes to eliminate this control and or influence wherever it is found. Critical Theory's influence on CIP is that these values are incorporated in the curriculum of Indigenous school systems to promote an awakening in the students of that school system. The hope is for students to embrace their cultural roots, eventually challenging and reversing the federal government's assimilation/boarding school policies of the late 1800s, early and mid-1900s (Carney, 2005; Carter & Vavrus, 2018; Graham, 2012).

Post-Structural Theory

The impact of post-structural theory is very evident. Post-structuralism questions emancipation, reason, science and progress, and is vocal in regards to social inequality. By paying particular attention to heterogeneous and non-egalitarian rule and emphasizing practice plurality, it is possible to insist that reality is contingent upon and open to changes and

challenges (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) also state that politics plays a key role in social arrangements that form or create what is taken for granted.

In Indigenous and decolonizing theoretical frameworks this type of thinking appears not in academic knowledge, but in the knowledge of the Indigenous group that is the focus of the study. It rejects what is accepted as common knowledge and raises the question, "Why is our knowledge not worth knowing?" What makes knowledge of the original occupants of the Americas invalid? What makes the knowledge of those that came to the Americas, and learned to survive, better than that of the Indigenous occupants (Edwards, 2019)? These are the types of questions that are raised when using an Indigenous and decolonizing framework. Post-structuralism also brings about questions in educational Indigenous and decolonizing frameworks that catapults the issue of power and who wields it to the forefront. Who has the power, what are the goals of those that have the power and what are they trying to prevent those without power from achieving (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016)?

Post-structuralism also focuses on language, as does Indigenous and Decolonizing frameworks. In post-structuralism, words and language have meanings and sub-meanings. The use of words and language can intentionally have a level of deception and create confusion. Indigenous languages have meanings that cannot always be translated directly, often deeper than what can be expressed in another language and therefore must be discovered by the individual (Kovach, 2009; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). Discovery is another commonality between post-structural theory and Indigenous and decolonizing frameworks. While both pursue the meaning of words and language structures, Indigenous and decolonizing frameworks are looking for things besides power and controlling structures. Indigenous and decolonizing

frameworks seek meaning and other structures through language, stories and geography, which play a large role in defining relationships and responsibilities (Madden, 2015).

Post-Colonial Theory

Post-colonialism has a very big impact on Indigenous and decolonizing frameworks. The aim of post-colonialism is to attempt to understand the impact and effects of colonialism on the modern world (Nealon & Giroux, 2012). This is quite easy to see if you are Indigenous or any other person of color. The fact that decolonizing has to be validated should make this extremely obvious. The world of academia frequently looks at Indigenous theory with great skepticism (Kovach, 2009; Smith et al., 2019; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). The acceptance in academia of what knowledge is "right" or "valid" is frequently determined without the voices of Indigenous people or other people of color. Instead of listening to and respecting these voices, academic books feature almost exclusively the voices of white Europeans or white Americans.

Even the term post-colonial is problematic because it assumes that colonialism is not only over, but set in stone in all aspects of the world (Kovach, 2009; Smith et al., 2019). This is both true and untrue. It is true that colonialism, as far as physical empire building may very well be over, there are other forms of colonialism that still exist. The educational system itself is a form of colonialism. Whose history is being taught? —mainly European and white American. What is actually being taught to Indigenous students about European and white American history? Typically, only the parts that make those groups look strong, intelligent, and paint them in a favorable light. There are exceptions, such as slavery, civil rights, and the rise and destruction of Nazism. Yet, arguably, even most of these, if not all, are intended to diminish the negative role of European and white Americans.

What does this mean for Indigenous and decolonizing frameworks? They can be used to explore the reasons for decolonizing Indigenous educational policy and pedagogy. Decolonization is essentially the reclamation of Indigenous knowledge, culture, names, etc., in order to determine an Indigenous group's own destiny (Bell et al., 2016; Edwards, 2019; Kovach, 2009; Smith et al., 2019). The current BIE education system is rife with colonialism; it must be decolonized. Instead of depending completely on non-Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous knowledge should be incorporated, if not become predominant. Self-determination is the goal of Indigenous and decolonizing theoretical frameworks (Ball, 2004; Kovach, 2009; Smith et al., 2019; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019).

Author Contributions

The authors cited thus far are important because they are Indigenous researchers and academics who have fought to gain notoriety and credibility for Indigenous Theory and epistemology. Kovach has been cited with great frequency, but it is important to also know that within her own work she cites other authors such as Eve Tuck, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Wayne Yang, Graham Smith and Vine Deloria, Jr. Each of these authors have made large contributions to the theory. Many have collaborated for publications and share a common goal of promoting and legitimizing the Indigenous inquiry.

Vine Deloria, Jr., is quite possibly the most influential of the authors, cited and respected by many of his fellow scholars more than, possibly, any other. Deloria was one of the first and best known in the early days of developing Indigenous Theory. He was instrumental in the development and advancement of the idea that the future of Indigenous development and self-determination resides in education.

> Ideological leverage is always superior to violence . . . The problems of Indians have always been ideological rather than social, political or economic . . . [I]t is vitally important that the Indian people pick the intellectual arena as the one in which to wage war. (Deloria, 1988, pp. 256–257)

This is possibly his most famous quote but what he has said about the development and acceptance of Indigenous and decolonizing theory, is even more important. "Always have we discussed irrelevant issues while he has taken the land. Never have we taken the time to examine the premises upon which he operates so that we could manipulate him as he has us" (Deloria, 1988, p. 257). Education was used to inflict the most damage on Indigenous cultures, it is through education, that we can not only reverse this damage, but also fortify our cultures and evolve them for the future.

If academic researchers are as serious as they claim to be about the universal search for knowledge, then they need to open their minds to a broader examination of the Indigenous people and their education. If indeed knowledge is power (Kovach, 2009), then academia would be wise to consider the colonial nature of the policies and pedagogical practices of the BIE. By silencing the voices of Indigenous people, they are robbed of their culture, historical knowledge and freedom; all things that academia purports to value.

Key Principles

There are several principles that make Indigenous Theory an appropriate framework for this study, many of which will be more important to some Indigenous groups than others. Two really stand out as all encompassing: Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Voice. They are vital to Indigenous Theory, regardless of the Indigenous group using the theory or inquiry, because it opens not only a potential source of knowledge, but allows Indigenous students access

to education beyond their communities, while maintaining a strong cultural connection to their families and culture.

Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous knowledge is quite possibly the most important principle of Indigenous Theory. The biggest reason is that much of Indigenous knowledge is not recognized as actual knowledge. Many in academia view it, for the most part, as nothing more than myth. This is a product of a mindset that presumes that the knowledge gained from Greek, Roman, and European history and culture are superior to those of the Indigenous people (Kovach, 2009).

Yes, there are other sources of knowledge, such as that of Africa, Asia and America, but how many people can explain the origins behind those sources? How many schools are teaching why the Mayan calendar is more accurate than the one we currently use? What school math curriculum explains the origins of Algebra? How it was developed and why it was necessary? Very few, if any. So, this begs the question, if Indigenous people occupied the Americas millennia before Europeans were even organized into groups of people, why is it that Indigenous knowledge has little or no acceptance in their own land? This is what Vine Deloria, Jr. (1988) describes as ". . . outside observers looking into Indian society from a self-made pedestal of preconceived ideas coupled with an innate superior attitude . . ." (p. 265).

There is a lot of debate as to why Indigenous knowledge is not recognized as legitimate knowledge. The biggest factor is that most, if not all, Indigenous knowledge has historically been passed down through oral traditions; therefore, it is considered oral history and not actually recorded history. Western European historians have traditionally accepted that sources from the written tradition are more reliable than those of the oral tradition. Whereas over time the number of first-person accounts that can be accessed using oral reports or interviews are limited between

generations due to death; the written record often contains multiple sources that survive over time, allowing the historian to compare and contrast the evidence over generations. The advantage of one methodology over another should not be considered as validating one historian's views over another. When using sources from either the oral or written tradition, the historian must be aware of the limits of their methodology and the inherent bias that can be introduced into their research based upon personal experiences and values. Historians who write the best history understand this and look beyond their own biases and experiences in search of views different from their own. Such historians let the evidence guide their conclusions. In many ways, Indigenous knowledge is intended to liberate Indigenous people from the dismissive oppression of European based education and academic institutions that all too often have not valued and even denigrated the oral tradition of the Indigenous people (Kovach, 2009; Smith et al., 2019; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019).

What is Indigenous knowledge? Indigenous knowledge is found in the stories that are told by Indigenous groups. It is knowledge of which plants can treat what ailments, can help to create a delicious meal or can be used in situations where one has to survive. It is found in the Indigenous names for locations, sacred or not, and for what is located in certain areas. It's the language spoken by the Indigenous people in the many different areas of the Americas and other parts of the world (Kovach, 2009; Smith et al., 2019; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). It is even represented in the way a researcher asks themselves, why am I doing this? What is the goal of this research? Is it for my personal gain or is it for the betterment of my community and people (Kovach, 2009)?

Despite the many obstacles that stand in the way of acceptance, this is a necessary process and a fight worth fighting. Academia is responsible for the preservation and creation of

knowledge. Due to the impact of colonialism and the destruction of Indigenous communities through government education and other activities, not all of the old traditional ways of passing knowledge are attainable or even feasible. Academia is where Indigenous knowledge can not only survive, but also thrive (Kovach, 2009).

Indigenous knowledge comes from the individual and the group of Indigenous people they represent. In the author's case, the group and Indigenous knowledge represented is the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI). The sources of this knowledge come from EBCI people and sources. An advantage of EBCI knowledge is that most knowledge is recorded in multiple sources and in both English and Cherokee written documents. The Cherokee people had a written language and enjoyed a very high literacy rate (Conley, 2005). In arguing against claims of EBCI knowledge validity, the lack of a written language argument may not be valid. Usual claims that Indigenous history is not real because it wasn't written down do not hold up when it comes to the Cherokee because they *did* write it down. There *is* a written record, fulfilling the accepted definition of what history *is*.

Indigenous Voice

The second most important aspect of Indigenous and Decolonizing Theory is that voices that are often silenced through aspects of life outside of academia, as well as within it, are finally heard. Indigenous people must have a say in legitimizing knowledge about their people and how they are depicted. Through this framework, they have a say in what their stories mean, represent and how they are interpreted. Rather than having an outsider's perspective, researchers and knowledge seekers now have the insider's perspective that is more authentic (Kovach, 2009). Kovach (2009), Smith et al. (2019), and Windchief and San Pedro (2019) share the voices and stories of other Indigenous scholars. Their stories provide Indigenous Scholars and

groups a voice in the world of academia. It allows greater control over the information that is presented and accepted about the Indigenous people, their culture and history.

This is one of the benefits of Indigenous and Decolonizing Theory. These scholars and the Indigenous group they represent now have a voice in the world of academia. Through their voices, their perspectives, Indigenous thoughts, names and languages are being shared in a way that respects the heritage and culture and is relevant to their people's needs and wants (Kovach, 2009). It is reverence to the culture, themselves and the topic at hand that conveys what Windchief and San Pedro (2019) refer to as "the values, beliefs, and the essence of a story, which could transcend time and place" (p.6).

Finally, it is important for the researcher to display reciprocity, giving back to those that shared with them. This can be anything from stories, histories, meals, language, etc. What the researcher is giving back is the voice that was discovered through the help of the people and the shared knowledge (Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). In the parlance of those who research Indigenous culture and history, this is known as the Four R's. *Respect, relevance, reciprocity* and *responsibility* are the four concepts that must be followed to ensure that Indigenous groups and knowledge are not disadvantaged (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2016).

By giving Indigenous people a voice, they not only open themselves up for the induction of new knowledge but also open the world up to their knowledge. Academia is very powerful and has a way of making things change for either good or bad. Indigenous people are very suspicious of academics that come looking to gain their knowledge (Kovach, 2009; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). It is very important that they take their responsibility and relationship with the Indigenous group they are learning from very seriously. If they gain entrance into that knowledge, they have a responsibility to ensure that the utmost respect is paid to it and that this

privilege is not abused or taken lightly. It is not easy to gain entrance initially and if the trust is lost, it is almost impossible to ever gain back. Academia owes it to Indigenous people to do the right thing because of the wrongs of the past.

Educational Inquiry Critique

How is Indigenous and Decolonizing Theory important to educational inquiry? This is quite an easy question to answer; education has caused more damage to Indigenous communities than 500 years of war ever could. In the mid to late 1800s, the United States government started a well-intended but quite monstrous policy called assimilation. Its goal was to incorporate Indigenous people into mainstream white culture. Destroy what makes him Indian and save the man he could be (Reyhner, 2013). This policy was wildly successful, to the point that many Indigenous people no longer practice, speak or even understand their original languages and cultures.

Indigenous Theory can be the key to undoing nearly 100 years' worth of cultural genocide against America's Indigenous people. Some practices still remain, even if the people conducting them don't understand them. Indigenous Theory can be a way of re-igniting that old fire for Indigenous people. It can inspire their willingness and desire to learn and to take in knowledge, from all places.

Many Indigenous people have a negative association with education. Given the history of the relationship of BIE education with the Indigenous people, it is logical to conclude that negative perspectives would exist. However, education through an Indigenous and Decolonizing framework, using Indigenous and Decolonizing practices and methods, can make education more appealing by reproducing the pride that once existed in Indigenous people. It may restore some

of the old ways of passing knowledge, or if nothing else, give the elders a chance to pass knowledge on in a new way that is aligned with authentic cultural standards and norms.

Beaulieu's study (2006) concluded that Indigenous students, in Indigenous schools, who were performing at high levels, did so through educational programs based on their culture (Beaulieu, 2006). He examined the effectiveness of culturally responsive education programs and discovered that they were very effective. His research determined that culture cannot be passed down without the learner being immersed as a part of that culture. It has to be done in a way that surrounds the individual with its application and involvement of the parents, family and community (Beaulieu, 2006). Indigenous and Decolonizing Theory not only encourages this, but also deems that it is necessary in order to fulfill the principles of Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous voice.

Simply installing a culture-based program, however, is not going to solve all the problems. Stakeholders in education must have a common goal in mind and be willing to reinforce those goals when challenges arise. The community, school(s), family, parents and students must buy into the goals. This means that the educational experience being produced must incorporate the goals of each of these stakeholders, as well as have the same expectations for all involved. When completely surrounded by those who have a shared expectation, achievement is not only easier but more meaningful (Beaulieu, 2006).

Educating in a way that appeals to a cultural or Indigenous based education can have a decolonizing effect on not only the Indigenous student and teacher, but also on non-Indigenous students and teachers as well (Madden, 2015). In her study, Madden (2015) states "introduction to an Indigenous worldview opens up space within the academy and schools to conceptualize education differently" (p. 5). The problem is that most educational institutes traditionally do not

promote this position, either by choice (boarding schools) or through more covert means (curriculum) (Ball, 2004). It is imperative that Indigenous and Decolonizing inquiry be recognized as an acceptable approach in order for Indigenous people to be able to take advantage of an education that "saves" the *Indian* and the *person*. When education denies both the culture and identity of the student, the student feels ashamed and that shame prevents them from achieving their full potential, in effect, colonizing them and failing to provide an appropriate education (Ball, 2004).

In order to reverse the damage caused by education directed by the federal government, as well as inadequate education through a mainstreamed system and the dismissal of and lack of acknowledgement of Indigenous knowledge by the academic community, Indigenous knowledge must be given an equal place in the world of academia. The validity of Indigenous and Decolonizing inquiry can be seen based on the results of just a small number of studies (Haines et al., 2017; Hardbarger, 2019; Madden, 2015; RedCorn, 2016; Reyhner, 2013). Indigenous students are worth the effort to educate in a way that can best produce results that appeal to their culture and community and meet their needs. When academia fails to see the value in getting the best results for *all* students, then it fails in its primary goal—the discovery and creation of knowledge.

The goal is survival though education. The survival of various Indigenous people around the world through the passage of their knowledge to the next generation of Indigenous people depends on the younger generations learning about their cultures from the ones that hold that knowledge. This should be coupled with having to learn how to use traditional knowledge and modern knowledge so that the Indigenous groups can be successful in today's world. Things

are never the same as they used to be, so the passage of knowledge must find a way to adapt in order to continue.

Indigenous people both want and need education. How to obtain that education is the issue that needs to be addressed. Through an Indigenous and decolonizing inquiry, Indigenous students and communities will have a better chance in life. It will allow them to be educated according to both cultural and mainstream standards, while holding on to their pride. They will be able to learn without experiencing the shame and horrors that their parents and elders have known. They can learn and remain Indigenous.

Implications for Serving as a Framework

Use in School Related Research

When it comes to Cherokee Central Schools (CCS) in Cherokee, NC, applying an Indigenous framework to the curriculum and the preservation of Cherokee culture and language will be very advantageous. The application of Indigenous and decolonizing framework can create both a better working relationship between the schools, the community, the families and the students. Why is this important? It is important because most Indigenous communities have a negative opinion of education due to the BIA boarding schools that were in operation from the mid to late 1800s to the mid 1900s. These schools were highly effective in their job of stripping Indigenous students of their cultural identity and assimilating them into white society (Graham, 2012). The Cherokee people are no different from other Indigenous communities when it comes to the resentment of education that fails to acknowledge their culture and traditions.

The boarding schools were very effective tools for the re-education of Indigenous students to the Western European ways because they were able to, for the most part, isolate the students from the core influence in their lives—the community. The community was and is an

influence that reinforces the very thing the schools were trying to rid them of—their culture. By removing the community influence, they were able to establish the federal government and white American culture as the most powerful influence in their lives. By doing so, they were able to remove most of the Indigenous culture and language from students (Graham, 2012). If this wasn't enough, harsh punishment was used to reinforce the Western European power dynamic and the white culture that was being instilled in these students (Carney, 2005; Matengu et al., 2018).

The family and community remain the heart of Indigenous life (Kovach, 2009). There are some communities that have their own school, many of which were former boarding schools run by the government. CCS is only affiliated with the BIE due to the fact that CCS receives money from the BIE. Therefore, CCS must follow certain guidelines that have been determined by the BIE in order to continue to receive that money. Due to the current restrictions in place, an Indigenous and decolonizing framework for any research or programs for CCS will be difficult to apply. However, it can and absolutely must be done.

By using the Indigenous and decolonizing framework for researching the CCS history and budget, the researcher can analyze the profound impact of the U.S. government's education policy and its effectiveness on CCS students. Looking at the current state of CCS students, a researcher is able to determine how Indigenous knowledge and voices can be better facilitated in order to improve student performance. Community and familial involvement in the education of the students, as well as replacing the power influence that is currently being held by the BIE and replacing it with the influence of the community, can potentially result in a new attitude towards education; an attitude that is optimistic and joyful, rather than negative and pessimistic. The bigger potential could lie in a rejuvenation of many cultural traditions and the Cherokee

language. However, this type of potential can only be reached if the Four R's of Indigenous research (respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility), are followed (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2016; Kovach, 2009).

By including Indigenous knowledge, the message sent to the students will be that the knowledge of their people is important and worthy of learning. They can learn that there is no shame in their origins and that their culture is a source of pride. For EBCI students, they will be able to have access to their past, which is full of great accomplishments and feats that many other nations were unable to accomplish until contemporary times, if ever. This knowledge can then be passed down from people that are a part of their community and their everyday lives, which would make the knowledge more meaningful to them. Most importantly, it would allow EBCI students to have a solid foundation to rely on when or if they decide to attend an institution of higher education outside of EBCI lands. They will be able to have a support system firmly established before they leave their community and know that when they return, they will not only be an educated person, but an educated Cherokee.

Using an Indigenous and decolonizing framework, while also being very deliberate about the inclusion of Indigenous voice will complement and reinforce the feelings that the use of Indigenous knowledge will bring about. By including Indigenous voice, the researcher will be giving a voice to those that may not have one otherwise. Learning lessons about language, culture and beliefs are great, but they lack relevance and reciprocity if they are not coming from someone that is a part of the community. The inclusion of Indigenous voice means that the community must be involved, even if the researcher is an Indigenous person from the community. An Indigenous researcher from the community has a strong connection, but it does not make them an authority on all matters of the community or the culture.

No one person can know everything about an Indigenous group; they may have a lot of knowledge, but they cannot know everything. Any researcher is going to have their own biases, so to help be more balanced and reflective of the community, it is best to have multiple sources, which means multiple degrees and amounts of knowledge. This gives more voices an opportunity to be heard. This respects the different views that are held by community members, makes the researcher responsible for what they write and emphasize, is relevant to community concerns and needs and is reciprocal of the views and voices of community members.

Community Responsibility

As a Cherokee community member, I have a responsibility to honor my relationships to the community, its members, my family and friends I depend on for my research. The four R's of Indigenous research hangs over me, even more so than a non-Indigenous researcher. The community trusts that I have conducted good work by their standards, based on what is important to them. Using an Indigenous framework provided a constant reminder, as well as keeping me grounded and centered as to what is at stake with my research. There is more than just a doctoral degree at risk, my community's, my family's and friend's trust in me is at stake. Indigenous and decolonizing framework permits me to use my cultural knowledge in conjunction with my academic knowledge. It allows me to see the world through two lenses. Any Indigenous person that leaves the community for academic purposes, needs to find a way to open their mind to accept new knowledge, while maintaining their cultural connections.

Indigenous and decolonizing theory can inform established academia in regards to Indigenous research, the search for and creation of new knowledge and, most importantly, the improvement of Indigenous education and relations with academic institutions. Indigenous and decolonizing theory has roots in several epistemologies and frameworks. Critical theory has,

quite possibly, the biggest influence, due to its insistence on the inclusion of voice, representation and the acknowledgment of multiple truths (Kovach, 2009).

Indigenous and Decolonizing Theory can also have a huge impact on the way educational research approaches education. It emphasizes giving credence to the knowledge of Indigenous groups, while also allowing Indigenous people a voice in the education of their children. The impact, according to studies, has been an increase in participation and achievement, as well as, an increase in cultural intrigue and pride (Ball, 2004; Beaulieu, 2006; Madden, 2015). It also allows students to retain a strong connection to their communities when attending institutions of higher education by having pride in knowing that their people's knowledge is worth knowing and that they do not have to sacrifice their culture in order to obtain a degree (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2016). No shame, no disgrace, nor any worry of losing the connection to their culture, but achieving that which has been denied for so long, personal, cultural, and educational liberty.

In conclusion, there are five major considerations that emerge from understanding and implementing an Indigenous and decolonizing framework to education, which will inform this study. The first addresses the need for reconciliation between Indigenous people and academia for past slights and wrongs caused through misinformation and bias. Secondly, there must be the incorporation of Indigenous (cultural) knowledge into the education of Indigenous students to promote culturally responsive education. Such cultural responsiveness is not the unique purview of only a few groups but must be considered for all in the diverse American society. There must also be the implementation of an immersive learning environment for cultural learning. While this provides the foundation for culturally responsive learning, it enhances the educational experience by extending the relevancy of the culture to the students.

Based on these prior considerations, there must also be the establishment of common goals and expectations from the main stakeholders (students, families, community and school(s). Without this level of input, there is no hope for the inclusion of the Indigenous voice. Finally, once these other considerations are undertaken, there must be a strengthening and perpetuation of Indigenous cultures, languages and personal and cultural pride of the people. Throughout this study, these five considerations will provide the underpinning and theoretical framework. The data collected and analyzed, resulting in sound conclusions and recommendations is built upon this framework. Reconciliation between Indigenous people and academia is majorly important due to the use of education for the destruction of numerous Indigenous cultures but also for the exclusion and degradation of Indigenous knowledge. Academia is supposed to be the source and bearer of knowledge, yet it lacks the knowledge of everyone, mainly by choice. There are even attempts to validate this exclusion of knowledge, in spite of the validity of arguments against what it holds to be truthful knowledge.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

When looking at the relationship between the United States federal government and Indigenous people, two things dominate their interaction: war and education. This may seem odd to those who are unfamiliar with the history of America's original occupants and their interactions with Europeans and U.S. citizens, but they are by far the most impactful. Despite being at war, for the most part, for the first 400 years, warfare was ineffective and inefficient. The goal of subjugation was no closer, due to continual fighting and it constantly strained the resources and the man power of the military. Education however, was the most effective and efficient for achieving the goals of Europeans and the U.S. government. Education involved spending less money and manpower to achieve the goal of subjugating Indigenous people. At the very best of feats, education could succeed at eliminating Indigenous people from the face of the earth, or the very least, removing any vestige of the Indigenous culture through a policy of rigid assimilation. Thus, allowing military resources and manpower to be distributed elsewhere instead of on a battlefield of an unwinnable war.

From the beginning, the goal of the U.S. government and its educators was always very clear and not hidden; the total destruction and annihilation of Indigenous cultures and languages through assimilation. If full assimilation was not possible, at least their languages and cultures would be nullified. History has shown that the latter policy was, and still is, very successful. This policy was not exclusive to the United States. Canada initiated their own Indigenous education program with the same endgame in mind. Canada's Indigenous people were subjected to the same nightmare through a residential school's program and through the amendment of the Indian Act (1894), which regulates the everyday lives of Canadian Indigenous people (Edwards, 2019). Canada's residential schools earned the same reputation as the

boarding schools of the United States with tactics that brutally punished any actions that could be perceived as cultural.

Intriguingly, very few Indigenous groups are actually in control of their children's education today. Officially, in the U.S., the assimilation policy has long since been over, yet the very people that were responsible for the most destructive government policy towards Indigenous people, are still in control of Indigenous education and still telling Indigenous communities that it still knows better than they do about their children's education. There are some who would argue that the U.S. government does know better and has an obligation to provide education for Indigenous people. However, upon closer examination of the destructive education that was provided, it is completely understandable why *anyone* would question the quality and the intent of any education provided to Indigenous people by the U.S. government.

The following will provide a closer look at the education provided to Indigenous people, from the U.S. government, through, first the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and then, presently, through the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) (Niles & Byers, 2008; RedCorn, 2016). When looking specifically at the Cherokee educational experience, one must include missionary schools, most notably the Moravian school in Spring Place, Georgia (Wilkins, 1989). Education is supposed to be an experience that opens a young mind to the world and the many possibilities that can be learned and achieved. Some were able to have such an experience. However, for many students, it left them shattered and irreparable. What could and should have been a wonderful experience, allowing young people to discover who they are and what they could become, left many with no idea of who they were, where they fit in this world, and if they should even exist in it.

Legal, Political and Institutional Context

Both the United States and Canada initiated policies of educating Indigenous children. Though not the first entities to attempt to educate Indigenous people, they were far more effective in doing so. In terms of legality, Indigenous education was confined to an area all its own. Although missionary schools were voluntary and not nearly as strict, due to the threat of parents removing their children and being guests in a foreign land; this was not the case for government run schools.

Legal Context

In Canada and the United States, government run Indigenous schools were not a matter of choice. In the U.S. the Indian School program started with the Peace policy of 1869-1870, under the Grant administration, though the official beginning of the boarding schools and where they started is up for debate (Littlechild & Stamatopoulou, 2014; Smith, 2009). In both the United States and in Canada, Indigenous people were considered wards of the government under the constant control of the federal government, with few exceptions (Edwards, 2019; Graham, 2012).

Due to the numerous treaties signed between the Indigenous groups of the United States and through the Indian Act in Canada, education became the preferred method of dealing with Indigenous people, rather than use of military force. The method of application would be through laws, passed down from government officials that required Indigenous children to attend government or missionary run schools. This policy remained in effect in the United States until 1975, when the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) was passed (U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIE), 2019).

In 1975, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), later through the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), made a 180-degree turn, instituting a policy of cultural preservation (BIE, 2019). This

was a good change, in theory and good for public relations; yet, the policy in practice continues to fall short. The BIE still holds the reins of Indigenous education and limits the input of the communities it claims to serve. BIE determines how certain money is spent, what it is spent on, and what measures are used to determine achievement. BIE also holds the authority to require certain types of programs be used within school systems that fall under their control. They can also require how language is taught in the schools, who is eligible to teach those courses and have even determined that a certain amount of signage or visuals be present in classrooms.

However, there remains the question of whether this change of policy was and is too little, too late. One hundred years of cultural genocide is hard to undo and even harder to forget and forgive. How can the hands that once repeatedly hurt and abused you for practicing your culture, now be trusted to be the hands that will comfort and encourage you to practice and learn your culture?

When looking at the BIA and BIE sections of the Department of the Interior's website, there is an obvious effort made to gloss over and even hide the truth about the early years of Indigenous education. Information about the boarding schools is located on the website, but one must undertake an arduous search to find it. It cannot be easily found with drop down menus and easily accessible tabs. Undertaking a search via the search engine yields few results. The information garnered from the website provides only a brief statement of the nature of the boarding schools in their early days. Even this information is glossed over, revealing few details of the history and nature of boarding schools. Although, credit must be given for a level of honesty when it comes to explaining the goal of the boarding schools. In a statement pertaining to Health and Safety risks, the writer states that students were not allowed to practice traditional

beliefs or speak their traditional languages and that the policy and approach was inexcusable (BIE, 2019).

Yet, this does not quite tell the tale of the original policy. It silences the screams of the young children that were subjected to these schools. It silences the cries of the parents that had their children ripped away from them by federal officials. It covers the tear-stained faces of the young people that had their traditional clothing ripped away and replaced by clothing that was alien to them. It restrains the fighting of the young boys that would not only lose their language and pride, but also their long hair. What was once a source of cultural pride was now a source of shame. It doesn't bring back those young people who were to be the future of the Indigenous groups, many of which would never return from the boarding schools. It doesn't un-break the shattered hearts of generations of people who simply wanted to survive and raise their children as their ancestors had (National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, n.d.).

In order to see the true nature of these schools and mercilessness of their policies, one must go beyond the BIA and BIE, away from the Interior department's website, which by all accounts wishes to act as if the assimilation policy never occurred. The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NNABSHC) website provides a database full of resources for the study of the Indigenous boarding schools and its aftermath. Many of the available resources lead to articles and information on other websites. These resources patch together various sources of material that can help clarify BIA education policy and the methods used to fulfill those policies. Many of the resources are first-hand accounts from survivors and demonstrate the impact of the cultural trauma still felt today, even by the generations that never set foot inside the boarding schools.

One particular reference in the database leads to a timeline of boarding schools in the United States. *Education Week* published the timeline, which is filled with quick reference facts and provides some details about policy and the changes that were made over the 100 years of the assimilation policy and its use of education (Reyhner, 2013). The timeline starts with the Indian Civilization Act and explains how it allotted federal money to religious organizations that attempted to found schools in Indigenous controlled areas with the intent of "civilizing" Indigenous people. One of the first schools to be established under this act would be the small school, founded by the Moravians in Spring Place (modern Calhoun, Georgia) in the Cherokee Country (Wilkins, 1989). This was followed by the founding of Brainerd School in Tennessee, near the Chickamauga Creek. However, the Indian Removal Act would lead to the end of both of these schools (Wilkins, 1989).

All of these laws and systems of control stem from an unwillingness, first by President Andrew Jackson, then by others that followed in many parts of the federal government to ignore the well-established rights of Indigenous people (Wilkins, 1989). Originally, the United States made it very clear that tribal nations were different and needed to be approached differently than any other group in the claimed lands of the United States. This is reflected numerous times throughout American History. This was evident after the passage of the 14th Amendment. The Amendment's focus on citizenship and the guarantee of due process rights for all citizens produced immediate confusion as to whether it should be applied to Indigenous groups. The Amendment had been written as a means to protect the rights of recently freed slaves. In 1870, a Senate Judiciary Committee attempted to put the legal issue to rest but was unsuccessful. It was not until the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 was passed, that official citizenship status was

granted to all Indigenous people within the United States and its territories (The National Constitution Center, n.d.).

Unfortunately, the 14th Amendment and other federal laws have not lived up to either the ideal of equal protection under the law or respect for all cultures. Deloria (1988) shatters all illusions of equal protection and application of the law when he states, "Whites have always refused to give non-whites the respect which they have been found to legally possess. Instead there has always been a contemptuous attitude that although the law says one thing, 'we all know better'" (p. 8). It has been said, "He who holds the gold makes the rules. Whoever has the money, has the power". In the case of the historical and legal relationship between the federal government and Indigenous peoples in the United States, particularly with regards to Indigenous education, Indigenous people have possessed neither the power or the ability to make the rules.

Political Context

Politically, the education of Indigenous children has always been a popular endeavor with missionaries and politicians. As stated before, there was a desire by white Americans to have the Indigenous people educated, but educated how the white people saw fit. Politically, the US government needed to be able to encourage the settlement of the American west. This meant ensuring that the original occupants of this area were not going to pose any threat to the takeover of that land. War was unable to assure that there would be no threat, so eventually the government resorted to using education as a means of separating Indigenous people from their cultures. The government wished to eliminate their culture and all stories from times when they were free. The best way of doing this was to separate the children from the source of those stories and that culture (Edwards, 2019). Once they were unable to return to their families, they could be molded into Americans (or Canadians), assimilated into white culture. This was

effective for the purposes of both the United States and the Canadian governments, but unfortunately not for the Indigenous people.

Politically speaking, it was important for the government to, as Vine Deloria (1988) says, tame the wild animal. He then states that for the Indian, unlike the black person, he had to be absorbed into white culture, made into a white man. While stripping both groups of their legal rights, they in fact did this in opposite ways. Ironically, the Black person was ostracized from white society, not allowed to be involved with it, while the Indigenous person was forced to participate, against their will. Politically, government officials needed to have the Indigenous people act like whites, to feel safe from and to exert control over what was viewed as *wild*. Because Indigenous people showed little desire to be part of white society, this attitude was deemed unnatural and in need of correcting (Deloria, 1988).

The timeline on the NNABSHC website indicates that there were two seismic shifts in the political viewing of Indigenous education. In the 1920s, there was a considerable amount of pressure placed on the BIA to improve education due to the extreme poverty on reservations, followed by the Indian New Deal. This new deal would make it possible for the BIA to negotiate with public schools to provide education to Indigenous students through the Impact Aid program, a form of reimbursement (National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, n.d.). Politically, it was becoming a bad thing to mistreat Indigenous people.

Institutional Context

In 1975, with the passage of *Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act* (ISDEAA), there was an abrupt change to Indigenous education policy and the way that Indigenous groups would be dealt with in terms of self-governance (BIE, 2019). Politically speaking, Indigenous people were to have more of a say in their own lives, yet, institutionally,

Vine Deloria (1988) statement would ring true, yet again. BIA would change policy and methods, but the overall goal remained much the same. Strings were attached to every amount of money that tribal nations received. The money was available and plentiful, but rules had to be followed; because, "we all know better" (Deloria, 1988, p. 8).

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was given a perfect way out—blame-free, they maneuvered out of support for the boarding schools and magically transformed themselves into saviors, hiding behind new (yet still ineffective) laws. Yet institutionally, the goal was still the same, control what is being taught and how it's taught. A good example of this is in the handling of the No Child Left Behind Act's (NCLB) Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) determination for BIE schools. Essentially, the BIE schools were to be treated like a 51st state and allowed to develop their own AYP measurement. The BIE didn't take this opportunity. Instead the BIE mandated that schools use the AYP determination of the states they were located in, in spite of the law stating that the schools could develop their own, with BIA approval (Cavanagh, 2004). This is just one of the many obstacles that make Indigenous education appear good on paper, but when you look at the process and the product being produced, it leaves much to be desired.

The regulation of Indigenous education and institution of Indigenous pedagogy needs to be returned to the tribal nations. They need to be allowed to develop their own system of education. Numerous studies have shown that students that are more in touch and involved with their culture and language do better and are more involved. They care more when they can see themselves as something to be proud of, not ashamed of (Austin, 2005; Ball, 2004; Bell et al., 2016; Madden, 2015; Mamaril et al., 2018; Matengu et al., 2018; RedCorn, 2016; Tessaro et al., 2018). Evidence already supports that a culturally responsive approach has a great impact on

Indigenous students (Beaulieu, 2006; López et al., 2013). Indigenous schools were making progress with this approach until the emphasis on testing emerged. This emphasis is failing to properly serve Indigenous students, this is reason enough to make a change.

Historical and Contemporary Scholarship

Trends

There are several trends that can be found when researching Indigenous education. When looking at the history of Indigenous education, there are very few primary sources when it comes to actual policy. Most research and articles will cite personal accounts and other types of communication between government officials and other interested parties of Indigenous education, such as missionaries. There are many articles about contemporary Indigenous education, but they only provide a very brief historical account of the boarding school era and assimilation policy used in those government and missionary run schools.

Wilkins (1989) writes about the missionary schools in the old Cherokee Country (Northern Georgia, Southeastern Tennessee, Southwestern North Carolina), with an emphasis on the Missionary school in Spring Place and the Cornwall School in Connecticut. The account concentrates on the experiences of John Ridge and Elias Boudinot. The timeline found on the *Education Week* website provides some information, but no specifics. It does appear however that the missionaries cared more about converting the children, rather than actually educating them. The Moravian missionaries had to be given an ultimatum to build the school or leave (Wilkins, 1989).

The majority of historical references tend to focus on the boarding schools and the methods used to force assimilation upon the children. These methods were used to reinforce the practice of harshly punishing anything, even slightly, construed as cultural practice. Beatings

and mouths washed out with lye soap were the most often cited punishments, but ridicule and manual labor were also employed (DeConcini et al., 1989; Niles & Byers, 2008). There were other horrors in the schools, such as sexual abuse, perpetrated by priests, nuns, teachers (male and female) and others (Echols, 2018). Often, there was no punishment for the perpetrators (DeConcini et al., 1989).

There is typically a divide, however, in the different eras of Indigenous education. The Boarding school era is typically considered to be the mid 1800s to 1975. It is after the passage of the ISDEAA and the shift of BIA education policy (1975-present) that kicks off the contemporary era of Indigenous education. There is an abundance of information available about this era, but the emerging trend was culturally based education for Indigenous students. Many studies have been devoted to this idea, and their results seem to suggest that there is some evidence that this approach is effective at generating more interest and better results from Indigenous students (Austin, 2005; Ball, 2004; Beaulieu, 2006; Bell et al., 2016; Hilberg & Tharp, 2002; Madden, 2015; Mamaril et al., 2018; Matengu et al., 2018; RedCorn, 2016; Tessaro et al., 2018).

Essentially, this approach attempts to infuse material related to indigenous groups' culture into the education they are already receiving. This culturally responsive approach to Indigenous education was showing positive movement in the effort to reverse the effects of assimilation (López et al., 2013). This practice gained some popularity in the 1940s and 50s, but really started to emerge after ISSEAA. The NCLB Era changed the focus of tribal from cultural learning environments to testing mandates. This was done despite overwhelming evidence that the cultural infusion approach was proving to be far more beneficial to Indigenous students

(López et al., 2013). Sadly, the emphasis on testing has not diminished during the post-NCLB era of American education.

Studies indicate that current policies are not doing enough to enable the continuation and further development of these programs (Austin, 2005; Ball, 2004; Beaulieu, 2006; Bell et al., 2016; Hilberg & Tharp, 2002; Madden, 2015; Mamaril et al., 2018; Matengu et al., 2018; RedCorn, 2016; Tessaro et al., 2018). While there is a desire to develop these types of programs and systems, there are just not enough funds to make this happen. The statutes are very clear that their intent is to ensure that culture and language are a major part of the school curriculum; yet, other statutes and directives involving Indigenous education contradict the language of the statutes (Beaulieu, 2006). These contradictions are apparent when the requirements for the teachers eliminate the best or sometimes only qualified candidates.

Many of the elders that possess the knowledge that is needed to make language and culture a major part of the curriculum cannot be hired because they do not meet many of the statutory requirements to become a licensed teacher. They may lack the formal education that is required in order to become a "certified" teacher. Often, the experiences and knowledge of these individuals are unavailable because of issues between the National Park Service and individuals collecting traditional plants from the Great Smokey Mountains National Park. This seems trivial to those not a part of the community, but it adds to the patronization that Cherokee people aren't allowed to gather the very plants that have been a part of the tradition longer than the government's, that now restricts their access, existence. Additionally, there are currently no North Carolina teaching certifications or licensures for Cherokee, or other Indigenous group's language or history.

Beaulieu (2006) also makes it clear that there needs to be efforts that go beyond the funding of grants and contracts with the federal government. The mentality that believes nothing more needs to be done is the reason why there has been little action other than what can be budgeted with federal money. Moving past this mental block will allow Indigenous schools to truly offer Indigenous students an authentic Indigenous education, which would represent a truly equal educational opportunity (Beaulieu, 2006).

Findings

It is very clear from a review of the literature that the intent of federal funding and oversight was the destruction of the Indigenous culture and the language. Federally directed education purposefully isolated the Indigenous child by cutting them off from their cultural and linguistic supports (tribal lands or reservations) through a process of systemic cultural traumatization and acculturation. The intent was to remake the Indigenous child in the white Western European image. Consequently, over time a majority of the Indigenous children were colonized and assimilated.

Not only was this system effective, it has lasted beyond its intended purpose, at least on paper and officially. The effects of the policies of the boarding and residential schools are still manifested in today's Indigenous populations. Indigenous students struggle in schools, especially at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Cherokee High school is no exception to this, consistently performing below the North Carolina state average in Math, Reading and Biology. Many Native students go to schools that are considered impoverished (Faircloth et al., 2015). Due to the lack of resources at the high school level for many Native students, the likelihood of an inferior high school education is extremely high. Many in these low economic schools typically are not prepared for the academic rigors of post-secondary education (Flynn et

al., 2012). Also, since there are high levels of poverty, the chances of these students having parents with a post-secondary degree are extremely low. This leads to a lack of knowledge about how to obtain the necessary and proper resources to prepare their children for post-secondary education (Flynn et al., 2012).

The research shows that a lack of resources, be it financial, personal, human, psychological or post-secondary preparation, have a big impact on the achievement and persistence of Native students. These issues are more complex than just throwing money at them to make them go away. Money could help, but will not fix these problems. They require time, care and hard work in order to properly attend to them. Like the different Indigenous people of Canada and the United States, the solutions are complex and varied.

It has also been found that education with no clear purpose or relevance for the student is useless (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2016; Tessaro et al., 2018). The quality of education is determined by its relevance to the individual receiving it. To Native students and communities, if the education is not useful to the student's desired goals, then it has no relevance to them and thus is useless. The preservation of their cultural heritage and giving back to the community is a high priority for many Native students and communities (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2016; Tessaro et al., 2018). Education that does not help with this goal, in some form, also lacks relevance and may serve as a disincentive for post-secondary study (Usher, 2009).

The literature shows there are ways of overcoming the negativity associated with the boarding and residential school programs. They involve educating students using Indigenous culture and inclusion of tribal languages. Kovach (2009) writes that while conducting her research she looked to her cultural heritage and practices to center her mind and thought processes. Her conversations and research were conducted in an Indigenous framework that

incorporated culturally based methods and concepts. Using these methods have shown to be effective for Indigenous students and researchers to overcome years of assimilation and colonization through a Western European education (Beaulieu, 2006; Forbes, 2000; Mamaril et al., 2018; RedCorn, 2016). Smith et al. (2019) and Windchief and San Pedro (2019) use this same method when describing the stories of Indigenous scholars. Students can learn that who and what they are is a source of pride and not develop the shame that their grandparents and great grandparents were meant to feel about themselves and their people.

The use of culturally based education and education programs provides evidence that the approach is not only showing a vast improvement in student achievement, but also providing a healing effect for students (Boone, 2019). Programs and curriculum based on cultural teachings resonate more with Indigenous students and can provide purpose and a new outlook on education. This also allows educators and students to view education in a different way. By looking at the values of each Indigenous group and applying those values to their education, educators can produce a finished product that will be more able to serve their community and their unique needs (Boone, 2019).

These claims are validated by Castagno and Brayboy (2008) when they found that a culturally responsive approach results in a number of positive results including, but not limited to: more respect towards elders, are more self-directed, display higher self-esteem and higher academic performance. This approach even found that there were increases or gains in Math and reading achievement (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008).

Debates

Forbes (2000) has argued that the recent testing and national standards are counterproductive to a multicultural education. By implementing national standards for both

curriculum and testing, teachers and students now have to focus more on test taking and in hopes of improving academic success rather than learning about their own or any other non-white American culture. Many of today's textbooks and tests are written with a white American bias, which inhibits academic success.

The information from Forbes (2000), while over 20 years old, still rings true. There is still a major emphasis placed on testing in public and BIE run schools. There are currently no textbooks written from an Indigenous perspective and most tests used for achievement accountability are not written for students of a non-white American background. This has led to many schools and even the BIE having to defend their practices in court when they stray from what's required (Boone, 2019).

Today, many Indigenous parents are not happy with the quality of education that their children are receiving and are showing this displeasure by bringing litigation against the BIE. These litigation claims are challenging, not only the educational quality, but also the degree of discipline and the denial of community involvement, all of which are federally protected rights (Boone, 2019). This once again underscores Deloria's (1988) admonition that "although the law says one thing, 'we all know better'" (p. 8).

Yet, despite all of the research indicating the positive effects of culturally based education, schools are still resistant to even thinking about implementing these programs. According to Boone (2019), Indigenous students experience higher-than-average rates of school related arrests, suspensions and expulsions. Even though the federal government has moved passed its policy of assimilation and the inhuman tactics that it deployed to achieve its goals, there is growing evidence that discrimination towards Indigenous students is still the norm (Boone, 2019). There is debate about the practicality of such programs due to their time

and money commitment (Bell et al., 2016). To succeed, the programs require that all stakeholders demonstrate patience and commitment in order to see the fruits of the labor.

However, for many Indigenous languages and cultural practices, time is a luxury that is in short supply. Many languages, including the Cherokee language, are suffering from an ever-increasing shortage of fluent speakers. With the number of fluent speakers (200 and declining) on the Qualla Boundary in North Carolina quickly dwindling, time is about to run out for the EBCI. These speakers are only getting older and we have few, if any speakers to replace them.

Attributes of the Body of Scholarship

Strengths in Scholarship

When looking at the body of scholarship as a whole there are many strengths. Although there is not a lot of easily found information from the official BIE or BIA websites, there are many other resources containing primary and secondary documents providing evidence of government Indigenous education policy and practices. In regards to the BIE and BIA websites, a search will lead to primary documents that provide some of the information necessary for this research. However, this is not easy to do and it does bring into question why it is so difficult to find information on such a well-known and long-standing policy.

Even more resources are available and much easier to access at the NNABSHC website. This website is essentially a database full of first and secondhand accounts of boarding school policy, eyewitness and survivor accounts. The number of materials is as vast as they are varied in context. Many studies and research articles start out with a brief history of the government run schools as part of the background information. These can be beneficial for finding even more sources for information relating to the boarding schools.

For gaining an understanding about reversing the effects of boarding and residential schools, there are several researchers and studies that have focused on decolonizing. The amount of material available on decolonizing is not very significant, but the quality and the strategies produced by these studies and the research are consistent. Smith et al. (2019), Kovach (2009), and Windchief and San Pedro (2019) are consistently endorsing similar methods that are found in different studies, such as Bell et al. (2016), Mamarill et al. (2018), RedCorn (2016), and many others. Their methods do vary according to the particular Indigenous group that they are researching. However, often they include the use of Indigenous names for locations, items, food, people, etc.; use of Indigenous practices, ways of thinking and the use of Indigenous knowledge. It should be understood that Indigenous cultures are very different from group to group and community to community. However, there are many values that each share and are the focus of decolonization strategies. As previously stated, the use of decolonization allows students to learn more about their traditional teachings and language and gain an understanding of their importance. They can learn there is value in who they are and from where they originate.

Weaknesses in the Scholarship

There is very little literature on indigenous frameworks. For many years, Vine Deloria (1988, 2003) was one of the few scholars in the field. Though the number has grown recently, it is neither as large or popular as other fields of theoretical inquiry. The primary reason is a lack of Indigenous scholars and the environment of mistrust that has been created in the past between Indigenous communities and researchers from predominantly white educational institutions that are Eurocentric in their history and research traditions (Kovach, 2009; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019).

Though scholars and researchers such as Vine Deloria, Margaret Kovach, Eve Tuck, K. Wayne Yang, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Sweeny Windchief, Timothy San Pedro, and Graham Smith have produced much research on Indigenous frameworks, the number of actual scholars is not much bigger. In order to combat this lack of scholars, authors such as Windchief, San Pedro, Tuck, Tuck and Yang have published works that incorporate the short works of many newer, or less known Indigenous scholars (Smith et al., 2019; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). This helps to get these names out into the field and provides them with the opportunity to have their work published, but the volume of works is still relatively small.

While there have been efforts made to encourage more Indigenous students at the college level, the lack of Indigenous Education Programs and the negative attitudes that many Indigenous communities and families have toward education in general are reasons for the dearth of Indigenous scholars and researchers (Ball, 2004). These factors also negatively affect the willingness of the Indigenous community to participate in research studies. There is little wonder that there are not more published works on Indigenous based learning (Flynn et al., 2012; Kovach, 2009). Indigenous people generally have written few historical or sociological studies of boarding and residential schools (Littlechild & Stamatopoulou, 2014; Native American Rights Fund, 2019). This brings attention to one of the major gaps in the body of scholarship.

Gaps in the Scholarship

One of the largest gaps in authentic Indigenous scholarship is a lack of historical information published by Indigenous authors, a product of the lack of Indigenous students trained in the Indigenous culture who become researchers. Most accepted sources come from non-Indigenous writers or sources. There are firsthand accounts of the boarding schools, but they are for the most part recorded by and credited to non-Indigenous writers. Even in the

NNABSHC database, government agents, non-Indigenous researchers or other non-Indigenous individuals provide many of the resources and studies.

Another gap in the scholarship is that information is often portrayed from a non-Indigenous point of view. In the Kent Nerburn (2002) book, *Neither Wolf nor Dog*, the subject, an old Lakota man named Dan, talks in depth about how Indigenous history is only told and taught from a non-Indigenous point of view. When talking about this topic, Dan states that when Indigenous history is shared, it is often wrong. Many times, the intent is to lessen or downplay the wrongs committed against Indigenous people (Nerburn, 2002). This is a sentiment that is often shared by Indigenous people when discussing education and is the basis of decolonizing strategies (Kovach, 2009).

Another gap in Indigenous scholarship is that acceptance of Indigenous methodologies is still being debated. Certain practices that are based on shared cultural values are often hard to fit into accepted traditional academic practices, so they are often viewed as unacceptable or not good enough. This lack of acceptance has created a gap in scholarship that is not only hurting Indigenous Theory as a whole, but also affecting the world of academia because it is limiting the ability to collect and gain authentic knowledge. It underscores a major presupposition of post-structural theory: whoever wields power can prevent acceptance of ideas different from theirs by a process of delegitimization (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016).

Framing for Educational Practitioners

How does this impact educators wishing to teach using an Indigenous framework to teach about Indigenous topics in a K-12 school? Ultimately, educators cannot teach what they do not know and they cannot teach in a way that they do not understand. For the educator that wishes to teach through the Indigenous framework, they must learn about the cultures they want to

teach. This includes learning from an Indigenous point of view and from what they consider to be important. The teacher wishing to teach about Indigenous topics needs to learn from Indigenous people and obtain all sides or points of view of the topic. This requires learning beyond a traditional textbook or academic course.

A better understanding of the Indigenous group(s) should always start with those people. Building a relationship with the people you wish to learn about and from is a very important step (Beaulieu, 2006; Bell et al., 2016; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2016; Kovach, 2009; RedCorn, 2016; Tessaro et al., 2018). Due to the history of researchers and the Native communities previously mentioned, it is vital that anyone interested in Indigenous Theory, frameworks or topics be familiar with the Four R's of Indigenous research (respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility) (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2016). When following these concepts, an educator can accomplish their goal, while not depriving Indigenous people of their voice and their values, especially if they are not there to represent themselves. This retains the validity and voice that was shared with the educator so that they earn the lessons shared with them (Windchief & San Pedro, 2019).

This allows the educator to maintain accuracy in the information shared and the practices used when deploying pedagogical methods, ideas and concepts. The educator has a responsibility to ensure that the information they are presenting is accurate and also respects the boundaries that are established by those they are learning from (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2016). If the educator is Indigenous, then this presents a whole other level of responsibility that can, in many ways, be more unique or distinct than that of an outsider.

For an Indigenous educator, especially one that is from the community being researched, they have the same responsibilities as outsiders, but also have the extra suspicion and

responsibility of their family, friends and neighbors (Kovach, 2009; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). Due to the small numbers of Indigenous scholars and researchers, combined with the already high level of distrust for academics, Indigenous people can be more demanding of their own. Researchers and scholars have to maintain a commitment to protect their community and people, while meeting the demands of academia, whether it is a post-secondary institution or the curriculum requirements mandated by the school in which they teach, all while staying within cultural norms (Kovach, 2009; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). For an Indigenous scholar from an Indigenous community, studying their community, the stakes are high with little margin for error.

In regards to social justice, Indigenous Theory and frameworks can be tricky. In some ways, Indigenous Theory can accomplish a great deal for Indigenous people and social justice. It provides Indigenous people a voice and a focus on what makes them truly unique (Kovach, 2009). It teaches pride in one's heritage and emphasizes cultural teachings, beliefs and language. Indigenous Theory can give value to Indigenous concepts and thinking, providing equal footing for the shared educational values of Indigenous people (Smith et al., 2019).

When combined with a decolonizing emphasis, Indigenous Theory can help to undo years of injustice and mistreatment brought about by an educational system ill-equipped to educate Indigenous children. It can have a healing effect on those that experienced the trauma from an education that did not value the person being taught, instead portraying them as a problem that needed to be fixed (Deloria, 1988; Kovach, 2009). Most importantly, by decolonizing and placing an emphasis on cultural values, Indigenous students can learn that they are valuable and have a purpose. They have everything to be proud of and no reason to be ashamed of what they are and where they come from (Ball, 2004; Beaulieu, 2006; Boone, 2019).

Indigenous people are finally starting to see acceptance for who they are, their beliefs and for their practices, ironically, through the very method that was so effective in denying them, education. The difference is that the education that is being used is that of the Indigenous people and what is relevant and important to each tribe. There is hope that eventually, there will be a resurgence of Indigenous cultural knowledge and languages. Education is a means to obtain cultural freedom, but education must be on Indigenous terms. "So, it is vitally important that the Indian people pick the intellectual arena as the one in which to wage war" (Deloria, 1988, p.257).

Chapter 3: Methodology

The pervasive goal of the federal government for "Indian" education has always been the total destruction of Indigenous cultures and forced assimilation of these people into mainstream White American society (Deloria, 1988). The first goal of my research was to determine what the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) community feels is important when teaching about Cherokee history and culture, as well as, how the community feels about the current job Cherokee Central Schools (CCS) is doing with the teaching of Cherokee history and culture. Achieving the first goal allowed for continual development of course material, to ensure inclusion of EBCI knowledge and voice throughout the course, thereby decolonizing the curriculum. The second, and primary, goal was to determine the impact of decolonizing the North Carolina American History I curriculum and teaching through an Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) lens. Answering the following research questions was instrumental in order to achieve the main objective of this particular study.

The following research questions guided this study in order to achieve the second and primary goal:

1. What is the impact of studying American History through the specific cultural lens of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians on student perception of their own culture?
2. How does this approach impact student perceptions of American history, education, history as a whole and their own way of thinking?
3. What is the impact of decolonization of the North Carolina American History I curriculum through the specific cultural lens of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians on student world view?
4. How will this impact student achievement?

There have been many studies that have suggested that students learn better when they are taught by teachers that come from similar backgrounds, known as culturally responsive teaching (Ciotti et al., 2019; Goe & Roth, 2019). They also learn better when the material is made relevant to their lives (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2016). This research sought to test the validity of those suggestions.

Due to research indicating that a culturally responsive teaching has shown to have a positive impact on Indigenous student learning in the past, this research sought to include the cultural resources of the community and its people. While also considering the community perception of the research study goals and the current outcomes produced by Cherokee Central Schools, in regards to Cherokee history and culture, the research needed to include information directly from community members. This was accomplished through direct interviews with and surveys of community members, testing, both before and after the implementation of the redesigned course, tracking and coding of student journal responses during the course and finally with a survey of the students directly involved with the exploratory study.

Conceptual Framework

It is only fitting that a study involving the educational history and current state of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) involved the use of an Indigenous framework. All too often academia, dominated by Western European views and practices, conducts research on Indigenous people and completely disregards their knowledge and teachings. Through the lens of the Cherokee perspective, this study embraces the very things that make Indigenous people, in particular the EBCI, who they are and what makes them unique. However, it is important to understand that there are distinct differences in the approach taken in Western historiographies

and Indigenous historiographies. Both, when applied properly can aid in the establishment of an Indigenous framework.

Methodologies

Western Historical Research Methods

The methodological study of Western history is a research process that values the written word and record of past events and human accomplishments. In contrast to Indigenous history, which is rooted primarily in the oral transmission of past events and knowledge from generation to generation, Western history relies primarily upon the written word. In the digital age, the process has increasingly incorporated stored digital recordings, both video and oral, as valid sources of history.

Due to humans not sharing a common language and history, there are always varying accounts of the same events and accomplishments, as well as different events and accomplishments occurring at different times and locations. Depending upon one's cultural history, people looking at the same event can unfortunately arrive at vastly different conclusions when examining a historical event. Western historical research has traditionally emphasized a belief in objectivity, the idea and use of credible sources and the focus on a particular space and time.

Objectivity, in an effort to make better sense of the world, is the effort to find meaning in historical facts through honest investigation, open processes of research and engaged public discussions (Appleby et al., 1995). The idea of being able to step back and look at historical events and people without any attachments or biases, was once considered possible and attainable (Appleby et al., 1995; Gaddis, 2002). Regardless of the historical school of thought,

this is what most Western historians strive to accomplish, yet this is questionable due to the inherent biases that every human being holds, whether acknowledged or not.

The goal of objectivity has long been held as the standard for writing and interpreting history by Western historians, especially in the United States. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the quest for objectivity was believed to be the key to making history on par with science as a methodological process, verifiable through facts in an effort to discover the truth about the past. Yet, in the years after World War II, new ways of thinking, brought into question the ability of historians to be truly objective (Appleby et al., 1995).

Some postmodern historians have questioned the concept of objective history and many have concluded that it is unobtainable. This is due to the inherent biases of all researchers and writers of history, and the impossibility of standardizing objectivity. No two historians will ever agree totally on an assessment of the same topic. All written history contains some bias and the writers of history often, with or without the intention, write with these biases, ultimately influencing their interpretation of both sources and events (Gaddis, 2002).

Western historians are unable to make claims about events and individuals without validation of the subject matter. Unlike literature, historical research must be subjected to accuracy checks (Gaddis, 2002). These checks for accuracy are conducted by supporters and by those who hold differing opinions or viewpoints of the events or individuals in question (Himmelfarb, 2004). If a source supports or reinforces the opinions or beliefs of those promoting the belief or opinion, then there is less scrutiny or questioning of the source (Gaddis, 2002; Himmelfarb, 2004). This can even occur when there is strong documentation from a particular document or citation. Often, Western historians will take a quote from individuals from history and attempt to interpret what the individual is really trying to say. Rather than take

the words of the individual at face value, researchers will look for, and often "find" another meaning behind the words that were spoken (Himmelfarb, 2004). This is a weakness of traditional Western historiography. Western historians must be careful not to interpret the past based on the times and values of the present. Herbert Butterfield, author of *The Whig Interpretation of History,* a seminal work in Western historiography, has warned of the historian's "tendency to patch the new research into the old story even when the research in detail has altered the bearings of the whole subject" (Butterfield, 1965, pp. 5–6).

What does this mean? Regardless of the Western school of thought that is being used, the "facts" used to support a historian's conclusions are sometimes only facts because the researcher deems them so. Truth becomes what the researcher or writer wants it to be and nothing more. Truth, or facts, can also be manipulated to fit whatever purpose is needed. This is why the best of Western historians believe that replication of facts is essential if one is to discern the validity of the historian's interpretation. In order to assess these "facts" or "truth," one needs to find repeated and replicable "facts" (Gaddis, 2002). The more a "fact" is able to be verified by triangulating the historical artifacts, the more credible it becomes.

The importance of credibility is another theme common in Western historical research. What is a credible source? Regardless of the historian's ideology, the facts are derived from what is documented or written down or recorded in a way that can be consistently reproduced. The source of the facts merely needs to be written down or recorded at a point in time in order to be considered as an historical artifact (Appleby et al., 1995; Gaddis, 2002; Himmelfarb, 2004).

Once an historical artifact or artifacts is considered to be authentic, the historian's job begins in earnest. They scrutinize sources, most especially when the "facts" contradict or

disprove the opinions or beliefs generated based on the artifact (Appleby et al., 1995). Appleby (1995) argues that skepticism is encouraged based on a democratic practice of history. However, skepticism can be taken to the extreme and can raise questions about all forms of knowledge, rather than increase the volume of accepted knowledge. An extreme form of skepticism can lead to the belief that all history is constructed as a means to confirm and promote specific agendas. Such skepticism can bring into question the validity of the sources and the truth that they are intended to promote. A reputable historian would ask, "Are they accurately interpreting the historical facts or are they attempting to enforce socially constructed 'truths"? These types of questions are necessary and further complicate the job of distinguishing between historical interpretation grounded in artifacts and voices from the historical period from those screened and interpreted through the personal and cultural biases of the present time.

Regardless of their school of thought, Western historians tend to focus on events or subjects in a geographical location at a specific time in history. Unfortunately, historians can only focus so much attention to particular subjects and at particular times based on several limitations. The biggest of these limitations is that many sources may no longer exist or may never have been recorded, thereby limiting the amount of validation and verification that can be conducted (Gaddis, 2002). Historical research can serve as a time machine, allowing researchers to visit different locations and eras, but the amount and quality of sources describing the mindsets and historical lenses in which the people of the time viewed life, can make it difficult to fully understand the era, people and events. These three themes tend to work hand in hand.

Western history cannot be conducted effectively unless the three themes mentioned above are employed in conjunction with one another. Research on a particular time period in American history cannot be fully understood without first understanding how the people of the

time saw and understood things. An effective historian must also consider the differences in populations within different regions of the United States, including their race and socio-economic status. They must also consider the type of artifacts available to the researcher and the quality of those sources. Historians trained in the Western historical tradition ground their research in as many primary sources as possible because these tend to be much more reliable than secondary sources, which are more distant from the event.

Indigenous Historical Research Methods

When History is written from the less sought-after perspective of America's Indigenous people, the historical research practices are both similar and different. While Indigenous history shares the theme of validation through credible sources, the concept of what is considered credible is where common ground gives way to a vast gulf of differences. While Western history seeks credibility through triangulation of written documents, Indigenous history considers the oral history to be just as credible, if not more credible in some ways. Storytelling is a major uniting characteristic of Indigenous people. Many stories share similarities and many others are specific to the nations they originate from (Miller & Riding In, 2011).

The oral tradition is a common trait of Indigenous people because many lacked a written language. In fact, very few groups of the Americas were able to develop a written language, thus making memorization of stories and repetition of these stories vital to their longevity and preservation (Kovach, 2009; Miller & Riding In, 2011; Smith et al., 2019; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). Western historians for the most part believe that the oral tradition is unreliable and prone to being changed based on the goals and ideas of the storyteller. However, the same has been said about the written tradition of record keeping. After all, there are many that believe that history is written by the "winners". How many historical records and accounts have been found

to be exaggerations or falsehoods?? How many historical "facts" turn out to be untrue? There are a great number, yet, remarkably, we are told by the same people that oral history is less reliable than written history. The tension between written or documented history and oral traditions has long existed among historians.

From the Indigenous perspective, an argument can be made that the oral tradition may be equally, if not more, reliable because of the time and work that is stressed to ensure that Indigenous stories of the past are consistent and accurately retold. Adding to the already strict tribal requirements placed on storytelling, when you add the extra layer of scrutiny placed on storytellers by modern scholars, there is even more pressure than ever on Indigenous storytellers to ensure that they are at peak performance in delivery and accuracy. Additionally, the term "history" can lead to the questioning of any historical record—oral or written. All history is the telling of stories about the past. These stories will vary depending on the source of the record (Smith et al., 2019).

History written from an Indigenous perspective also contains what Miller and Riding In (2011) refer to as a context for understanding concepts such as invasion, oppression, dispossession, and genocide. Any research or assessment of America's involvement with these actions in its past are often met with ridicule, discredit and accusations of treason (Miller & Riding In, 2011). If we cannot look at American history with the same critical lens that is taken towards Indigenous history, then we should ask ourselves a series of very serious academic questions. The most obvious should be, "Whose history are we hearing?"

Another common theme between Western and Indigenous history is the focus on space and time. While both tend to fixate on particular places and times in history, their approach and level of importance are major differences. In Indigenous history, more value is placed on the

place an event occurs rather than when it happened in the grand scheme of things. Indigenous people value certain places in their worlds. For many people, the traditional location of their people is sacred. They are sacred because of the blood, bones and ashes of their ancestors that are still located there (Deloria, 2003). There is an existential connection to the land. It goes beyond possession. Many of their histories may not focus on what year an event occurred, but instead on the location and its importance as to what happened. Time is important, but the event itself and the location of the event impact the importance of the event. The only equivalent that comes close to the reverence of land for some Americans is the preservation of Revolutionary and Civil War battlefield sites. Yet, even these sites do not meet the mark set by Ingenious people.

A major difference in Indigenous history is the importance of community. Indigenous history focuses less on individuals and more on community concepts. How are the events or occurrences important to the community and how it functions? What is the communal lesson to be learned from these events? The community was and still is the heart of the world (Deloria, 1988; Kovach, 2009; Miller & Riding In, 2011; Smith et al., 2019; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). For Indigenous stories, there are two types: mythical and teaching. Both, however, teach how to live life, as well as the results of good and bad decisions through personal narratives consisting of place, events and occurrences. These stories serve, Kovach (2009) explains, as vessels for the passage of lessons, medicine, and practices to assist members of the community. They are not always passed through narratives but can be passed through song, prayers and symbols as well. This results in a bridge between the use of storytelling, oral tradition and space and time. Ultimately, they are used to provide for the welfare of the people and strengthen the relationship of the community (Windchief & San Pedro, 2019).

Though the methodology for the transmission of history is different from the Western model, the Indigenous model is no less stringent and methodical. Indigenous historical researchers shed light and focus on the thinking and the passage of historical knowledge of Indigenous people. Indigenous people, while sharing similarities with non-Indigenous people place different values on similar things. Whereas Western models of history too often turn their nose up at oral traditions, Indigenous historians embrace them while providing legitimate processes for transmitting historical information and ideas (Kovach, 2009; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). This connection also serves as a method for sharing a side of history that if not taught will ironically be lost or at the very least excluded from the historical record.

Employed together, recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of the Western and Indigenous research methodologies, can be a powerful tool for finding solutions to complex problems that Indigenous people face. In the words of Pauline Johnson (2006):

> Decolonizing Indigenous research is not the total rejection of Western theory, research, knowledge, and existing literature, but it is about shifting directions into Indigenous concerns and worldviews and how we come to know and understand our theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes. (p. 54)

Indigenous research is a way of adapting and evolving how Indigenous people view and interact with our world. It is a way of both holding on to our past and using its lessons to move forward into the future. If we were to completely reject one over the other, then we will essentially sentence our cultures to an eventual death. If we do not evolve, then we will truly lose everything that makes us unique.

An Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) Centered Approach

This study used an EBCI-centered approach to the teaching of a North Carolina Honors American History I course at the EBCI tribal school, located within the EBCI trust lands. This study examined the impact of American History taught to EBCI students by an EBCI teacher. This approach allowed an authentic Indigenous lens with the goal of decolonizing the curriculum. To be short, this was accomplished by constantly asking, "What were the Cherokee doing during this time?" This question would prove to be the constant driving question throughout the initial development and adaptation of the course. The answers to this question would ultimately come from the EBCI archives, thus providing the point-of-view needed for accomplishing a Eastern Cherokee perspective.

What is meant by "EBCI centered" and why does it matter?

EBCI centered means that the research was approached and answered through the point of view of an EBCI teacher, students and community members. The research questions were answered using knowledge and perspectives that primarily originated from the EBCI community and other Indigenous sources rather than being viewed, primarily, through a traditional Western lens. Instead of using the colonial views of outsiders, be they members of the federal government or Western academia, this research looked at what the EBCI people and culture said. While conducted primarily with the citizens of the EBCI nation and community in mind, the research was also aimed at those who have either perverted or ignored the truth about the deleterious effects of colonial educational laws, policies, and practices. With this in mind, it made sense that an Indigenous conceptual framework be applied to the research.

A central tenet of Indigenous Theory and inquiry is that the beliefs and practices of the EBCI must be taken into consideration when developing policies for curriculum and other areas

that pertain to the functions of the school system. It also means that when an EBCI individual is researching a topic for an assignment or for a project that relates directly to the community, these traditions and beliefs are to be respected and integrated within the final product (Kovach, 2009; Smith et al., 2019; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). Such is the case with this research topic.

Indigenous scholar Paulina Johnson (2016), however, posits that employing an Indigenous Framework as part of the decolonization process does not require the Indigenous researcher to totally abandon Western theory, research, or knowledge:

> Decolonizing Indigenous research is not the total rejection of Western theory, research, knowledge, and existing literature, but it is about shifting directions into Indigenous concerns and worldviews and how we come to know and understand our theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes. Primarily, decolonization is by no means an effort to live as Indigenous peoples once did before contact and colonization, but a movement to rid the colonized relations with nation-states and the destructive nature of those relationships. Simply, it is a movement to 'bring back' that includes the revitalization of language, recovering ceremonies, institutions, technologies, philosophies, games, and various other forms of ancient knowledge, including traditional governance and responsibility. At the same time decolonizing methodologies do not allow Indigenous peoples to fall into victimization of past injustices but rather demonstrate how we are able to work toward our freedom, transform the world around us, and liberate our lives while at the same time enhancing our cultures, traditions, and state of mind. (p. 54)

Nevertheless, it is important for the EBCI, as an Indigenous nation and culture, to determine what the education of its young people should be. This is important because if the

EBCI is to truly be a sovereign nation, then that sovereign nation should be sovereign in all aspects, especially how that nation educates and determines how best to educate its youth. This is a benefit that has been denied for many years. When it comes to the education of EBCI youth, there has been little input from EBCI parents and the community.

Not having a voice in the education of its young people delegitimizes the EBCI as a nation, community, and culture. In fact, "rejecting one's ancestral knowledge and accepting negative images of one's ethnic identity may be expected to provoke cognitive dissonance and self-hatred, a pathological condition that colonial thought would dismiss as unavoidable" (Miller & Riding In, 2011, p. 26). When people have no voice, they become malleable, nothing more than subjects. Could this be the goal and endgame, in spite of the recent change in policies permitting the teaching of culture and language by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)? It is important to take a look at both past and current policies to see how real change for the better can occur.

Any changes to the way that EBCI youth are educated must be driven by the EBCI voice. One must ask, "What role is played and more importantly, what is actually being done with the voices that are being expressed?" In order to get a better idea of how both Indigenous knowledge and voice is being applied at Cherokee Central Schools, the research helped to draw out those answers. Both Indigenous knowledge and voice need to be the driving force in any changes that are made or implemented.

EBCI education, like all education, needs to be relevant to the people it is intended to serve. Relevance is a major concept of Indigenous theory and one of the Four Rs, which include; respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility. The Four Rs ensure that the researcher does not take advantage of the community being researched (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2016). By using

EBCI knowledge and voices, EBCI education can include what Kovach (2009) describes as a way of respecting heritage and culture in a manner that is relevant to needs and desires of the community.

Indigenous people are very suspicious of academics who want to acquire their knowledge (Kovach, 2009; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). It is very important that those who wish to gain knowledge from Indigenous people, take their responsibility and relationship with the Indigenous group they are working with very seriously. If they gain entrance to the people and their knowledge, they need to treat both with respect. It is not easy to gain entrance initially and almost impossible to regain if ever lost. Academic researchers must conduct more honest and authentic kinds of research if they are not to perpetuate the wrongs of the past promoted by biased colonial approaches that either ignored or devalued the very people they purported to help.

Historical Context

It is important to understand that the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) community is small, both in population and even more so when it comes to the student population of Cherokee Central Schools. Like many Indigenous communities, the Cherokee community sees many different researchers from various locations and institutions. As in many Indigenous communities, the people of the EBCI are often suspicious of the intentions of these researchers. They have seen many outsiders come into the community, extract information and leave, often without providing any form of follow up or direct benefit to the people of the EBCI.

It is because of the actions of past researchers that even more suspicion is cast towards anyone who would seek to research the EBCI and its people. This suspicion is not eased towards members of the community that wish to conduct the same type of research. The case can be

made that even more suspicion is directed at members of the community that wish to conduct research. The suspicion exists because of the negative interactions of the past between Indigenous groups and academia, and the small number of Indigenous researchers (Kovach, 2009; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). It is also why the pressure to conduct oneself and their research in a way that protects the community from further exploitation is of the utmost importance.

Rationale for the Study

Eight years ago, I decided to change a small part of how I taught American History. While adhering to the state mandated curriculum, I made an addition that included an entire unit on Cherokee History. This was done with the intention of defiance, yet the results of that act of defiance changed many things about the way I taught moving forward. It was through this act that it was discovered that CHS students, born and raised on EBCI trust land, surrounded by history and culture, knew little to nothing about it.

It was discovered that though the students had been taught Cherokee language since kindergarten, had participated in traditional dances, singing, and crafts, they had not been taught about their history. They were unaware of many of the accomplishments of their ancestors, nor did they know the origin of many of the practices that we still maintain today. For seven years, only a handful of CHS students were being exposed to Cherokee History in their history classes. Limited exposure of young generations to any culture threatens the very continuance of that culture. By only having a small number of students exposed to Cherokee history and culture in the classroom, the number of people with that knowledge will continue to decline even further, expediting the decline and eventual destruction of the culture in a similar manner as was conducted during the boarding school era. Therefore, restricting information that can empower

the youth and possibly increase interest in the culture by the ones who need it most and are most capable of retaining it in large amounts.

Relevance

There are many misconceptions and lies about the education that students receive at Cherokee Central Schools, the history of the EBCI, and the role that the federal government has played in the perpetuation of both of these problems. Yet, it is the U.S. federal government that is ultimately in charge of the education of EBCI youth. Given the track record of the federal government's Indian education policies and their effects, it is not unreasonable to research and analyze the policies that continue to affect the education of EBCI children. For over 100 years, the federal government has implemented an unchecked and unopposed education system in the EBCI; it is long overdue for a look at the results to determine if something better can be done.

By examining the role that the EBCI community plays in the education of their youth in conjunction with the application of EBCI knowledge and voices, it can be determined if the federal government should continue to have a say in the education of EBCI children. States within the United States are responsible for the education of their students. The federal government is not constitutionally obligated or charged with that role. With regards to Indigenous peoples, however, there are treaty obligations that the federal government must adhere to in regards to the education of Indigenous children. Those treaty obligations need to be reevaluated and possibly reapplied.

When the federal government employs the same policies to educate the children of all Indigenous people, they are essentially generalizing Indigenous people as a single group despite vast cultural, geographical, and historical differences (Kovach, 2009). This has been a critical flaw in federally supervised education because it does not address the distinct differences

between Indigenous groups throughout the U.S. and is therefore irrelevant to many, if not all groups. Due to the distinct differences between different groups of Indigenous people, there is a need for different approaches, rather than a one size fits all model or Pan-Indigenous approach (Kovach, 2009). This research emphasized the historical ineffectiveness of a colonial approach applied by the federal government to EBCI education and the subsequent need for an EBCI centered approach. An EBCI centered approach provides the best hope for future EBCI students to reverse the damaging effects of federal education policy, as well as decolonizing the North Carolina American History I curriculum.

Methodology

This study was framed as a narrative inquiry into the historical background, as it impacts development, of an Anglo-centric curriculum and that effect on students at CCS as an exploratory case study. Due to the nature of this study, the subjects were limited, allowing greater depth of inquiry thus supporting the application of this methodological approach (Kovach, 2009). As a foundation, this study involved collecting information from individuals and representatives of the Cherokee community located on or adjacent to the Qualla Boundary, as well as current and former students of CCS. By giving the individuals who experienced the school system a voice, a better understanding of the difference in curriculum perspective was developed (Ergün, 2016). The issues of education, which often tend to be non-responsive culturally, are shared across many diverse groups in our country. The findings of this study may be extrapolated to other cultures and disciplines.

Narrative inquiry aligns very well with Indigenous theoretical frameworks because, like Indigenous Theory, there is great value associated with the telling of stories (Allaire, 2018; O' Grady et al., 2018). Often, the ideas, feelings and general stories of Indigenous people are left

out of history books and any development of what is considered to be historical fact or history curriculum. One of the key purposes of narrative inquiry is to give voice to marginalized groups and allow them the opportunity to share their stories so that they can be heard (Ford, 2020). When it comes to decolonizing the curriculum taught to a marginalized group, such as the Eastern Cherokee, it was very appropriate to hear what those students had to say.

A narrative analytic was the most appropriate type of narrative inquiry to be used in this study. Ford (2020) states that a narrative analytic requires the development or discovery of a plot, displaying data links as part of the telling of a story. Storytelling is a major part of Indigenous cultural life, as well as, the teaching of history. This research tells the story of EBCI students and their response to being taught through their own cultural lens.

Site and Participant Selection

The site for this study was Cherokee High School (CHS) in Cherokee, North Carolina in the Honors American History I class. I served as the teacher of this class, which may be seen as a limitation to the study or a threat to its validity. However, populations of Cherokee students taking this course are limited, and as the teacher, I had a deep understanding that informed not only the choice of methodology but the analyses and conclusions of my study. This is not necessarily a sample of convenience as every effort was taken to ensure that bias was controlled throughout the study (Ford, 2020). This particular course was chosen as the topic of this study because it required some adjustment to both the curriculum and instructional practices to determine the impact of a change from a Western to an Indigenous perspective on student learning and engagement. The expectations for this course are of a higher level than those for a regular course and, therefore, provided an opportunity to expose students to different course materials and levels of thinking through the Indigenous lens.

Students and parents were informed about the study prior to the first day of school. Traditionally, the school has an Open House event prior to the beginning of the school year to allow students, parents and teachers an opportunity to talk and discuss expectations for the upcoming semester. However, since COVID-19 has dramatically altered the way that schools operated in 2020 - 2021, the method of delivery and discussions about the students' potential involvement in the study was altered accordingly. I contacted potential participants through emails and phone calls to inform them of the purpose and the methodology of the study. Students and parents received copies of a letter of recruitment (see Appendix C) and an informed consent form (see Appendix D), which was signed and returned to me at the parents' earliest convenience; this was a necessary adaptation due to COVID-19.

In addition to the higher expectations assigned to the honors level course, I am the only EBCI history teacher employed at CHS. I am the only culturally connected history teacher that has the qualifications to teach this course. Thus, making the context of the study and course more relevant for the students will fall to someone who has an Indigenous perspective, not someone looking from the outside in. The students experienced looking at, hearing from, and learning about their own culture and history from one of their own.

Changing the Curriculum Perspective

In order to prepare for the delivery of the curriculum through an EBCI lens, discussions and planning were done with community members and employees of the school that are most familiar with Cherokee culture and practices. This involved the inclusion of community ideas (Martell & Stevens, 2019). A wide net was cast in order to gain a better understanding of how people within the community felt about the education they received from the Cherokee school

system and what they desired in an American history course taught through an EBCI perspective.

To provide the most thorough and accurate information and context to the students required adequate input from the CCS cultural department, composed of school employees that have vast knowledge of Cherokee culture and/or history and tribal community members. It is unrealistic to be able to provide an EBCI perspective without getting an idea of what the people of the EBCI think (Martell & Stevens, 2019). It would also be disingenuous to rely on the knowledge of one individual. No one person can know everything there is to know about Cherokee culture and history, nor can one person speak for an entire group of people (Baldy, 2016). The EBCI have elected officials who cannot speak for everyone, why would one community member be able to claim this authority?

Many individuals had limited mobility, especially elders, so accommodations were made to allow them the best opportunity to participate. There were efforts to coordinate interviews with EBCI government officials. Each of these individuals have valuable knowledge and experiences that will help to understand what an EBCI perspective might look like in a history class and what the focus of an EBCI lens should be. Though several people were interviewed, many of the original intended participants were unable to be interviewed. Either scheduling wasn't possible or contact was not returned. However, by taking this approach to the research, the Four Rs of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility were honored (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2016).

Data Collection

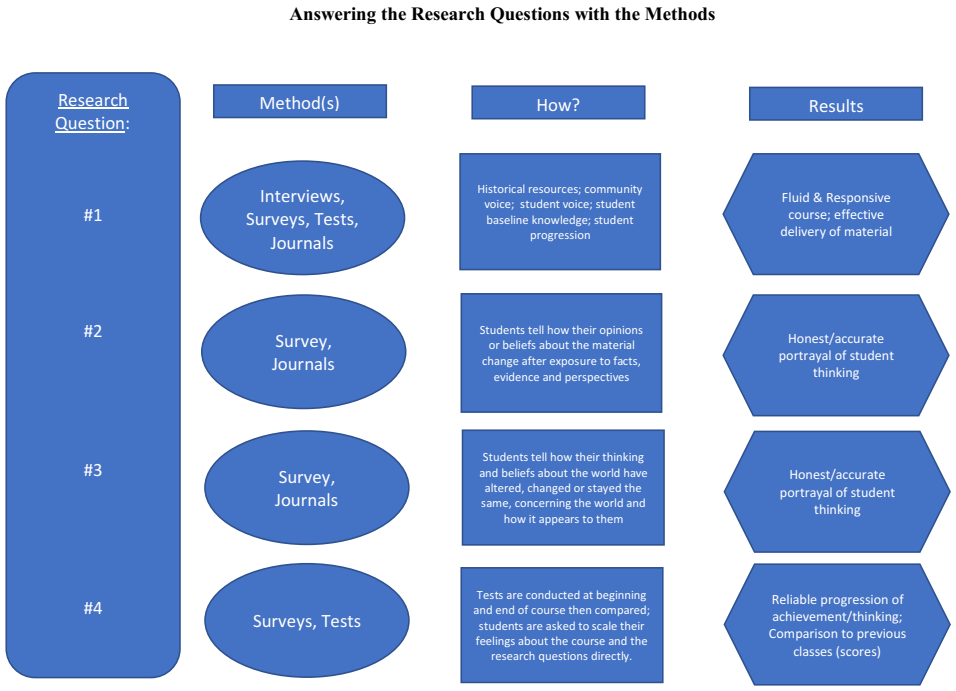
Due to the small population of EBCI trust lands, located on the Qualla Boundary in Cherokee, North Carolina, the small number of students that attend the tribal high school

(approximately 350) and the even smaller number of students in the Honors American History I class (11), there will be a very small sample size, which is appropriate for an ethnographic case study (Allaire, 2018). However, this is not necessarily a threat to the validity of the study (Johnson et al., 2020). If anything, it emphasizes its importance. Native Americans make up a very small percentage of the United States population. It is because of these small numbers that their voices are silenced. It is very easy for non-EBCI voices to block out the voice of the EBCI. This study gave EBCI students the opportunity to hear *their* stories, express *their* thoughts, and utter *their* voices.

Due to the importance of storytelling in Indigenous cultures, in this case, EBCI culture, data were collected and conveyed through the narrative analytic approach of narrative inquiry. Data were collected through a variety of sources including the following: interviews, surveys with current and former CHS students, student journal entries, and Pre-tests and Post-tests. It is important to remember though that because of the emphasis on Indigenous theory and framework, less importance is placed on what Western academia values because the values of the EBCI and most Indigenous people are not the same as non-Indigenous academic values.

Figure 1

Answering the Research Questions with the Methods



Voices Heard

Data analysis is broken down into two major sections, Community data and Student data. This demarcation allows the best alignment with Indigenous theory by inclusion of both Indigenous knowledge and input, while also allowing the direct subjects of this study the opportunity to tell their individual stories. The students involved in the class, those directly impacted by this study, must have their story told separately from the adults and community members. This study is not just the story of rethinking how to teach American History to Indigenous students, EBCI in particular, but how they as students learned, what they as students

learned, and the impact that such learning experiences had on them as students. To disregard or exclude the knowledge and input of the students would negate the relevance and importance of the study.

The perspective of the community members offered yet another lens through which to analyze the data. This provides insight into what the community feels is important to learn about and how to incorporate these important elements of Cherokee history and culture. It is for these reasons, the use, design and implementation of the survey was necessary.

Interviews

I interviewed Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) community members. These community members were chosen based on their connection to the education of the EBCI and some at random (based on participation in a survey conducted later). There was a total of ten individual interviews lasting up to two hours each. These individuals were mostly enrolled members of the EBCI, mainly former students of Cherokee Central Schools (CCS), parents of students either currently or formerly enrolled at CCS, employees of CCS and recognized community leaders in both cultural affairs and government.

When determining the proper individuals to interview, certain criteria had to be taken into consideration. It was determined that a high ranking EBCI government official needed to be interviewed in order to gain perspective about how tribal officials felt about the idea of not only education in general, but the promotion and cultivation of Cherokee culture and history through the education system. It was also determined that the individuals to be interviewed needed to be people of respectability and renown within the community. These individuals also needed to be known within the community as knowledgeable in regards to the Cherokee culture and history and/or the education system within the Qualla Boundary.

Those interviewed were asked four open questions and were encouraged to answer the questions in the way that they felt best answered them in their mind. This was a way of aligning with Indigenous methodology by allowing the interviewee the opportunity to speak and be heard (Kovach, 2009). They led the conversation and could speak freely, which gives power and voice to individuals that, more often than not, have had no voice at all in the education of EBCI youth. The intent was to allow the interviewee the opportunity to say what they might want to say, but cannot say under any other circumstances—getting real opinions, real thoughts, real reactions.

The four questions can be found in Appendix E. Though brief, the questions get to the core of Cherokee education and its approach to teaching Cherokee history and culture. They are designed to let the interviewee go in the direction they desire to go, in order to obtain a variety of information about education on the Qualla boundary. These ideas help to determine what is really being taught and how things can be improved to better accomplish the goal of, essentially, the survival of the Cherokee culture and its history.

In total, there were four individuals willing to be interviewed and give their thoughts, prior to the distribution of the surveys. Each of the participants are enrolled members of the EBCI, living within the Qualla Boundary and working with the EBCI in some capacity: one EBCI government official, two educators from two different educational institutions within the Qualla Boundary and one community member with considerable knowledge of both Cherokee history and culture. Of the original list of individuals targeted, only two agreed and followed through with requests for an interview. The alternates were more than willing to participate and followed through. Their responses to the interview questions were varied in many ways, but also

contained many common themes and ideas. However, there were some ideas that were uncommon and are worthy of recognition.

The interviews were split into two groups: a predetermined group (individuals chosen specifically for their role in the community) and a post-survey group (individuals that volunteered to be interviewed after they took the survey). Though the predetermined group was specifically chosen, the post-survey group was selected randomly in order to gain a wider range of ideas and perspectives from different parts of the EBCI. The post-survey group volunteered by giving their email address at the conclusion of the survey with the understanding that they may not be contacted for an interview. Their insights and ideas were sought to both assist and aid in the continuing development of the Cherokee history and culture aspect of the course.

To preserve the uniqueness of the individual perspective in the spirit of storytelling, the interview protocol (see Appendix E) consisted of a limited number of broad questions. This was an opportunity for the individual to speak and be heard and not directed in one way or another. The point of the interview was to listen and learn directly from a primary source and let them tell the story they desired to tell. Beyond the set of questions, there were other questions related to experiences that simply allowed the interviewee to tell their personal story. Sometimes, in Indigenous Theory, letting the person talk and just listening to what they want to tell you can have unintended or unplanned benefits. Many people just want to be listened to and feel that what they have said has not fallen on deaf ears (Kovach, 2009).

It was important to have the semi-structured design to allow the interviewee the freedom to talk and the researcher the freedom to listen. Glesne (2016) discusses how the process of interviewing is being challenged by poststructuralists due to the fact that the interviewer controls the interview and the direction of the information by developing the questions that are

used. Keeping this in mind, I was careful to allow the individuals being interviewed freedom to decide which questions they want to address and which they will not, or let the individuals being interviewed lead the conversation, addressing issues they felt were most important. This proved to be instrumental in gathering data not originally considered.

Finally, it is important to understand that in a community with as few people as Cherokee and the Qualla Boundary, everyone knows or is related to everyone else. Word travels fast, and this type of environment does not always permit the free and open expression of ideas that might be found in larger communities. It is my responsibility as both a researcher and a community member to ensure that no harm is brought to those that share their time and wisdom with me. It would be both irresponsible and disrespectful on a human and cultural level to allow participants to be harmed professionally, personally, physically or mentally as a result of their participation in this research project. As stated previously, this is non-negotiable under any circumstances.

Surveys/Survey Interviews

The plan for surveying was to augment the interview data and to reach those who were unable or unwilling to be interviewed. The surveys (see Appendix F) were distributed to individuals through different mediums in order to reach more people willing to provide input anonymously. The surveys focused on the same concepts used in the interviews in an attempt to reach a broader sample of stakeholders. I then followed up with interviews, randomly selected from the survey responses, to triangulate the data. The goal was to get as many respondents as possible, even if they were uncomfortable with a face to face interview.

The surveys were purposefully designed to be brief and direct in both questions and responses. Due to historically low response rates for surveys and community history, the surveys had to be short and to the point, sacrificing power of the instrument for a greater response rate

without endangering validity (Creswell, 2013). These requirements led to the development of the format and content of the questions. The survey was developed using Google Forms. This choice was made due to the prevalence of Google's use and the familiarity of both the Cherokee Central Schools staff and the EBCI tribal government. Google is the email host used for both entities' email system. This permitted ease of use for survey takers and for data collection and analysis.

Most important, in order to promote the maximum number of participants for the surveys, and to a smaller degree, the interviews, participants were given the opportunity to provide their answers and thoughts on the surveys with absolute confidentiality. When dealing with such a small community (approximately 2,200 people according to the 2010 US census), it is important to provide and ensure that community members are free to give honest answers without fear of reprisal. Survey takers were also provided the opportunity to provide their email address if they were interested in being interviewed to give additional answers and insights about the incorporation of Cherokee History into the curriculum.

The final question of the survey asked if the participant was willing to participate in a more formal interview to go further into the questions in the survey. Of the 185 participants, 30 were willing to be participants in a formal interview, which allowed a large enough pool to randomly select the five subjects needed for interviews. Of the people taking the survey that chose to provide their email, five were chosen at random (with an additional participant) and asked to participate in an interview to get a more detailed personal view on Cherokee education. Accommodations were made for those chosen for a follow up interview due to COVID-19 restrictions. Potential follow-up interviewees were asked to participate, but would not be punished or penalized in any way if they chose not to. Participants were assured of

anonymity and there was no identifying information used when reporting responses in part or whole.

With all of these factors in mind, it is not uncommon for the number of participants in surveys and interviews to be low. Historically, parent participation in school conducted surveys, school related meetings or matters of academics in general has always been low and is at its lowest at the high school level. Realistically acknowledging such history, the expectations for community participation in this research endeavor were not very high. The number of community participants in both the survey and the interviews were expected to be less than 50 for the survey and 10 for the interviews at best. However, the community response and participation for this particular study exceeded expectations, making a strong case for the relevancy and need for this type of research among the Cherokee community.

Surveys were distributed to the community through three different media. The surveys were first shared, with approval from the CCS School Board, with CCS staff. Upon the suggestion of the CCS School Board, the second distribution to the community was conducted with the assistance of the Cherokee Community Clubs. Of the six community clubs approached, four distributed the Google form survey through their community club Facebook pages. Finally, the EBCI tribal government was able to distribute the link to the survey through the tribal government email system. Of these three media, the Community Clubs provided the most participants for the survey as well as the most volunteers to be interviewed. In total, 185 people completed the community survey, which represented a number far exceeding expectations based on historical context and patterns.

While the survey was initially not expected to provide a large number of participants, the information extracted was always intended to be an important part of the study. What the survey

resulted in was a surprise in many ways. The first being the number of participants in the survey. The large number of participants, considering the size of the community and the reputation surveys have for low response rate, was the biggest surprise. This supported the importance of this study to the community. The large number of participants provided a suitable pool of information from which to work.

Journal Entries (Student)

As part of the narrative inquiry, it was important to collect as much data as possible in order to determine what story was developing and to ensure that it is told as accurately as possible. With this in mind, it was important to discover how the main subjects of the study feel and think as the study progressed. In order to attempt to gain some of that information, the students participated in a weekly/biweekly journal entry (see Appendix G). For the students, this journal entry typically consisted of a question that related to the class discussion topic. The questions occasionally asked how they perceived or approached a topic or situation differently after having learned what they had in class.

The inclusion of the student journals allowed the students the opportunity to narrate their story. The telling of stories is a key Indigenous Framework methodology (Kovach, 2009; Miller & Riding In, 2011, p. 26). By including the words of the students into the methodology of the study, a respectful relationship was built between the students and me; which is important not only for the student/teacher relationship, but also adhering to Kirkness' (2016) inclusion of respectful relationships in the Four Rs of Indigenous research. These student narratives were used to create a coherent narrative based on their experiences (Allaire, 2018).

Allaire (2016) used this same method in a case study of Hawaiian Native students in the STEM fields at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. This case study documented the experiences

of ten Hawaiian students, involved in various levels at the university, detailing how they navigated the challenges and situations involved with being Hawaiian and working and studying in the field of science. The study documented the many situations and emotions these students dealt with throughout their experience and told their story while also documenting the many issues involved in incorporating Indigenous frameworks and methods into scientific fields (Allaire, 2018).

Pre-Tests and Post-Tests

To gain an idea of where the students stood in terms of understanding and knowledge of their culture and history, it made sense to deploy a pre-test (see Appendix A). This test also served as a measure for the students' knowledge and perceptions of American history. The pre-test allowed the researcher to better focus on the areas of Cherokee history and American history that not only needed to be covered but could better serve the students by providing more detailed information.

The post-test (see Appendix B) also served as a method of determining what, if any, retention of knowledge occurred for the students. Though the post-test covered both Cherokee and American history, questions also determined whether or not the students understood the main principles or concepts that are most important to Cherokee culture, both past and present. It also served as an opportunity to see if the knowledge of American history was better retained than in years past.

Both the pre-test and post-test were composed of short answer questions pertaining to American history and Cherokee history. The questions were based on the material covered throughout the course. The short answer question format was also employed as the format for all unit tests for the course. This format has been used for unit tests and finals for the previous eight

years. With short answer questions, there is a greater difficulty in guessing the correct answer; students either know the answer, or they do not. It is believed by the researcher to be a more accurate measure of student knowledge than a multiple-choice test. Multiple choice tests provide a higher probability of guessing the correct answer than a short answer-based test.

Employing an Interpretivism or Interpretivist Research Philosophy

A major strength of this study was its adherence to an interpretivist approach in the analyses of data. Interpretivism assumes "access to reality (given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments" (Dudovskiy, 2019, para. 1). Furthermore, a central tenet of interpretivism is that "the point of the research is to gain in-depth insight into the lives of respondents, to gain an empathetic understanding of why they act in the way they do" (Thompson, 2015, para. 5).

Within the context of an Indigenous Framework that values the opinions, thoughts, and beliefs of the Indigenous cultures, an interpretivist approach allowed me to unveil a lived reality that is far different from most Americans whose lives have been shaped by a Western European experience. A weakness of interpretivist approach is that the subjective interaction, involvement, and motives of the research can affect the reliability of the study. I have kept this in mind while conducting all aspects of my research. Nevertheless, while a reliance on Indigenous Voice enhanced the validity of this study, triangulation of the data enhanced its reliability (Thompson, 2015, para. 6).

Data Analysis

Analyses of the interviews and surveys with students, teachers and community members provide a basis for how effective the study was at accomplishing the goals of teaching through an EBCI lens and how the different perspectives impacted the students and their

achievement. Using narrative analysis allowed an understanding of how the interviewees constructed the meaning and/or the relaying of their experiences with the main goals of the study (Glesne, 2016).

Journal entries provided the best data for what, if any, impact the course had on the thinking or perspectives of the students. This presented the greatest potential for data pulled from the study to be able to address the research questions. The writing of the students revealed their feelings about themselves, their culture and the subjects of discussion in their class. Post surveys of the students also helped provide insight into how students feel about their culture, history and worldview.

The data revealed the plot of the story that developed in the class throughout the semester. The story that was told has the potential to provide educators a starting point for future studies by allowing students to reclaim their voices and let them be heard outside of their own heads. Their story was told, unlike those before them, *with* them, not *for* them.

Validity

Threats

Threats to the validity of data come in many forms. One such threat to the validity of this study is that much of the information came as self-report from individuals through interviews. There are many ways that the information garnered from these interviews can be flawed. The person being interviewed may harbor hard feelings towards the school system or individuals that work(ed) at the school system may have certain biases or past experiencers may cause the respondent to be jaded towards or against the school specifically or EBCI in general. Every attempt was made to encourage interviewees to address their responses to the content of

the interview questions, which decreased the extraneous comments that might have otherwise colored the interview or led to inaccurate or irrelevant data.

Another threat to validity is the fact that I was researching my tribe, my community, my place of business, my students, which may have been influenced by my biases. I also interviewed people that I know personally. My closeness to the subject can be construed as a strength or a deterrent. Fortunately, access to information was not as difficult as it would have been for an outsider. A negative is that some bias is almost guaranteed. Also, since I am a part of the tribe and community, there was considerable pressure when it comes to reporting negative information or information that may show any of the aforementioned entities in a negative light (real or imagined). This was addressed by attempting to focus on the positives and still addressing the negatives, but in as respectful a manner as possible.

Despite these possible threats, there are several ways this was addressed. By using some of Maxwell's (2013) strategies, there were ways of limiting these threats and their impact. Rich data (having enough as a result of thorough interviewing and surveying), respondent validation (having those interviewed go over recordings or questions and analyses when needed), triangulation (use of multiple, varied methods) and comparison (past data compared to current data) were all helpful methods used during this research (Maxwell, 2013).

Impact of COVID-19

As stated earlier, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic played a major role in the implementation of this study. Every aspect of the study from teaching the course, conducting the surveys and interviews, and gaining the necessary signatures, was heavily impacted by the precautions and policies mandated as a result of COVID-19. To ignore these effects would

minimize the impact of the study as a whole. This study was completed in spite of numerous setbacks and hindrances caused by this pandemic.

The setbacks began at the very onset of the study. Due to CCS policies for COVID, no students would be allowed on campus for the initial first month of the school year. This quickly changed to the first quarter and then into the first semester. This was a hindrance to the study because remote learning was still a new technique for myself and the students, adding to this was the widespread dislike for the method. Students expressed almost daily how they did not like this approach and were eager for the opportunity to be able to conduct class face to face. This never manifest and the students made the adjustments needed because there was no choice in the matter. Later student survey statements would indicate that the online method was still an unpopular part of the course.

This was also a hindrance because it did not allow the opportunity for the students to learn in an immersive learning environment. This was one of the major points noted in the interviews and surveys given to community members and was never able to be implemented. This inability to even attempt this method of teaching was detrimental to the study and was hinted at in the student surveys. Another major detriment was the lack of personal connections that are made when students and their teacher are in a shared space, such as a classroom. This type of connection was not absent, but was definitely lacking for both the students and teacher.

Being a neutral observer and taking a neutral stance was not completely possible, but this was used in a positive way. My closeness to the research subject provided access to information that might not otherwise have been accessible to non-Indigenous researchers. However, students, the school, community, tribe, and community members were not exposed in any way that may be

harmful or in violation of cultural norms. Research was done in a manner that adheres to cultural norms and standards. This was not negotiable, under any circumstances.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Sources of Data Analysis

The following data was gathered directly from community members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI). All participants have done so willingly and under the understanding that their identities will be protected and that they were under no obligation to participate. There were no consequences held against them for refusal to participate and were free to withdraw from participation at any time, for any reason, or no reason at all. All EBCI cultural practices, expectations and norms were upheld and were done so under non-negotiable terms.

The information that follows comes from the community and student participants of this research study. It is *their* words, *their* thoughts, *their* ideas, *their* opinions, and *their* story that is being told. All efforts have been made to remove any identifiable information, while also, preserving their perspective.

Survey Questions

There was a total of eleven questions using a linear scale for the first ten. The linear scale asked respondents to choose one of the following: (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither disagree nor agree, (4) Agree, or (5) Strongly Agree. The final question was an open-ended question designed to allow the participant to lead the direction of the conversation, aligning with Indigenous theory framework. The survey may be viewed in its entirety in Appendix F.

Table 1 provides the breakdown of responses to question one on the survey. This reflects the long-standing movement to revitalize the Cherokee language and culture (McKie, 2019). It

demonstrates overwhelming support (97.3% agreement) for the inclusion of Cherokee culture into the Cherokee schools.

Table 1

Cherokee History and Culture Should be Taught at CCS

Response	N	%
(1) Strongly Disagree	1	0.5
(2) Disagree	1	0.5
(3) Neither Disagree nor Agree	3	1.6
(4) Agree	11	5.9
(5) Strongly Agree	169	91.4
Total	185	100.0

Responses to the question (see Table 2) concerning the infusion of Cherokee history into other histories demonstrate strong community support (98.4% agreement). This indicates that not only is the teaching of Cherokee history important to the community, but that it should be taught along with other histories or social studies such as American, European, and Asian studies in school. This gives credence to the idea that incorporation of Cherokee history should be much more than a simple unit within a course.

Table 2

Should Cherokee History be Taught Along with Other History?

Response	N	%
(1) Strongly Disagree	1	0.5
(2) Disagree	1	0.5
(3) Neither Disagree nor Agree	1	0.5
(4) Agree	15	8.1
(5) Strongly Agree	167	90.3
Total	185	100.0

Responses to question three (see Table 3) indicate how the community members judge how well the school is doing when it comes to teaching Cherokee culture and history. This is in stark contrast to the responses in the two previous questions in which community members overwhelmingly agreed on the importance of including Cherokee culture and history. Whereas over 96% agreed that Cherokee culture *should* be included, only 60.3% believe that it is actually happening. This represents a legitimate concern that the schools in Cherokee are not delivering the level of culturally responsive education desired by the community.

Table 3

The Education Received at Cherokee Schools is Culturally Relevant?

Response	N	%
(1) Strongly Disagree	1	0.5
(2) Disagree	17	9.2
(3) Neither Disagree nor Agree	55	29.9
(4) Agree	57	31.0
(5) Strongly Agree	54	29.3
Total	184	100.0

Once again, responses to question four (see Table 4) provide further validation of a united belief among community members that EBCI youth should be taught in the Cherokee schools and know their own culture. As shown in Table 4, respondents agreed with the statement that Cherokee students must know Cherokee culture (98.9%). If nothing else, the community definitely wants its youth to be taught and understand their culture, so it is important to discern if the community thinks the school is teaching it.

Table 4

Important for Students to Know Culture?

Response	N	%
(1) Strongly Disagree	2	1.1
(2) Disagree	0	0.0
(3) Neither Disagree nor Agree	0	0.0
(4) Agree	5	2.7
(5) Strongly Agree	178	96.2
Total	185	100.0

Question five (see Table 5) required respondent knowledge of the inclusion of Cherokee history in Cherokee schools. For this question, 37.8% indicated they did not know at all, while 13.9% believe it is not taught at all, and only 48.3% believe it is. This indicates that if it is taught, as less than half believe, then communication to the community is not happening. More than half of these community members are not seeing any evidence of its inclusion.

Table 5

Students are Taught Cherokee History in Cherokee Schools

Response	N	%
(1) Strongly Disagree	4	2.2
(2) Disagree	21	11.7
(3) Neither Disagree nor Agree	68	37.8
(4) Agree	51	28.3
(5) Strongly Agree	36	20.0
Total	180	100.0

Question six (see Table 6) was designed to establish reliability among responses to the parallel questions one and two. In asking respondents to indicate their beliefs on the importance of Cherokee history and culture in schools, there is again agreement (98.7%) with the statement. As in the two prior questions, the community members are almost unanimous in their support of teaching Cherokee history and culture in their schools.

Table 6

Important Students Understand Cherokee Progress?

Response	N	%
(1) Strongly Disagree	2	1.1
(2) Disagree	1	0.5
(3) Neither Disagree nor Agree	1	0.5
(4) Agree	26	14.2
(5) Strongly Agree	153	83.6
Total	183	100.0

Responses to question seven (see Table 7) again emphasizes the overwhelming support for teaching Cherokee history and culture in Cherokee schools when 93% disagree with the idea that it should *not* be taught. Again, this provides reliability to the conclusion that there is overwhelming support for the inclusion of Cherokee history and culture in Cherokee schools.

Table 7

Culture Should Not Be Taught?

Response	N	%
(1) Strongly Disagree	163	88.1
(2) Disagree	9	4.9
(3) Neither Disagree nor Agree	1	0.5
(4) Agree	3	1.6
(5) Strongly Agree	9	4.9
Total	185	100.0

Responses to question eight (See Table 8) indicate strong unity (89.8 %) within the community regarding the importance of learning Cherokee history. Once again, the majority agree that more should be done to teach Cherokee history and culture in the schools. This again indicates a lack of confidence among the community members that the school system is doing an adequate job in promoting its culture and history.

Table 8

More Should be Done to Encourage the Study of Cherokee History?

Response	N	%
(1) Strongly Disagree	4	2.2
(2) Disagree	4	2.2
(3) Neither Disagree nor Agree	11	5.9
(4) Agree	36	19.5
(5) Strongly Agree	130	70.3
Total	185	100.0

The responses to question nine (see Table 9) were the most varied of the responses to all other questions in that there was not a clear (over 50%) agreement or disagreement. Again, over one-third (39.6%) were unclear or could not agree or disagree, thus indicating a lack of communication and awareness of the school experience for students. This is particularly significant when compared to the responses to question three (see Table 3), in that 60% believe the education is relevant yet only 24.2% believe it is at a level in which the students have a deep enough understanding. This may indicate that there is a belief that the cultural responsiveness may be at a superficial level. At any rate, there is an indication of a lack of confidence by community members in the level of culturally responsive education that Cherokee students are receiving in CCS.

Table 9

Students Understand Their Cultural Beginnings

Response	N	%
(1) Strongly Disagree	17	9.3
(2) Disagree	49	26.9
(3) Neither Disagree nor Agree	72	39.6
(4) Agree	22	12.1
(5) Strongly Agree	22	12.1
Total	182	100.0

If the education provided at Cherokee Central schools is culturally relevant, then why do community members believe that students lack understanding about their cultural beginnings? If teachers are teaching about the Cherokee culture and history, then it would stand to reason that students would demonstrate some understanding of their culture and history. According to the community, those who see the product of the school system firsthand, there is no demonstrable understanding of the Cherokee culture and history from Cherokee Central Schools students. This is further reinforced with the responses to question ten (see Table 10).

Table 10

A Lack of Cultural Understanding Exists?

Response	N	%
(1) Strongly Disagree	11	6.0
(2) Disagree	19	10.4
(3) Neither Disagree nor Agree	59	32.2
(4) Agree	41	22.4
(5) Strongly Agree	53	29.0
Total	183	100.0

The responses for question ten make it clear that the community sees a problem when it comes to cultural understanding in that they perceive that it is not happening. More than twice as many respondents at 51.4% indicate that there exists a lack of cultural understanding as opposed to 16.4% who do not. Due to these responses indicating a lack of confidence by the community that culturally responsive education is being effectively implemented in CCS, it is pertinent to look at what is being taught on any day, in any class, at any grade level.

The survey concluded with an opportunity for the participants to provide additional comments concerning the teaching of Cherokee history and culture in Cherokee schools. Eighty-three respondents felt compelled to provide comments. Using a method for coding (Saldaña, 2009), one major theme emerged. Nearly three quarters of the responses expressed support for teaching more Cherokee culture and history to Cherokee students. This reinforced the responses (51.4%) to question eight of the survey that more should be done in order to accomplish that goal.

Twenty-eight respondents indicated the belief that limitations or even restrictions caused by the required North Carolina curriculum from the North Carolina Department of Education (NCDPI) was the main reason more is not done in terms of teaching Cherokee history and culture in Cherokee Central Schools classrooms. Cherokee Central Schools (CCS) requires teachers to follow the NCDPI curriculum and determines the performance of its teachers based on student performance and achievement determined by the state accountability measures.

Here are just a few of those responses:

"I think Cherokee history and culture should be taught in the school. As of now, it is difficult to incorporate it into our rigorous "test centered" curriculum though."

"I feel as if the Common Core Standards really block many educators from teaching Cherokee history and culture."

"As a Cherokee teacher, I would like more freedom to teach about it. But I am held back by my superiors, I won't mention name(s). We have to follow the curriculum because it's based off a grant on test scores."

"I believe there should be a clear Cherokee History Essential Standards that all Social Studies teachers have access to and are able to use as the basis for what elements of Cherokee History/Culture are taught in their classes. I pull from NC World History standards to inform what topics I cover for the rest of my curriculum, but there is not established standard for what aspects and events of Cherokee history and culture should be present, and this would provide a solid framework for us to draw from in order to provide a comprehensive learning experience for students. It doesn't have to be AS rigid as some state standards, but I think creating one would go a long way in making sure all of us provide quality education. Ideally, it's something flexible enough to be appropriated

> across a variety of social studies courses, but streamlined enough to where we're all on the same page and so are the students. Consistent, relevant, and effective."
>
> "I would say that the history and culture should be integrated across the curriculum and not simply taught as a stand-alone subject. I think all staff need to be trained on culturally responsive methodologies, summer curriculum development opportunities, and new employee PD opportunities for integrating cultural/historical components into their classrooms and to better understand the school and community they work in."

If teaching Cherokee students their history and culture is important to CCS, then, according to its teachers and community members, there is a belief that the curriculum it teaches does not permit this to happen in a meaningful way, if at all. This provides evidence supporting the survey answers for questions nine and ten, as well as, explaining why the overwhelming majority of respondents felt that more should or could be done to promote Cherokee history and cultural learning at CCS. The survey suggests that the community feels that teaching Cherokee history and culture is important, yet, they feel that the curriculum used by the school system limits or even eliminates this entirely from their student's education.

Other themes that emerged supported the creation of Cherokee standards and increasing staff knowledge of Cherokee history and culture. Thirteen respondents suggested the need for the creation of curriculum or essential standards pertaining to Cherokee history and culture. Respondents stated that these standards would need to be created by the school system, but stopped short of stating who specifically should create them. Several offered to assist in their creation, but all stated that they were personally unaware of what is important and how to go about doing such a thing. Many, if not the majority, of CCS teachers are not community members and are non-Cherokee. Therefore, they may lack the knowledge of what and how to go

about meeting these standards. With these ideas in mind, it makes sense that increasing teacher knowledge received a similar number of mentions.

Eleven respondents suggested increasing the historical and cultural knowledge of the teaching staff of CCS. Teachers can only teach what they know. If the teachers, especially non-Cherokee teachers, do not know Cherokee history and culture, they cannot realistically be expected to incorporate Cherokee history and culture in their lessons. Several respondents, though not giving identifiable information, stated they were teachers and that they lacked enough knowledge to be able to effectively incorporate Cherokee history and culture in a way that would be impactful. They expressed a desire for more opportunities to learn, not only Cherokee history and culture, but the language as well. This indicates a need for professional development in this area.

In summary, the survey measured two specific constructs: the level of community support for infusing Cherokee history and culture into the curriculum (see Tables 1, 2, 4, 6,7); and the level of community confidence that the schools are actually doing this (see Tables 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10). From the responses, it is clear that the community strongly supports infusion of the culture, but there is no confidence that CCS is doing this.

The survey revealed that the community believes CCS provides a culturally relevant education for Cherokee students, yet the surveys indicate that the community believes that Cherokee students do not understand their cultural beginnings and that teaching cultural understanding is a problem at Cherokee schools. The open-ended responses on the survey provided more evidence to support this contradiction. Nearly three quarters of respondent's answers underscored that more needs to be done to promote Cherokee history and culture, as

opposed to only four respondents who believed that the school system was doing a good job of promoting the learning of Cherokee history and culture.

Many respondents indicated ways that they felt the school could improve upon this lack of understanding. The variety of the responses was surprising, but not nearly as surprising as the number of respondents indicating the need for Cherokee standards being established and increasing teacher knowledge of Cherokee history and culture in order to be more effective in its incorporation. Many of these respondents self-identified as teachers at CCS. This was surprising because to institute instructional changes would require more time and work from the teachers, many of whom are already stretched thin under normal circumstances, let alone those that are included within CCS during a pandemic. The willingness of the community to help with the fulfillment of both of these suggestions was, yet another pleasant discovery made through this study.

The survey data support the belief that teaching Cherokee history and culture are important to the community. These results provided evidence that the community may be willing to assist in fulfilling this goal if given the opportunity to do so. Thus, validating the Indigenous theory belief in incorporating both Indigenous knowledge and voice into the research, or in this case, developing the idea of incorporating Cherokee history and culture into the American history curriculum (Kovach, 2009). This also moves Cherokee education away from the lens of "outside observers looking into Indian society from a self-made pedestal of preconceived ideas coupled with an innate superior attitude." (Deloria, 1988, p. 265) and gives it back to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI). This promotes their voice throughout their children's education.

Interviews

Interviews were organized into two groups: predetermined interviews and post-survey interviews. This was done in order to develop a range of opinions and ideas on what the community considers important for Cherokee students to know about their history and culture. This also allows for a more accurate representation of what exactly is the Eastern Cherokee perspective.

Predetermined Interviews. When determining the proper individuals to interview, certain criteria had to be taken into consideration. It was determined that a high ranking EBCI government official needed to be interviewed in order to gain perspective about how tribal officials felt about the idea of not only education in general, but the promotion and cultivation of Cherokee culture and history through the education system. It was also determined that the individuals to be interviewed needed to be people of respectability and renown within the community. These individuals also needed to be known within the community as knowledgeable in regards to the Cherokee culture and history and/or the education system within the Qualla Boundary.

Through the interviews there were several common themes or topics that emerged. Through coding (Saldaña, 2009), these themes/topics have been categorized under four common entities of responsibility. An entity of responsibility is a group or institution, being a part of Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) in some way, shape or form, that holds influence over the students or general population of the EBCI. These entities of responsibility are: Families, Community, EBCI government, and Cherokee Central Schools (CCS). The common themes that emerged from the interviews can be categorized under at least one of these entities with many falling under all. In order to achieve a more focused study, special focus will

be given to the topics shared by three or all categories as well as themes unique to one category. This approach was taken due to the large number of common themes and the timeframe for implementation. There were simply too many to try to incorporate into one course in one semester.

Shared Themes. Even with a focus on themes that fall under three or more entities, there were 14, only five of which did not fall under all. This attempt to decrease the number of themes was fruitless, due to the wide-ranging impact and importance of the themes discussed. This shows the complexity and importance of the work that was conducted and still needs to be completed. The themes that fall under all entities are found in Appendix H.

It should be noted that these are the results of the opinions of the individuals interviewed and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of all or most of the EBCI. Rather than simply highlighting individual ideas, which may not be supported by multiple interviewees, a search for common themes was conducted in order to discover common understandings and ideas supported by multiple interviewees. Fortunately, due to the positions and community standing of the individuals, a fairly accurate understanding can be gained. There are many implications from these themes, the most obvious, however, is that many of these issues go well beyond the school system and permeate throughout the EBCI community.

Every one of these themes can be related to what is being taught or what is not being taught to EBCI youth. Many participants pointed to the current curriculum and stated that it was important to learn what the state or even the federal government has determined is important, but that, for EBCI students, it is equally important to incorporate Cherokee values. It was expressed by the community members that the first thing EBCI students need to learn is where they come from. Meaning, they need to be taught about Cherokee history and cultural development.

Participants also expressed the need to explain cultural aspects through their historical evolution or development over time. In order to better understand why things were/are done, one must know why and how they began, along with how and why they evolved. This provides an explanation, not only of historical events, but the culture, which can often be mistaken for things that are not culture at all. It was also unanimously agreed that students need to be taught about the adaptability and resilience of the Cherokee people. This was something that was stressed because of a belief by many of those interviewed that the "younger generations do not understand that ideas and practices have changed for the better because of interactions between the Cherokee and different groups throughout history." It was also stressed because it was through this adaptability and resiliency the Cherokee were able to not only survive but thrive throughout history.

The dangers of promoting a victim mentality was addressed by all interviewees and was determined to be a major problem. "Teaching the historical resiliency of the EBCI helps to disprove the victim narrative and will help to move the EBCI and its members past the very real trauma that has been experienced, yet does not have to define us" was expressed by the EBCI government official.

Interviewees expressed the belief that teaching about Cherokee resilience will provide students the opportunity to see that they come from people who are worthy of recognition, have accomplished many things and have contributed to the greater good of humanity. Thus, providing a source of pride and identity, while also giving a different perspective of history and how its impact was felt by people other than upper-class Americans. Showing the Cherokee perspective, according to one interviewee, "helps to perpetuate our efforts to revitalize our

language and culture." That source of pride can lead to other positive developments within the EBCI as a whole.

Of the common topics, the lack of an academic standard was another very prominent issue. This refers to the lack of importance that the community places on education in general and to the lack of enforcing and following through on high expectations at Cherokee Central Schools (CCS). Several interview participants expressed that in their own educational experiences, academics were and continue to be a non-priority. One participant said to look at the product being produced or lack thereof. This doesn't just fall on CCS. The community and families are complacent in this particular issue as well, according to the interviewees. One interviewee, a former student of CCS, spoke specifically of how there are no expectations or any consequences if grades were not indicative of a high level of learning. Instead of holding students accountable, they stated that excuses were made for why students could not perform at a high academic level. These excuses presently persist because there is little incentive for students to do more than the bare minimum, if that. Several interview participants pointed to the community as not having a standard for academics or even a plan on how to perpetuate the language and culture. One interviewee, an educator in one of the schools, described how community members are quick to point out flaws in the education but are slow to provide solutions or participate in order to improve things.

One interviewee, also a former student, parent, and teacher at CCS, highlighted the lack of an academic standard within the community by pointing to the absence of a PTO and the attendance at academic meetings at the school. "The numbers are small, but when you go to a sporting event, the seats are often full." There is a disconnect that exists between CCS and the other entities, namely families and the community as a whole. "There is a lack of understanding

that needs to be addressed, but little movement has been made." The sentiment among the interviewees was for people to step up and get involved. Reach out and ask, "How can I help?" "Too many are quick to offer criticism but slow to offer help."

This illustrates the apathy that was a common theme of the interviews as well. Many of the participants expressed that apathy was prevalent throughout the EBCI. "There is an unwillingness to do what is needed to improve current conditions." The apathy is what fuels the problems of the EBCI and that unwillingness to help facilitate change is what keeps it alive. It adds to the normalcy bias that "This is how it has always been" or "this is how it is everywhere!" Learning about our culture and our history will teach that the normalcy bias that currently exists is completely false! Education is important to disproving all these ideas and practices that keep the EBCI in a trapped state. The Cherokee people have always been a "scholarly people," as expressed by most interviewed. "Our people need to know that education and knowledge have always been important. The current state of education and the attitudes towards it are holding us back."

Several interviewees stated that expectations for students are necessary, and if they are absent from the community, the family and the school system, then we are fighting a losing battle. "Nothing will ever change if we do not all hold each other accountable," was one expression.

> We need to raise the bar for what our expectations are for our kids; when they don't obtain that, we can't make the way easy and say, 'That's ok. You know, we are going to go ahead and move you ahead'. I mean, look at our damn test scores! They're awful! They're awful. Our outcomes are terrible right now.

Another stated that they have high expectations for their children because they want better for them and want them to be capable of functioning in the world. Their success is the EBCI's success. "What they need to realize is that they have a responsibility. Responsibility, not only to themselves, but to their community, to their people, to the world. But they ain't getting that." If this was the common thinking amongst families and the community, then why has there been no change?

Many community members start to take an interest in their education later in life, which is good, according to a couple of interviewees. "A lot of younger people just don't care to learn." One of the interviewees involved in an educational institution mentioned that many people, as they did, start learning later in life or when they go away from the boundary.

> They got to college and their friends figured out, 'Oh, you're a Cherokee? You're an Indian? You're a Cherokee Indian?' And now it's a big ol thing of pride. 'Yeah, this is me!' They get a little sense of pride about them. That's when they start to learn more about Cherokee. Cause it's cool!" It is not considered cool to be Cherokee until people learn what you are and start asking you questions. It's only when they realize they lack the knowledge they should have; do they start to want to learn and have a change of mind. It's a shame that it takes them getting into college to want to learn to be Cherokee.

Even then, it is not true of everyone. Some community members are unconcerned about our history, culture and language. One interviewee stated that they hear from many people, "Why should I learn that? It's not going to help me in the real world." Sadly, their opinions will never change because there is no expectation or practical use for them. Until each of the entities

of responsibility decide they are going to match their actions with their words, there will be no change.

Unique Themes. Unique themes are themes that fall under the control or responsibility of one entity. Of the emergent themes that were unique to each of the responsible entities, CCS possessed the most with seven unique topics. Oddly enough, both the community and families had only one unique theme specific to them. Though the argument can be made that each of the themes for community and families can be applied to both; however, in the context of the interviews, they were not. The themes were specifically addressed in a context that pertained to the specific entity.

The unique theme applied to the community was *cultural explanation.* What this means is that it is the responsibility of the community to provide explanations for the culture and the practices that are involved. There are efforts being made to promote the culture and these efforts are applauded by the individuals being interviewed. The only connotation that was given about this particular theme was a desire to see more community members becoming active participants. It is the responsibility of the community, as a whole, to promote and facilitate the appropriate explanations for cultural practices. It is not the sole responsibility of the school.

The argument can be made that this is also a family responsibility, which is true to an extent. Many families participate in traditional practices, but others do not. The reasons for this lack of participation vary, but a lack of knowledge is a major reason. It is also important to consider that there are also many that have a lack of want or desire to participate. If someone from one of these families wants to learn, they do not have the luxury of depending on their family to provide explanations. This is why it was necessary to assign this topic's responsibility

to the community. The community can effectively meet this responsibility by providing the knowledge when asked and, as we will see in the next section, access to this knowledge.

The theme assigned exclusively to the families of the EBCI are dealing with family issues. The reason for this assignment is in the name. Family issues are often best dealt with within the family. If the need to involve the community arises, then it can and should become a joint responsibility. Family issues are complex, because sometimes they can become big issues due to neglect or they are better handled within the family because they are not issues that can be handled beyond the family.

The school system (CCS) has the greatest number of unique topics. These are included in Appendix H. In terms of Cherokee history and what should be taught, nearly all interviewed expressed the importance of not only teaching about Cherokee history, but the importance of teaching the "good, the bad and the ugly parts of it," as expressed by the government official. This was conveyed to mean that all of the history should be included, even the parts that do not necessarily show the Cherokee or the EBCI in a positive light. One interviewee expressed that it is important to understand that,

> Yes, the Cherokee orchestrated wars, participated in massacres and committed atrocities. This is part of our history, and it is important that our students learn about these events and understand that there are lessons to be learned from even our darkest moments.

However, there was consensus that these events need to be told through the Cherokee perspective as well as the European or American. It was expressed by all, particularly the older interview participants, that the whole story needs to be told, and that cannot be told from just one perspective, particularly when that perspective is not that of the student's culture.

Every participant expressed the importance of incorporating language learning along with historical and cultural learning. "The three go hand in hand and can only be properly taught in conjunction, not as separate subjects"; in the same vein, the best way to teach these three subjects is through immersive learning. The students need to be able to see, hold, hear, experience what they are being taught. All interviewees expressed that more needs to be done to ensure that EBCI students are getting as much as they can, which leads into the next topic, the underutilization of resources.

The EBCI and CCS have been blessed with resources. These include: cultural, historical, geographical, material and monetary resources. The campus of CCS is located in one of the most picturesque areas in the country, rich in technological and material resources. However, many of the cultural and geographical resources go unused. There is a wealth of knowledge out in the community, yet the school may not reach out to use those resources effectively. Often, teachers are pushed to follow curriculum and worry about testing mandates, meaning these resources are unused due to limited time. Or, sadly, teachers want to use community resources but have no way of knowing how to obtain them. Resources like the Museum or the Village are often left unvisited by CCS students because of time restraints or a lack of promotion on the part of these entities. All agree that a better job needs to be done with communication, cooperation and utilization amongst these resources.

Post-Survey Interviews. The group of people that participated in the post-survey interviews were chosen from a pool of people that voluntarily gave their contact information during the survey. These participants were chosen at random from that pool. Initially, only five were going to be selected for interviews. The initial group that was randomly chosen only yielded three responses. In order to obtain the desired number of interviews, two more requests

were sent to randomly selected volunteers. These volunteers enthusiastically responded, as well as one of the original targets. This provided six interview participants.

Much like the predetermined interviews, there were many themes that emerged. Many of these common topics or themes were the same as in the other set of interviews, with a few differences, thus providing some triangulation. Each of the topics fell under the same entities of responsibility and the layout will follow that of the previous section. It is important to note that participants in this particular set of interviews are former students of the school system or parents of students in the school system. Not all participants are enrolled members of the EBCI (meeting the blood quantum requirements for membership), but they are all members of the community and all work within the boundary of the EBCI landholdings.

Each participant was asked the same four questions to the predetermined group with the addition of one question about the survey results. Though the addition of the survey question yielded more common themes, there were still several, if not nearly all of the same themes that were brought up and discussed. As before, this group of participants did so under the understanding and request that their identities remain anonymous in order to ensure freedom to respond without fear of reprisal.

The same criteria were used to determine the themes that will be focused on during this section. Only themes that were categorized under three or all categories will be discussed, while also setting aside a section for the themes that were unique to each category (see Appendix I). Under this criterion, there were eight themes that fell under both, all entities and three entities. The increase in number can be attributed to the increase in number of participants and the addition of a new question, but, the similarities in the themes must be acknowledged.

Shared Themes. The shared themes discussed in the predetermined interviews mirror the shared themes in the post-survey interviews with a few differences. In regards to themes found under all entities, the lack of teaching about Cherokee resiliency, the lack of accountability and the absence of expectations, teaching EBCI youth to walk in two worlds, and the acknowledgement that more needs to be done were all very prominent, as before. The themes that were common among this group (post-survey), yet not found in the other group (predetermined) and highlight the need for multiple perspectives.

The interviews yielded four themes, occurring with at least 66% of the participants, that were categorized under all four entities, differing from those found in the predetermined group. The first was access to cultural and historical knowledge. Several interviewees stated that many teachers and other community individuals want to learn more about the history and culture of the Cherokee, but they are often stymied by a lack of knowing where to access this knowledge. Enrolled members of the EBCI are unaware who and where they can go to in order to gain the knowledge they seek about the Cherokee and the EBCI. Interviewees stated that often people who want to learn get discouraged from the start because there is no access.

Access can be defined in many ways and the interviewees defined it in multiple terms. One common definition used by interview participants was internet access. The geographical location of the Qualla boundary does not permit all residents the ability to have internet access at their homes. Many also do not necessarily have the equipment to connect to the internet, even if they had the access. One participant stated that access to them was knowledge of individuals that were knowledgeable. Having access to this knowledge is vital because there is no centralized database for this knowledge. Most of the recorded knowledge is in print, which is good, but this information is located in several locations such as the museum

and the Tribal Historic Preservation Center (THPC). These places require appointments in order to access the material. Many people are not available to access this information when those appointments are available.

Another example of lack of access involves the knowledge of the individuals. "There are people on the boundary that have a wealth of knowledge, but people do not know they have it. Sometimes, there are people who purposely do not tell people that these people have this knowledge." Essentially, these people act as gatekeepers and grant access to this knowledge only to the people they want to grant it to. If people that are seeking knowledge are not "granted" access to people in the know, how can the culture and history continue? When we lose the primary sources of this information, we will then be at the mercy of what is written. This creates another level of concern pertaining to the accuracy of those written documents. Several interviewers also expressed that the concern with the number of fluent speakers is at a crisis level, yet all efforts that have been proposed for preservation have been met with resistance due to money, individuals in charge, or general community buy in. "The number of fluent speakers is now less than 200 people." Interviewees expressed concerns over the efforts to preserve the language, yet feel everyone involved in these efforts is trying to control how and what is done. One interviewee expressed frustration with this very thing:

> There is no consistency with what is being done. And when that $15 million was allocated (for language preservation)[1], everyone came running, 'Does this mean I get a piece of this'? So now, everybody that has been doing their language program, that's

[1] On November 6, 2019, EBCI Tribal council approved a resolution to allot $15 million dollars towards language preservation. However, the resolution was amended and left many details open for further discussion at a later time (Kays, 2018).

been doing the same thing for decades, just wants a little bit of that pie, a little bit of that money. That wasn't what that was for, that wasn't what we were asking for either.

These concerns lead into the next theme that was categorized under all four entities: A perception that there is no real vision for the future of the EBCI, the language, history or the culture. With all of these previously stated concerns, the idea of no vision for the future is disheartening to those interviewed. If there is no accountability, no expectations, no resiliency, and the death of the language looming over the EBCI's head, how can there not be a perception of no vision? This responsibility falls on all entities because it is developed by all four in conjunction with one another. The family is supposed to provide the foundation, the community provides the explanations; the school is to provide the tools to develop these ideas further, as well as new ideas, and the EBCI government is the voice of the people. If there is no vision being vocalized, developed, explained and founded, then what message is being sent to the EBCI youth? The youngest interviewee stated that ". . . the lack of accountability at the school and lack of preparation for life outside of the boundary gives me the feeling that there is no vision or hope for us." Though there was only one person that directly cited a lack of a vision, there were several allusions to this idea.

This perception is echoed by many of the interview participants. Many want to know why there is no vision. Some participants have connected this lack of vision (through allusions) to the lack of accountability. A common expression in the interviews was that people are content with the status quo, therefore, there was no urgency for change. One participant, a graduate of the school system and parent to students that have graduated, expressed that we are being shown we need to get back to learning the traditional ways and rediscovering our historical and cultural knowledge.

> Creator is showing us that we need to get back to our traditions. Things are happening today that will force us to change what we do and how we do it! History is starting to repeat itself and we need to relearn what we have lost.

This sentiment was echoed by several other participants. One community member, heavily involved with cultural preservation, stated that, "We have forgotten the lessons we taught to other groups over the years." "Your people taught my people how to do this (skin a deer using traditional techniques), but now I have to teach it to you? You are Cherokee! Your people invented this!", is something that they have heard many times from local hunters. The older community member whose children have now graduated stated that, "It is on us to rediscover and relearn what we have both chosen to forget and what was taken from us." In order to achieve this, the barriers must be removed.

The third theme that differs from the previous interview group is the fear of offending or angering people within the community. Of the differences in common topics, this one is one that is possibly the most prevalent. Every interview participant stated that this was one of the biggest issues. People are afraid of offending or upsetting others in the community, families, government or students, co-workers, school administration, etc. Many identified this particular topic to be the source of many of the other issues preventing the school and ultimately the EBCI itself from achieving its full potential.

It was stated by several participants that there is no accountability or expectations at the school because people within the school don't want to upset the wrong people within the school or the community (those holding political influence). People who don't do their jobs or do things that are offensive to other people are not punished because of their connections within the EBCI government, community or the school administration. This perception of fear of reprisal is

the very reason that anonymity had to be assured in order for participants to agree to interview. Whether or not this is real, the perception is *very* real. People will act in a certain way if they fear retribution or reprisal. "Please, please man, don't tell anyone that I was the one who said this!" and "I can't say this out loud or to other people because I will be put on the outs," were common statements from interviewees.

Many people who hold political influence or have family connections to people in power positions are often allowed to get away with actions that others would not. They also, often control access to certain resources, either cultural or through the tribal government. Getting on the wrong side of these individuals can cost people their livelihoods and even acceptance within the community. The detriment to this fear is that the youth and the EBCI suffer as a whole. This fear leads to the lack of responsibility, accountability and expectations. The fear leads to limited access to knowledge, lack of knowledge, lack of resiliency and the need for more effort to be made. More importantly, this fear leads to the final topic: EBCI youth need to be able to develop their own opinions.

The previous group described the importance of EBCI youth developing the tools they need for success; this topic is a development of that concept. Not only do the EBCI youth need to be capable of developing the tools for success, they need to be able to develop their own opinions about how to go about it and what that success is. The current perception expressed by a recent graduate of CCS is that students are being prepared to stay home, not be successful away from home. "There was no reward for people who do well!" This participant went a step further and said that students are being prepared to be dependents and little more—dependents of the EBCI government, their parents, the federal government, etc.

EBCI youth are not being prepared to assume leadership roles, nor are they being prepared to serve in many other roles. "Why are you not listening to me? Why won't you take me seriously? I'm trying to be independent and I'm trying to do what I need to do and you're not taking me seriously" is the sentiment of the youngest, and most recent CCS graduate, interviewee. This failure falls on all four entities. It is both a by-product of the other topics and the cause of many other topics that are categorized under at least three entities. These are systemic failures that are in desperate need of fixing according to the interviewees.

The list of topics falling under at least three entities is just as long and pointed as the list for all entities. The interviews occurring post-survey were a bit more pessimistic, but important nonetheless. Sometimes, it is just as important to know your failures as it is your successes.

The themes categorized under three entities (see Appendix I) are: community connections; community buy-in with connecting curriculum and culture; missing a sense of belonging/identity; importance of Cherokee history; start teaching language, history and culture at an early age; no understanding of culture; need for learning from multiple perspectives; the presence of generational issues between the younger generation and the older generations and better understanding each other; and finally, the most controversial theme, placing too much emphasis on Blood Quantum.

These themes could warrant their own study, but for the purposes of this study, the use of multiple perspectives in education, the importance of Cherokee history, and community buy-in with connecting curriculum and culture will be discussed. Each of these themes and concepts are used in the study directly. Interview participants explained that in order to best develop and accomplish a meaningful education for EBCI students, the education needs to be taught from multiple perspectives other than the mainstream American perspective. Participants expressed

the need for students to hear their own people's stories, accounts and points of view throughout their education along with those of the mainstream and other people involved in the material.

In terms of Cherokee history, many stated that it was best to hear Cherokee history from the perspective of the Cherokee. The information should also be presented in a way that is unbiased, in order to allow for the students to develop their own ideas, opinions and perspectives. Several stated that Cherokee history was not taught to them in the school system and that what they did learn about the history of the EBCI came from few sources and in small timeframes. Many that *were* able to be taught about their history and culture were taught outside of school by their parents or elders. Their own natural curiosity or the guidance of their elders were what enabled them to learn, not what was available to them within the school system.

However, one of the older participants shared that they were in school when the push began to relearn the language. "The excitement that was involved in that time period was due to its newness and it was previously forbidden by the school system (under the control of the Bureau of Indian Affairs) before the 1970s." The desire to learn the language would become a priority, but according to many interviewees, has fallen short of expectations. "There was no follow through. What were the results? How many fluent speakers have been produced? The answer was always, none."

Community buy-in with connecting the curriculum with the culture was a topic touched on by nearly all participants as well. Nearly all expressed the sentiment that there was no realistic way of separating from what the state or federal government decided was an appropriate curriculum. There was nearly unanimous sentiment that we are too intertwined with the outside world to completely separate from it. Therefore, it was important that EBCI students learn this curriculum, but have it aligned with Cherokee culture. Some participants expressed a desire to

see cultural standards developed and implemented, and some stopped short of that. However, it was unanimous that the community needed to be involved in the development of either these standards or this alignment.

The idea of walking in two worlds comes through with this topic, yet there were a few who felt that this concept hinged on community buy-in. It was expressed by one former student of CCS that they did not feel that they were prepared for life beyond Cherokee and that any efforts to be better or to do better was a bad mark against them within the community.

> I feel like no one supports me back home. I feel like I get more support from friends away from Cherokee, from my school away from Cherokee. From the opportunities I've gotten to do, getting more cultural and moral support from the diversity committee at school, from people that still want me to run the Native American Student Association. I'm getting more support there than I am from home. They've (EBCI) forgotten about me!

Many participants felt as if they weren't considered Cherokee enough if they left home to better themselves. Several expressed discouragements from many of their peers and community members; that leaving was bad, and that there would be little support if you wanted to leave. There would also be little support if you wanted to better your situation.

> They support every person that stays there (Cherokee), but as soon as you leave, they don't really support you. If they don't know your name, they don't support you. And, as soon as I graduated, that was it. I feel like it didn't prepare us for anything. We were prepared to stay in Cherokee. We weren't prepared to leave.

This is where community buy-in is paramount. If the community hasn't bought in, this type of discouragement will persist, undermining the entire effort. Buying in means taking the education

of the future leaders of the EBCI seriously. Making sure that there is not only an expectation of graduating from high school, but excelling at all levels of education. This includes encouraging them to not only earn an education, but providing support during and after obtaining it.

Unique findings. Like the predetermined group of interviews, this group yielded some unique themes for certain responsible entities (see Appendix I). Unlike the predetermined group, the post-survey group had no unique themes for Families. The themes for the communities were the way the community, as a whole, presents itself and the existence of a contradiction between what is claimed to be taught by CCS and what is believed by the community to be taught by CCS. Participants believed that the community needs to do a better job of determining what image they want to project, not just to the outside world, but to those that live within it. There are certain behaviors that are allowed to perpetuate and this feeds into the lack of accountability and the persistence of enabling certain negative behaviors. Several respondents indicated that the youth of the EBCI will look to the example set before them by the community and will use it as their model for how to conduct themselves in school, out in the world and in their daily lives. Our communities need to be more conscious of this and make sure that the model being projected matches the behavior and actions they want.

The second theme is one that would appear to be connected or completely placed on the school, but the wording is what is important and why it is not. This is the existence of a contradiction between what is claimed to be taught by CCS and what is *believed by the community* to be taught by CCS. Since the wording is "believed by the community," it is reasonable to expect this to pertain to the community. This particular theme arose from the addition of the interview question that came from the data in the survey. Participants were asked for their reaction to the survey data indicating that the community feels that the school is

providing a culturally relevant education, yet understanding of the culture is a problem at Cherokee schools. The majority of the interview participants felt that this was an indicator that either the community doesn't really know what the school is claiming to teach or that the school isn't really teaching what they claim they are. Either way, this perception makes it clear that there is some kind of disconnect between the community and the school.

Given this information, the participants expressed frustration over the lack of progress of the school. One former student in particular was very vocal about the displeasure with the level of education that they received. They indicated that their time in college was made more difficult due to the lack of rigor and appropriate level of difficulty with the courses offered. This particular participant stated that it was no wonder students are often not successful beyond CCS. The rigor, accountability and expectations are not what is being claimed or advertised.

Another participant that is a parent to recent graduates of CCS expressed a similar sentiment, but stated that her students were to be self-motivators and if they weren't getting what they needed intellectually, they needed to get it outside the school system. There are familial ties to the school system and it was not an option to remove their students from the school system. The participant stressed that if there is a problem, the solution is not to leave it, but to do what you can to fix it. If you can't solve the problem for everyone, at least fix it enough for *you* to be able to deal with it. The prevailing view was that change has to occur or it will be the same old thing until everything is gone.

The lone topic that pertained entirely within the EBCI government is a difficult one. The statement was made several times that if we are truly a sovereign nation, then why do we not capitalize on this sovereignty? The comments around this statement included both breaking away from the federal government and doing things completely on our own and simply creating

our own curriculum. Several participants felt that it would be best to continue to accept federal monies and write our own curriculum. Those who would like to see the opposite done, declining the money and the EBCI do things completely independent of the federal government were adamant about doing so because of the former boarding schools that were a cornerstone of government run education.

The participants wanted a completely different approach to education, one that was driven by the EBCI and not the U.S. government. Though the minority, their thinking about the boarding schools was echoed to a degree by many of the participants. There was no desire to continue the way things are currently going and the sentiment was that the EBCI should have control over the education of its children. Though, it was stated by many, in order to fully be independent, the EBCI government would have to contribute significantly to make up for the loss of funds. One participant said that people will have to "Put their money where their mouth is and step up. We can invest in anything but our youth. That's not good enough anymore".

Finally, CCS had five unique topics. Each of the topics relates to the others which means that the issues are symptoms of a larger issue. The first topic of discussion was that the school needed to do a better job of getting the right people in the right positions, this includes doing a better job of providing the necessary amount and type of cultural training, not only for non-Cherokee employees, but the Cherokee employees as well. The surveys indicated there is a desire and need for this type of training, and the interview participants were quick to point this out. Four out of six participants indicated that this was a need that must be addressed and done so in a way that keeps the right people and better serves the students. As stated before, all participants are community members, but many confessed to not feeling comfortable with the knowledge base that they had for the history and culture of the EBCI.

This feeds into the next theme, making the education relevant for the students. Participants made it very clear that making the curriculum relevant to the students was of the utmost importance. Suggestions were made as to how to achieve this and they mainly came down to showing how they can use this knowledge in everyday life or making connections to their families and family practices. Relevance is also connected to another topic that is uniquely the responsibility of CCS and that is connecting the culture and academics. Culturally related classes are separated from the core academic classes, which often leads to students feeling that their culture and these core courses have no relation or connection. One interviewee stated that,

> Many of the core classes can be easily connected to the language and culture, not just the history class. History is the easiest, but some teachers find it difficult to make connections with courses such as biology or math. This is not the case though. Many cultural practices involve biology and earth sciences providing several connections that can be made.

One example given was how the Cherokee knew that there was a certain time of year to hunt and consume certain animals, such as squirrels. These can only be safely eaten after the second hard frost due to certain parasites that are found on them prior to this time of the year. Though it can be more difficult for certain subjects, there can almost always be some connection made. However, it is difficult for teachers to make these types of connections if they lack the knowledge necessary to make them, reiterating the previous topic related to education and training of CCS staff.

The fourth topic is the need for more immersive learning. Interview participants stated that there needs to be a more immersive approach for Cherokee cultural, historical and language

education. One participant, who has students currently enrolled at CCS stated "I would like to see a more immersive approach because there is more to learning about these things than what can be provided through the traditional classroom." Several participants made the statement that the culture and history of the Cherokee is more than just reading about events in books or on notes and the language is more than pronunciation and printing text. Language, culture and history are to be experienced and engaging.

> You learn to talk by listening and mimicking, but you also learn it through being immersed in it. If everyone around you is speaking a language, you learn to pick it up quicker. If you are learning about an event, actually being in that place gives the learning another level of meaning because you are surrounded by it. You can feel it with your hands and smell it. You are using all of your senses in the experience.

Full immersion within the content and the material allows a deeper level of learning that resonates with the learner in various ways. Students are impacted differently with each experience. Nearly all participants expressed a desire for an immersive learning experience due to these factors. However, one participant looked at their time in CCS and, though in full support of an immersive approach, was adamant that every student be given the opportunity to learn this way. The participant spoke of wanting to be exposed and learn more of the language, but was not afforded that opportunity. CCS should not dictate who is worthy and who is not worthy to learn the language. The student should be allowed that opportunity through their decision and or efforts.

The final topic that is unique to CCS is, according to the survey data, a contradiction in what CCS claims they are teaching and what is actually teaching. Participants were very clear that they felt that this contradiction not only exists, but has persisted for some time. Though no

participant was willing to go as far as to name names and place blame on individuals, they were very clear that what is currently being done was not producing the results that are desirable.

One participant stated, “We have been teaching language classes for nearly forty years and there have been no or very few fluent speakers produced. The language is still dying, even though we have two schools teaching language.” Also, every participant that attended school at CCS indicated that they were not taught Cherokee history outside of a few instances or in short time frames. One stated that other than two classes their last two years of high school, the only time they were exposed to the culture was during Cultural Summer School, but even that only lasted two weeks out of the year. Most stated that what they learned about the culture, history and language occurred outside of their time at CCS.

It is worth noting that in every interview that was conducted, every participant expressed their support and happiness about the research study and the changes being made to the way the course would be taught. This was one of the few things that everyone interviewed agreed upon. There was genuine excitement that someone within the school was implementing a change. Words are incapable of relaying the amount of happiness that was expressed when talking about the concept of the study and its implementation. Some of the statements made were, “It’s about damn time we seriously looked at this!”, “I was so happy to hear that you were doing this! We have needed it for too long!”, and “I would like to help you in any way I can!” Many just laughed and said thank goodness!

It is also very important to note that each participant praised the efforts of the cultural department of CCS and the efforts of the teachers at New Kituwah Academy. Most participants stated the work they do is important and difficult. However, they stood by their statements that what is currently being done is not effective, so change is necessary.

Survey Related Investigation

Due to the survey bringing about the question of the existence of a contradiction between what CCS claims to teach and what it actually teaches, a request was made of teachers to submit ten random lesson plans. This request was made of teachers in all three schools within CCS. The target number was ten lesson plans from ten different teachers across ten different grade levels. The target number of lesson plans was not reached. However, there was at least one respondent from each school and a total of 36 lesson plans that were obtained.

Table 11 shows the breakdown of the lesson plans received. Of the lesson plans obtained, only ten contained lessons that were related to Cherokee history, culture and language. Of the respondents, one was an EBCI teacher and the other others were non-EBCI. The elementary school had the highest number of lesson plans with Cherokee related material or subjects, the middle school's lone respondent and lesson plan contained Cherokee cultural elements and the high school had the least number of cultural elements present in the lesson plans, but made up the bulk of lesson plans sent.

Table 11

CCS Lesson Plans Involving Cherokee Culture

School	Grade/Class	N	#Cher.	%Cher.
High	12/English	15	0	0.0
High	9/Science	10	1	2.8
Middle	6/Science	1	1	2.8
Elem.	K/S.S.	5	5	13.8
Elem.	5/S.S.	5	3	8.3
Total		36	10	27.7

These individuals were willing to help in any way that was asked and their contributions were greatly appreciated and valued. Yet, because of the small number that was submitted, it would not be accurate or fair to make a definitive statement as to how much Cherokee history and culture is actually taught in CCS. However, it does raise questions as to why so few participated. There will be no further speculation on why so few responded other than to ask, what could have been done better to achieve a higher rate of participation?

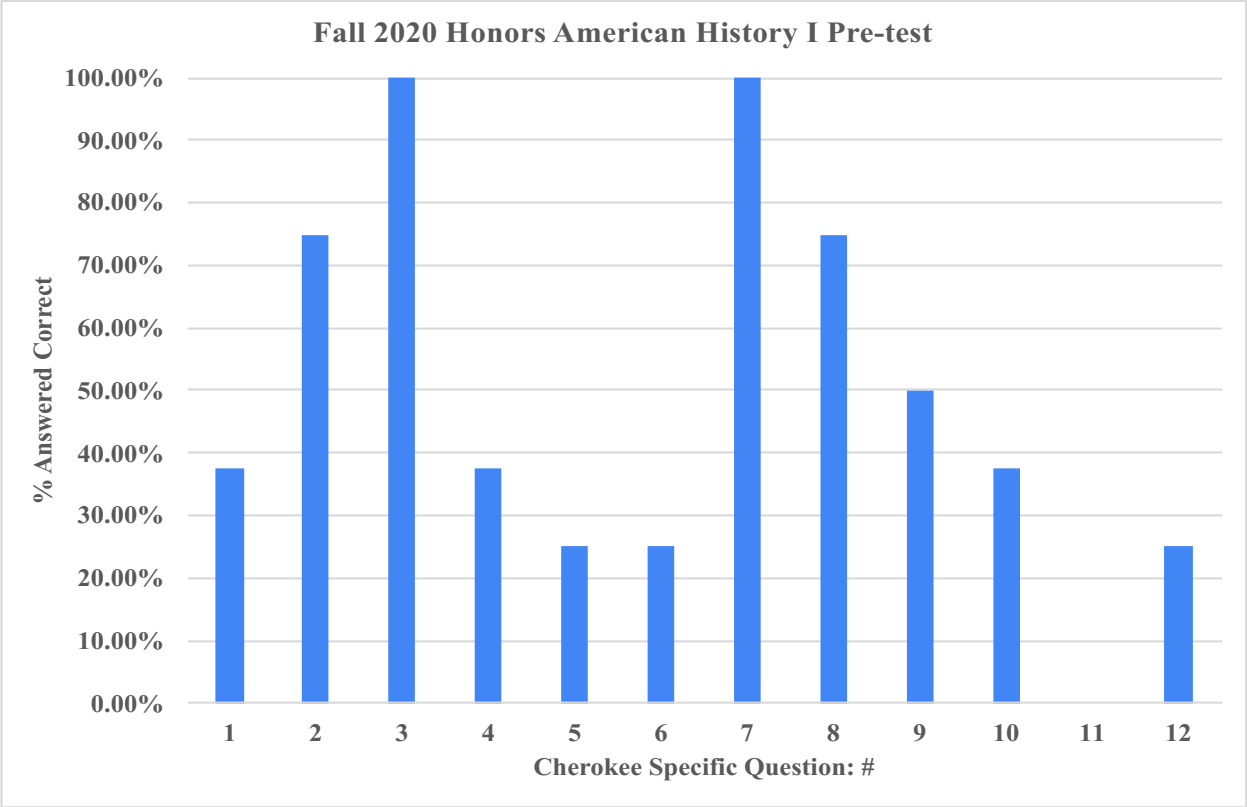
The lack of submissions does further raise questions about just what does CCS actually teach? Based on this one third of the target number, legitimacy *could* be extended to the perception that CCS is not doing enough to teach Cherokee history and culture. This information should be taken as a reason for concern and should be used as valid concern for a much deeper look at the incorporation of Cherokee history and culture into the daily lessons district wide. The claim of deception could be validated based on the information obtained. However, I do not believe there is enough information available now to do so, but there is more than enough to warrant further investigation.

Student Work- Pre-test

At the beginning of the semester, the students that were enrolled in the Honors American History I class were given a Pre-test. This Pre-test was 25 questions long with 13 questions pertaining to American history and 12 questions pertaining to Cherokee history and culture. The questions pertaining to Cherokee history and culture are questions that would be expected to be known, as well as a few that are slightly higher-level knowledge, but just as important to know. Figure 2 shows the results of the Pre-test.

Figure 2

Fall 2020 Honors American History Pre-Test



The first question asked: "What is the most accepted theory for the first inhabitants of North and South America?" Of the eight students that participated in the study, less than half of them answered correctly with the Asian Migration Theory or the Land bridge Theory. 37.5% answered correctly and 62.5% incorrectly or did not answer. This is not unusual, though this topic is covered in World History, the course taken prior to American History.

The second question asked: "Who were the first Europeans to contact the Cherokee?" For this question, 75% of students answered correctly with a couple correctly identifying the leader of the expedition, as well. This is considered to be a common knowledge question, so it was not surprising that the students had no difficulty answering the question. The

third Cherokee history question is also one that is considered common knowledge: “What are the seven clans of the Cherokee?” The answers proved this to be a common knowledge question with every respondent answering the question correctly (100%).

Cherokee history question number four would prove to be more difficult than anticipated: “What was the treaty that sent the Cherokee to Indian Territory?” Only 37.5% of respondents answered this question correctly. This question should have been a common knowledge question, or at least was considered such when selected for the pre-test. Only three students answered this question correctly with all of the incorrect answers describing either the name for the removal of the Cherokee or no response.

The fifth and sixth Cherokee history questions received the fewest correct answers: “What was the role of women in the Cherokee government?” And: “The original Cherokee country contained all or part of which states?” Both of these questions were originally considered to be easy questions. It was assumed that students would have been taught at some point the role of Cherokee women in the Cherokee government, yet many gave answers that described the role of women in the 1800s and early 1900s. The answers to question six were just as surprising because it too was considered to be a common knowledge question. However, for each question, only 25% or two students knew the correct answers for each question. These are questions that should have been covered considerably early in the education of EBCI students, especially the role of women in the Cherokee government.

Question seven was a welcome return to expectations with every respondent correctly answering the question: “What is Kituwah and why is it important?” All eight (100%) participants correctly answered that Kituwah is the original Cherokee settlement and known as

the Mother town. Unfortunately, this would prove to be the last question that all respondents would answer correctly.

Question eight asked: What were the two chiefs of every Cherokee town? Only 25% of respondents answered this question incorrectly. This indicates that though there was a couple that didn't answer correctly, there is evidence that this material has been covered at some point. Question nine asked students to: "Describe the role of women in Cherokee society." Though similar to question five, it is indeed a different question. This question was used to determine if the students paid attention to the wording, as well as, whether or not they knew the answer. Based on the answers to the question, several students did not catch the difference in the question and responded with the same answer as question five. Either way, 50% of the students answered correctly and 50% answered incorrectly. Once again, this is discouraging because this was a question that was considered to be a common knowledge question.

Question ten asked students to: "Explain factionalism." This is considered a higher-level question because of the complexity of how factionalism developed among the Cherokee and the individuals and events surrounding it. As expected, few answered correctly, but those that did only answered with the correct definition. They did not answer in any way that would explain the concept thoroughly.

Question eleven is another higher level and difficult question, proving to be the most difficult question on the pre-test. It asked: "How does syncretism pertain to the Cherokee?" None of the students were able to answer the question correctly. This is not surprising, but also a little disappointing because this is the concept the entire Cherokee societal system is based on and an important concept that will be covered throughout the course.

The final question proved to be one of the big surprises from the Pre-Test. Question twelve asked: "What was the significance of Sequoyah's development of the Cherokee Syllabary?" This should be taught to CCS students from the very beginning, yet only 25% or two students were able to give the correct response. The others were able to identify what the syllabary was, but not its significance. Of all the questions, this was the one question I truly expected all the students to answer correctly, yet it was one of the lowest.

To summarize the pre-test, of the twelve questions asked pertaining to Cherokee history and culture, the majority of the students only really knew four of them. Of the common knowledge questions, the majority of students were only able to correctly answer half. The higher-level questions were answered but the students knew less as a whole than expected. This raises several questions.

Student Work- Journal Entries

Throughout the duration of this research study, students were responsible for writing journal entries as part of their notebook for the course. At the end of each week, with a few exceptions, students would be given a question that they were to respond to as their journal entry. These questions varied from week to week. The commonality with the questions were that they were asked in a way that was to make them think about the work they had done during the week and their thoughts about the work or if their thinking had changed about certain topics or concepts. Initially, the journal entries had a very high response rate, but this rate fluctuated throughout the semester. Typically, only half, or slightly more would respond. However, those responses would give a vital insight into the thinking of the students. A graphic of the themes that emerged from the student journal entries can be found in Appendix J.

In total, there were 15 journal entries. The first journal prompt was possibly one of the most important prompts because it determines a base of what the students know, or at least think they know, and personally think about their own history and culture. This was the only prompt that would receive 100% participation with students that agreed to be a part of the study. The responses were fairly predictable, but there were a couple of surprises. Most talked about knowing that they were Cherokee and how they have family members that have allowed them to have some connection to the culture. There were a few that stated they didn't feel that they had much of a connection, or at least not as much as they should. The most surprising response was that one student didn't feel connected at all and did not see the point! The opinion was expressed that they did not see the use in learning a dying language and a dying culture. They also stated that they knew people would get upset when this opinion was expressed, but that would be how they felt unless they were convinced it was worth giving a chance.

The second journal prompt was simply asking if they had learned anything during the week that may have changed their thinking. Unfortunately, as would become a trend, only five of the participating students answered the prompt. As expected, however, the responses were varied and showed that several students did not have a basic historical understanding of the Cherokee or the role that Cherokee women played in Cherokee government and society. Some students showed they had a better grasp of Cherokee history and cultural practices during the early parts of the course, but that would change as we moved further along in the chronology of the subject.

Prompt three had the second most responses with ten. This prompt comes at the conclusion of units one and two, both of which contains specific discussions and lectures on Cherokee origins, cultural practices and the colonization of the Americas by Europeans,

concluding with the American Revolution. All topics within the two units were intertwined with Cherokee history. Prompt three asked: "How has learning about Cherokee History and cultural aspects along with America's colonial history helped with your learning about overall American History? Be specific."

Responses to this prompt, though different, had the same recurring theme: learning about the different perspectives helps to better understand and make sense of certain events and actions. Responses either alluded to or outright stated that learning from different perspectives had helped them better understand the material and, in a few cases, encouraged a desire for further learning. One student stated that this made them want to seek out other perspectives of these events to get an even better perspective of history. Several expressed it made them realize that they didn't know as much as they thought they did and that they were only getting one point of view and not the whole story.

Prompt four resulted in a spike in the number of responses to 7, all of which were participants in the study. This prompt asked students:

> Has learning about Cherokee history and culture in conjunction with learning about the events that lead to the founding of the United States helped to improve your understanding of American history? In your opinion, how has it helped or not helped?

All responses stated that they felt that their understanding of American history has improved because of the inclusion of the Cherokee perspective and the inclusion of Cherokee history. Several expressed that learning from multiple perspectives allowed them to hear why each side felt the way they did, why they acted in the manner they did, and allowed them to develop their own opinion about these actions and events.

Several stated that this approach to learning history increased their knowledge of *their* history. Many stated they were unaware of many things that had occurred in Cherokee history and that connecting it to American history allowed them to learn something that they might otherwise not have the opportunity to learn. One student stated that they have always seen American history and Cherokee history as separate topics, but this approach allowed them to see that they are not separate but two parts of the same history.

Prompt number five came after a debate focusing on a Cherokee historical event within the time frame of the American Revolution and the Cherokee's involvement. The prompt itself involved the students considering the events of both the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. This was a very dark period of time for the Cherokee, and the students were learning just how dark and desperate the situation was for the Cherokee. This would be starkly contrasted with the perspective of the American colonists who were fighting for independence and beginning to establish their government and its future status.

Prompt five asked: "How has your view of Cherokee & American History changed? Feel free to go down the rabbit hole a little in your response. If it hasn't changed, give some insight as to why you think it hasn't."

Many stated that their opinions hadn't changed as much as their knowledge of these wars and the Cherokee role in them. Many expressed sadness that they had never been exposed to this information before and that they had a better understanding of their own people. What did not change was their frustration with the treatment of their ancestors and that they would not have been exposed to this information, if not for the course.

A second prompt (prompt six) was issued the same week as prompt five because of the students' participation in a debate over a series of events specifically concerning the Cherokee

during this time period. This debate was the conclusion of a series of lectures and notes about two recognizable and divisive Cherokee figures: Dragging Canoe and Nancy Ward. Both figures were involved in actions and events that would bring about devastation and suffering to the Cherokee, yet one is remembered favorably and the other as a villain. The debate required the students to be broken into groups, develop an argument for their person and one against the other person. In two series of statements, each group would then get two minutes to prepare a response to the other group. Finally, they would have another two minutes to prepare a final argument for their person. The prompt asked: "How has the debate on Nancy Ward and Dragging Canoe helped you with your understanding of not only Cherokee/American History, but the world in general?"

This prompt was one of the few with all participants responding, yet the responses were revealing. The students overwhelmingly stated the debate helped them understand the importance of understanding different perspectives and the importance of learning to compromise. One even stated that it helped them understand that perspective is determined or influenced by their values. A person's values are reflected in their perspective. Another student expressed how eye opening it was to have to defend a person that you completely disagree with. It showed them that sometimes it is important to compromise with people you may disagree with in order for everyone to benefit. Every student expressed the positive impact the debate has had on their understanding of Cherokee and American history, as well as, their worldview.

The seventh journal prompt asked students: "How could the United States government have been more effective and efficient when it concerns the Cherokee, the State of Franklin and the interactions with all groups of people on the country's borders at the time?" Students were

also told to keep in mind that people in that time period did not have the same knowledge or mindset that people today have available to them and to keep within the context of the times. This particular question received the lowest response rate of all prompts. Responses to this prompt were not consistent and students expressed frustration with the way the question was worded. Something about this prompt did not connect with the students and the prompt, which was perceived to be worded in a way in which it was difficult to respond. Coupled with the low response rate, this particular prompt did not lead to any useful responses.

Prompt eight would see a return to higher response rates with six responses from the study participants. This particular prompt came at the conclusion of learning about the dramatic changes the Cherokee made to their government and society in an attempt to preserve what land they had left. This prompt asked: "Having learned about the changes the Cherokee had decided to make during the Cherokee Progressive Era, how did it improve Cherokee society? How did it damage Cherokee Society? What do you feel are the most significant results, good or bad?"

Student responses centered around the opinion that there were indeed several good things that came with this time period, but the bad were very devastating. Students indicated that the development of Sequoyah's syllabary was the best of the improvements. Its impact was undeniably beneficial for the Cherokee. Another common positive outcome was the seriousness of protecting what land was left and the severe punishment of those that attempted to sell Cherokee lands.

Nearly all student responses addressed the loss of the traditional culture and practices as the biggest negative impact of this time period. Though they expressed an understanding of why some of these practices were let go, they still felt that it was a bitter sacrifice to have to make. They also expressed that the focus and seriousness of this effort was too late. Many

stated that serious efforts should have been made prior to this time period and that might have allowed more options. One student in particular expressed disdain for the schools that were available to the Cherokee. The methodology of these schools was where their complaint lies. Though the frustration is more with the people running the schools rather than with the Cherokee themselves for sending their children to them.

The ninth prompt was issued two weeks after the Eighth Prompt. This particular prompt came at the end of a week that involved learning about the Trail of Tears and the presidency of Andrew Jackson. There was also a change in the way the class was conducted. Instead of lecturing, students would be given access to the notes the night before class and would be expected to look over the notes and prepare discussion topics for the class. The prompt for this journal entry asked students: "Based on the notes and discussions from this week, how has the information impacted your thinking? Has it changed in a good or bad way? Has it benefited you to discuss these topics the way the class has? What would make it better or more meaningful for you?"

Responses expressed a liking for the new approach to conducting the class. They also expressed that though there has not necessarily been a change in how they feel about the topic, they have started to change the way they think about it. The students started to make connections in different ways because of the new approach. Students used phrases such as, "my thinking has evolved," "thinking more in depth," and "helped me expand my thinking." They also expressed a desire to have more dialog with classmates about the topic to see how their peers thought about the subjects of discussion. One student stated that hearing other students ask questions helped them to think of things they had not previously considered. All in all, the responses would help to further develop the course and the thinking of the students.

Prompt number ten asked students:

When thinking about the topics that we have both discussed & that you have read in the notes this week, what has really stuck out to you? Or, to put it another way, what have you thought about more, or thought about differently than when you started the week?

The topics of the week covered the Texas War for Independence, the War with Mexico and Western Settlement. There were a variety of topics that stuck out to the students, but the only commonality among the topics were that the students stated they thought it was weird that their chosen topic was the one that stuck out to them.

One student stated that the Donner party stuck out to them, only because it showed them that there is some truly dark stuff in history. This same student used the incident of cannibalism in Jamestown as information that had it not been for the course, she would probably have never known because of its dark nature. Two students indicated that the Texas War for Independence stuck out, but for different reasons. For one student, they were just interested in how Texas became part of the U.S. The other stated that the incident with the cannon and the flag stating "Come and take it" and the amount of control Mexico had over American settlers in Texas was what stuck out to them. These responses were a nice reminder that students are indeed individuals and what one deems important or interesting only reflects that one student in particular. It is easy to want to look at people as generalized groups and this was a reminder that doing so drowns out the individual and what makes them unique. Like cultural kudzu blocks the structure it overtakes and makes everything look like the invading culture. We can't forget what makes these students unique.

The eleventh prompt was directly aimed at answering one of the main research questions: "How has this class impacted your thinking about American History and the world

around you?" Though student responses varied, as usual, there were several who stated that their thinking about American history and the world has changed due to understanding that there are always at least two sides to every story. Perspective and how things are presented are important because you should always look for the other perspectives in order to get a better idea of what really happened. Students also expressed that being able to learn about their own history has helped them better understand American history and the world. One student's response was very powerful:

> I've had classes for history multiple times but they only ever served information and just moved on, so I never really understood or even knew the right way to ask questions, because I didn't know specifically what confused me. This class is teaching me events that happened in the right order with connections to Cherokee people as well, so now I understand what I was missing from my other classes that I had in the past. I was missing the history of Native Americans, such a large part of my life that has been masked in every history lesson I've received. This class gives me a better understanding of history and connects me with the past in a more personal way now that there aren't significant parts missing, as is the case with most American History textbooks.

What this quote is saying is that this particular student not only wants to know their history, but needs that relevance for comprehension. This statement proves that culturally responsive education has a positive impact on students. They need and desire that relevance and identity that otherwise would not be given to them.

Prompt twelve once again is directed at answering one of the research questions of the research study: "How has this course impacted your view on Cherokee history & culture?" This prompt would be one of the few prompts that would generate a response from all

participants. Most responses talked about how they learned new information that they had not previously known. Several also stated that the course has had an impact on how they perceive history and especially Cherokee history. One student indicated that the course had helped them grow and understand more about the Cherokee culture as a Cherokee person.

Another response indicated that though they can't say that they feel much different than when they started, they did describe the class as an eye opener and that they are now more aware of Cherokee interventions in history. Many also stated that it was a reminder that they still have a lot they need to learn about their own culture and history. One student went as far as saying that this should be taught in "all states and schools".

The 13th prompt also directly asked the students their take on another research question: "Has learning about Cherokee History helped you to better understand American History? Explain how it has or hasn't." Student responses overwhelmingly said that the course did help them understand American history better. Though their reasons varied, most indicated that the course provided them with a better idea of the whole story, through multiple perspectives.

Prompt 14 asked the students specifically about the topic being discussed during the week. This would allow students to express how they felt about previously learning about Eastern Cherokee involvement in the Civil War. The prompt asked: "How has your thinking about the Civil War changed, considering any new knowledge you have gained through this course?" Though there were only four responses, those that did respond stated that their thinking changed only a little. What they did gain and appreciated was the addition of the details, especially with the Cherokee involvement.

The final journal prompt asked:

> When thinking back on this semester and the time you have spent in this class, answer the following question: "How has this class impacted the way you view American History, Cherokee History and Culture and the way you look at the world? Explain your response.

The responses mimicked the responses from earlier entries, stating that they enjoyed learning about the different sides of every story in history and that perspective is important when learning about history. Several expressed that they have taken a new way of thinking and approach to history. Many also expressed a new appreciation for their Cherokee history, as well as a different world view. Finally, several expressed appreciations for being taught the way that they were for the course.

> This class has really helped me understand history. Even though I know there's two sides to a story I got to learn what those stories were. It has helped me see the full picture and understand how things happened and why they turned out that way. Also because of the information I learned, it has helped me make up my mind on certain subjects, such as the election. This class has really helped me understand our past and how our country is today.

Another student stated:

> Looking back on this class from beginning to end I've realized that I was, and still am, very uneducated. I now know that you have to dig so much deeper than you think because you can't fully understand history until you've read the full story. Now I feel like I'm starting to get a better grasp of how to actually explore history. This class really did open my eyes, mainly to the fact that there is always more than we think and that

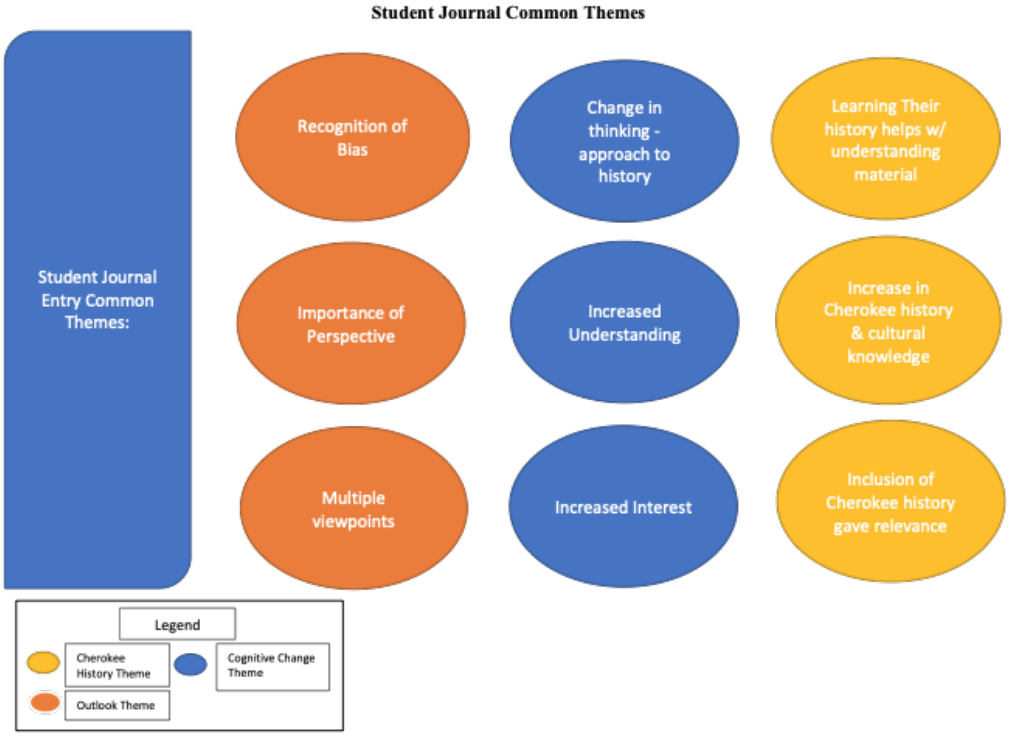
everything is about perspective. I definitely do think I got a way better understanding from this class than I would have in another class.

According to the journal entries, the students felt that they had gained tremendously from the course and the way that it was taught. This may not seem to be important to people outside of the teaching profession, but this is important. If students do not feel there is any value to what they are learning, they will not put forth the effort to learn it. These students are saying they see value in what they have been taught. This would lead one to predict that the information and knowledge being taught will be reflected in the course final or post-test.

There were many differences in the responses to each prompt, but out of all of these responses, there were several themes that emerged (see Figure 3). Each of the journal prompt responses fell under one of three themes in one of three topics within those themes. The Saldaña (2019) coding method, identified the nine topics and themes. Each topic was specifically named by the students in their writings. The students acknowledged several times they were aware of these themes and were responsive to them in a positive way. The most prominent topics that emerged were the importance of perception, the importance of understanding multiple perspectives and how learning *their* history has improved their understanding of American history.

Figure 3

Student Journal Common Themes

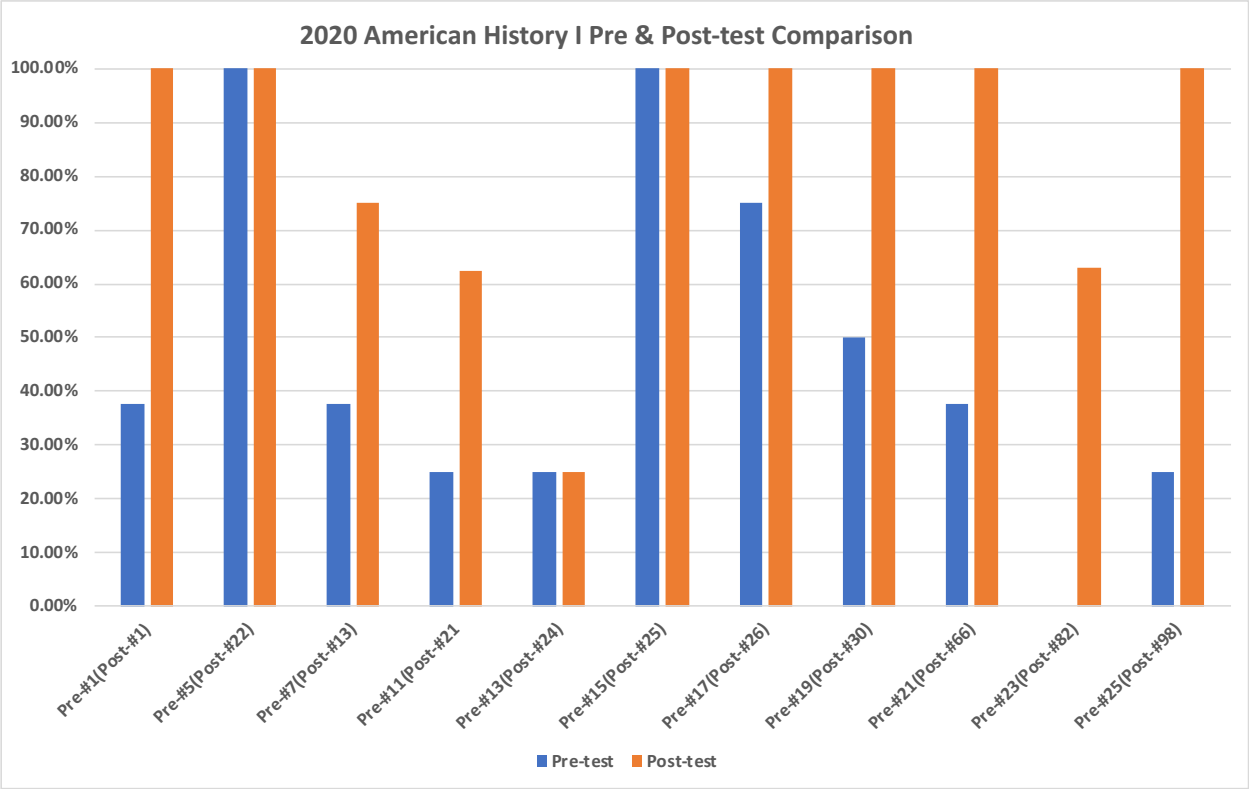


Student Post-test

The post-test or final exam was administered to all students (participants and non-participants) on the same day. The final contained most of the same questions found on the pre-test, as well as, more questions on the same topics. Overall, the Post-Test consisted of 100 short answer questions. Of these 100 questions, 23 questions were based on the incorporation of Cherokee history, 11 of which appeared on the pre-test. A comparison of pre-test and post-test answers, as found in Figure 4, showed an increase in correct answers and knowledge.

Figure 4

Fall 2020 Honors American History I Post-Test



When comparing the pre-test responses to the post-test responses, students showed dramatic improvement in percentage of correct responses. There was only one question that did not show improvement in the post-test. This particular question relates to geography and indicates that, in the future, more emphasis or attention will need to be paid to this particular area. All other questions, showed an increase in correct response percentage. All questions that were answered correctly by all test takers in the pre-test remained at 100%.

When looking specifically at Cherokee history related questions overall, 26% (6 questions) were answered incorrectly by 50% or more of the test takers. The questions that were answered incorrectly the most were related mainly to historical facts and events. Only one of

which was culturally related and was one of the most missed questions on the Pre-Test. This shows that students were receptive to learning more about Cherokee history and culture, not only because they said they were in the journals, but the number of correctly answered Cherokee related questions were considerably high.

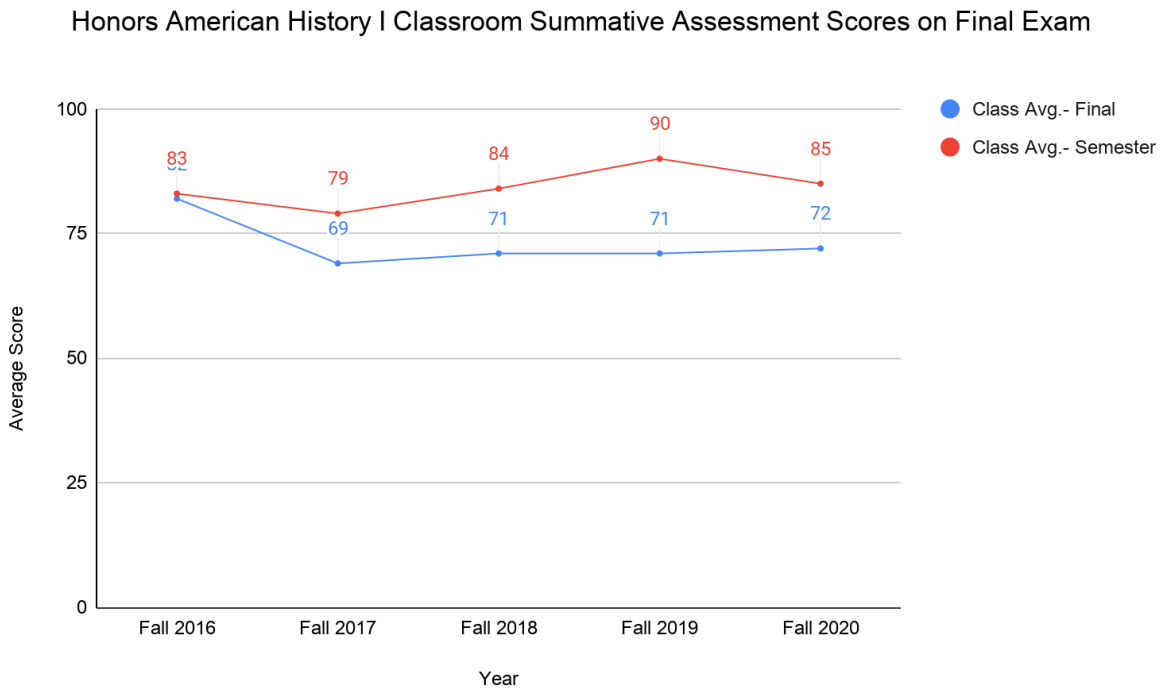
The question answered incorrectly the most was, “The original Cherokee country contained all or part of which states?” (80%). The other two questions that were answered incorrectly most often (70% of the time) were: “What was the name of the Eastern Cherokee Confederate regiment and who was its leader?” and “Who came up with the assimilation policy?” The other three questions that were answered incorrectly most often were incorrectly answered 50% of the time. This indicates that the students were not only receptive to learning about Cherokee history and culture, but retained that information at a positive rate. Of the remaining 17 questions on the post-test pertaining to Cherokee history and culture, 16 had a correct response rate of 80% or higher. The remaining question had a correct response rate of 60%. The average of Cherokee specific questions is closely in line with the overall class average for the post-test.

Overall, the average test score for the post-test was 72. On the school’s grading scale, this would be a C letter grade. When compared to the previous four years (see Figure 5), this is the second highest average for the course final. Though not as high as the 2016 average (82), this shows positive movement. This increase in average, though small, is still a step in the right direction by showing that taking this approach did not bring about a decrease in test average and this was accomplished during the COVID-19 pandemic (Dorn et al., 2020; Wallace, 2020). In a time when schools are experiencing dramatic decreases in grade averages, these test scores increased. This is important because though limited in how the class was able to operate in terms

of methods, rather than follow the same trend as similar classes with similar limitations, the difference was culturally responsive teaching. It shows improvement, however small, during the worst of times.

Figure 5

Honors American History I Classroom Summative Assessment Scores on Final Exam



Overall, the post-test shows two important things: the first is that students are retaining the information being taught to them at a positive rate and at a slightly higher rate than the previous three years. The post-test also shows that using the decolonized approach of incorporating Cherokee history and culture along with the North Carolina American History I curriculum has not had a negative impact on student achievement. This is very important, especially when considering the circumstances, the course was being conducted under, COVID-19 Pandemic. In spite of these circumstances, statistically, the course was able to show

improvement in testing achievement. Once again, though the difference is small, it is a difference in the right direction during extraordinarily bad conditions.

Student Surveys

At the conclusion of the course, all students were asked to complete a survey in order to share their thoughts about the class and the approach used to teach its content. Of the ten students in the class, nine took the survey (90% of students). Of this 90%, all participants confirmed they completed and submitted the survey. These surveys were conducted with anonymity and, like the survey taken by the community, involved using a linear scale to determine answers for most questions (seven questions) and three open-ended questions allowing the students to state their opinions in their own words.

The linear scale questions directly asked the students the research questions of this study. This was done in order to get the information directly from the students, in order to understand their perspective on the research questions.

Table 12 shows the breakdown of question one on the student survey. All of the students agreed with this statement. 66.7% of which strongly agreed, indicating that the students believed they had learned and retained knowledge about Cherokee History in a noticeable way.

Table 12

This class has increased my knowledge of Cherokee History and Culture

Response	N	%
(1) Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
(2) Disagree	0	0.0
(3) Neither Disagree nor Agree	0	0.0
(4) Agree	3	33.3

(5) Strongly Agree	6	66.7
Total	9	100.0

Student responses to question two (see Table 13) show 100% of the students agreed with this statement with 66.7%, again, strongly agreeing. These responses indicate that the incorporation of Cherokee history and culture in the American history lesson has helped develop their view of the course subject (American History I).

Table 13

This class has helped to enrich and develop a broader perspective of American History.

Response	N	%
(1) Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
(2) Disagree	0	0.0
(3) Neither Disagree nor Agree	0	0.0
(4) Agree	3	33.3
(5) Strongly Agree	6	66.7
Total	9	100.0

Table 14, as with the previous questions, shows that 100% of students agreed with this statement. Those strongly agreeing and just agreeing were only slightly different with only a one student difference in favor of strongly agreeing. These responses indicate that students felt that the addition of Cherokee History benefitted their learning of American history.

Table 14

Learning about Cherokee history and culture helped to increase my knowledge about American history.

Response	N	%
(1) Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
(2) Disagree	0	0.0
(3) Neither Disagree nor Agree	0	0.0
(4) Agree	4	44.4
(5) Strongly Agree	5	55.6
Total	9	100.0

The fourth survey question (see Table 15) was the first question that had a third separate response. Though the majority of students agreed, one student answered that they neither agree nor disagreed. Of the responses agreeing with the statement, 55.6% strongly agreed.

Table 15

Learning about Cherokee history and culture increased my appreciation for it.

Response	N	%
(1) Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
(2) Disagree	0	0.0
(3) Neither Disagree nor Agree	1	11.1
(4) Agree	3	33.3

(5) Strongly Agree	5	55.6
Total	9	100.0

The next survey question (shown in Table 16) yielded a similar response rate as question four. Question five would show the fewest number of students in agreement throughout the survey. Yet, the number in agreement is still the overwhelming majority (77.8%).

Table 16

Learning about Cherokee history and culture has impacted my worldview (how I see the world).

Response	N	%
(1) Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
(2) Disagree	0	0.0
(3) Neither Disagree nor Agree	2	22.2
(4) Agree	2	22.2
(5) Strongly Agree	5	55.6
Total	9	100.0

Question five specifically asked if the students' worldview had been impacted, though the majority agreed that their worldview had been impacted, it is not made clear on how so.

Question six (shown in Table 17) would return to 100% of the students agreeing with the statement, but was the only question where the majority of responses were not strongly agreed. 55.6% simply agreed, while 44.4% strongly agreed. This shows that the students believe they were able to develop their own opinions and ideas about American history.

Table 17

This course has helped me to develop my own opinions about various aspects of American history.

Response	N	%
(1) Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
(2) Disagree	0	0.0
(3) Neither Disagree nor Agree	0	0.0
(4) Agree	5	55.6
(5) Strongly Agree	4	44.4
Total	9	100.0

In the final linear scale question (shown in Table 18) one student responded they neither agree nor disagreed, while 5 (55.6%) strongly agreed. The other three (33.3%) respondents agreed, but not strongly. These responses are interesting and would benefit from further investigation through direct interviews, though this option was not viable nor available at the time. The responses do show that the majority of the students believe that having the course taught from a perspective that incorporates their own history and culture benefited their understanding of American history.

Table 18

Having this course taught from a Cherokee perspective has allowed me to have a better understanding of American history.

Response	N	%
(1) Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
(2) Disagree	0	0.0
(3) Neither Disagree nor Agree	1	11.1
(4) Agree	3	33.3
(5) Strongly Agree	5	55.6
Total	9	100.0

The open-ended questions at the end of the survey asked students about their favorite part of the course, what they thought could be done to improve the course and if there was anything else they wished to say that had not been addressed in the survey. Responses to these questions varied greatly. When asked about their favorite part of the class, students responded that they enjoyed learning about *their* culture and history. A couple of students indicated they enjoyed learning about different perspectives of history and the class discussions that allowed them to hear the different perspectives within their own class. These responses validate the teaching of the course through the Cherokee perspective, and indicates that students are receptive to this style of teaching.

The second open-ended question asked the students what could be done to improve the course? Once again, responses varied, but there were a couple of references to not liking that the

class was taught online and one student stated: “Nothing due to the fact the facts were not sugar coated and straight to the point.” This indicates that giving the students the facts and allowing the students to develop their own opinions was appreciated. It also indicates that the circumstances the course had to be taught under was not ideal for anyone, and that under different circumstances, the course could have been more effective. This gives credence to what several community members stated about the need for a more immersive approach to teaching Cherokee history and culture in order for it to be more effective and impactful.

The final question asked the students if there was anything that they would like to say or talk about that hasn’t already been addressed? As expected, half of the class responded that there was not anything else. Unexpectedly, there were several students that expressed thanks for the class and gratitude for the efforts of the course. One student responded, “The one thing I would like to say is that you are one of the few teachers that do more than just teach, you help us get to our goals and further then that sometimes.” This may not have a major contribution to the data and may seem insignificant to those who are not teachers. However, this means more to the analysis of the study than any other piece of data gathered throughout the entire study. This student has found everything they could have possibly gathered from a course and from a teacher. Teachers do not get many opportunities to see the fruits of our labors or the impact we have on our students. This is one of those rare moments where a teacher can see it and they are told directly by those they have impacted. This piece of data proves, at least to this educator, that this approach is worthy of repeating and its value is beyond description.

Overall, the data gathered throughout this study show that there is not only a need for this type of approach to teaching American history at CCS, but there is also a desire for it. The students of CCS need to know who they are, what they are and where they come from. As both

Cherokee and Americans, they need to get this information together, not separately. They also need to be given the facts of their histories, not one perspective and opinion of their histories, but multiple perspectives and opinions.

CCS students, as well as, students in every part of Indian Country and America need to be taught American history through multiple perspectives. When we teach students American history through one perspective, we are only telling them one part of the story and we are limiting them to looking at a very broad picture through one small peep-hole. Teaching through multiple perspectives allows the students to look at the picture of American history with both eyes. This is especially important to Cherokee students because for years, they have only been allowed to look at history through a very narrow lens. Decolonizing the curriculum and teaching American history through a Cherokee perspective allows them to see this picture of American history from different vantage points and gives a much clearer picture of exactly what American history really is.

By teaching Cherokee history and culture in conjunction with the North Carolina American History I curriculum, students are given the opportunity to have the facts and evidence for both viewpoints laid out for them. Then they are allowed to develop their own opinions of Cherokee and American history. When teaching students only one perspective, whether it is the mainstream American or Cherokee, we deprive our students the opportunity to know the whole story, know all the evidence, and most importantly, to develop their own way of thinking and opinions. Not only will they appreciate the opportunity to do these things, but they will be more receptive of the information given to them and will respond in a more positive manner. Our students deserve better than what we were given and as educators, parents, community members

and EBCI officials, we have a duty to make sure our students have the most, and best, information and opportunities available to them.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This study set out to determine the impact of decolonizing an American History I curriculum in North Carolina. The findings indicate that for Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) students at Cherokee Central Schools (CCS), learning about Cherokee history and culture in conjunction with American history not only improved their achievement and retention of knowledge, it gave them something that they were missing, their identity and their voice.

This study set out to answer four research questions:

1. What is the impact of studying American History through the specific cultural lens of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians on student perception of their own culture?
2. How does this approach impact student perceptions of American history, education, history as a whole and their own way of thinking?
3. What is the impact of decolonization of the North Carolina American History I curriculum through the specific cultural lens of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians on student world view?
4. How will this impact student achievement?

Using Indigenous methodologies—incorporating Indigenous voice and knowledge into the curriculum (specifically EBCI voice and knowledge)— the students in the course were given a truly unique learning experience. This course had never before been taught in this manner due to the change in approach, but also policy changes brought about because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Fall 2020 Honors American History I course was taught 100% remotely. Though this was originally supposed to be a temporary situation, circumstances led to this becoming permanent for the duration of the semester. Ultimately, all of these questions would be answered, and many more would emerge.

The impact of studying the course through the EBCI perspective was quite positive and profound. The community stated that this was important and that this needed to be done by teaching the "good, the bad, and the ugly"; the truth. This sentiment was echoed by the individuals that were predetermined interview targets and those interviewed after the community surveys were completed. The student surveys and journal entries indicated that the students also felt this way. "This (class) has helped me better understand the Cherokee because I have gotten to take a further dive if you will into the history of the people. Not only to look at the good things but also the bad". The students themselves stated that they appreciated and learned more from learning about their own history.

> Learning about Cherokee history has helped me better understand American history, because I've now learned about both sides of the history, and I've learned more about American history in general, along with Cherokee history, and learning about both at the same time and what the differences and similarities were amongst the history is really cool.

The students confirmed that this approach indeed had a positive impact on student perception of their own culture through their writings in their journals (see Appendix J) and through their comments in the student surveys (see tables 12-18).

Many of these students expressed that they had not been exposed to much of the information that was shared during the course. Even the students that had some knowledge of Cherokee history prior to the course indicated that the course increased their knowledge and appreciation of Cherokee history. Several came to the realization that they did not know as much as they originally thought and are now more interested in learning more about their history and culture.

Students also indicated through the surveys and journals that their worldview had changed. Though many did not specifically state how that view had changed, they did state that they now look at things with a more critical approach. They question things more now, than they originally did at the beginning of the semester. Students also indicated that they are more aware that there is more than just one side to every story; they need to "dig deeper" when studying history or other subjects. They understand that there are multiple perspectives and the manner in which this course was taught has helped them to change the way they think about things. They understand that there is a bigger picture and the more perspectives they learn about, the clearer the picture becomes.

> It helped me learn way more than any other American History class would. Learning Cherokee history doesn't just help me learn about history but other perspectives on how the Cherokee thought and other cultures had their perspectives. History is all about perspective and if we haven't of learned about Cherokee history it would be a whole different class.

The change in approach to student worldview also brought about the question of student perception of American history, education, history, in general, and their own thinking. Though partially answered with the change in worldview, the students indicated that their change in perception also impacts their perception on other things. Several students indicated that there was a change in the way they think and see things, because of the use of multiple perspectives and looking at things from the EBCI perspective.

> This class has really helped me understand history. Even though I know there's two sides to a story I got to learn what those stories were. It has helped me see the full picture and understand how things happened and why they turned out that way. Also because of the

information I learned, it has helped me make up my mind on certain subjects, such as the election. His class has really helped me understand our past and how our country is today.

It has helped them to understand why events occurred the way they did. It has helped them to understand the mindset and thinking of those involved with historical events. As one student stated, it is all about perspective and a person's values are reflected in their perceptions.

Many students expressed frustration that their prior history classes and general education failed to deliver an accurate and truthful representation of both American history and their own cultural history. Student journaling indicated a hint of resentment over the lack of exposure to Cherokee history and culture. There were, however, discussions towards the end of the semester that relayed the resilience of the Cherokee people. These discussions reflected the wishes of the community that Cherokee resilience be taught to the students. Students, through their journals and survey responses have alluded to this resilience by stating they have been given the opportunity to develop their own opinions, another point community members stated was lacking from the education that has traditionally been offered to EBCI students.

The last question that emerged from the study was about the impact on student achievement. The post-test results show that student achievement, when compared to the pre-test and the previous three classes final scores, did increase (see Figure 4). Though the test average was only a single point higher than the previous two years and three higher than the third year prior, it is a step in the right direction. This statistic is made all the more positive because of the circumstances surrounding the school semester and the downward trend of grades nationwide (Dorn et al., 2020).

COVID-19

COVID restrictions also made it very difficult to ensure that students were completing and turning in work, taking tests in a timely manner and completing journal entries. The low completion rate for many of the journal entries may be because of these restrictions. Another detriment of the restrictions was the lack of varied teaching methods. Typically, teachers can use various activities in order to help students with understanding and mastery of the material. This was taken away from teachers and this course was no different. Though the class was able to conduct an online debate, this was done only once due to the complexity and difficulty of accomplishing a successful and useful debate, completely online.

In spite of these obstacles and setbacks, the students still expressed that they felt that they learned a lot from the course and that they benefited from it. Students also indicated that they felt their knowledge expanded during the course. It is also worth noting that even with all of these things going against the course, the students not only displayed and expressed that they retained knowledge, but the class final average increased over the prior three years. As stated previously, there are many news articles detailing that student grades are considerably lower this school year because of COVID-19 restrictions on schools (Dorn et al., 2020).

There is great confidence that once these restrictions are removed, this course can greatly benefit from a more immersive and interpersonal approach to teaching American history through a decolonized Eastern Cherokee perspective. By including guest speakers, field trips to sites of cultural significance and partaking in traditional foods and practices, or just listening to elders talk to the students about traditional ways or in the Cherokee language, the students would benefit even more and make even better connections with the material, their history and their culture. This would also allow for a full implementation of the suggestions and concerns

expressed by the community through the interviews and surveys. All things considered, I believe that this study was a resounding success.

Concerns

Though this study was successful, there are several concerns that have emerged from the research, namely those that emerged from the community interviews and surveys. These concerns speak to issues that, while pertaining to the school system itself, go beyond the walls of CCS and permeate throughout the EBCI community. These concerns represent systemic issues that require the absolute and immediate attention of not only CCS, but EBCI families, communities and the EBCI government. The actions of each of these entities may have an immense impact on ECBI schools.

While numerous concerns emerged from the study, some gained greater prominence due to the overwhelming frequency in the responses. A lack of accountability (a) and expectations (b), a lack of awareness of resources (c), a lack of access to knowledge (d) and the lack of a clear vision for EBCI youth (e) are the most prominent and most in need of immediate attention. These five issues were identified by the community interviews and surveys, echoed by the responses from the predetermined interviews, and demonstrated in varying degrees by the students in the course.

Lack of Accountability

A lack of accountability was identified by both sets of interviewees as a major concern. These individuals each, in some way, stated that there is no academic expectation or accountability for EBCI students or even EBCI community members. This is an issue that has to change if there is to be any movement in reclaiming Cherokee history, culture and language. The lack of accountability and expectations has led to an abundance of apathy. This

apathy is not solely aimed at education. It seeps into the very fabric of EBCI society and our living culture. If there is no expectation or accountability for us to do better, to present our community in the best way, along with how we carry ourselves as individuals and as a community, students will not have any reason to do the same.

As previously stated, the issues brought up within the interviews indicate that there are many different things at work when it comes to improving the education of EBCI students and there are many entities that share the responsibility for improvement. The burden of improvement cannot be laid on the back of CCS, no more than it can be laid on the community, the tribal government or the families of the EBCI.

Lack of Expectations

Our youth will look to the model that is being presented to them from their parents, families, community, community leaders, teachers, school officials and government officials for expectations for what is the proper way to present and conduct themselves. If they see that people act out in a certain way, say objectionable things and do certain things with impunity and no accountability, they will grow to think that these things are in fact not objectionable or wrong, but acceptable and good. In turn, the image that is being presented for the EBCI, as whole, will not be in line with traditional practices, conduct or thinking.

It is understandable that some things will change. The EBCI is a product of the very change that has befallen the Cherokee people through history, yet, we can navigate inevitable change in a traditional and culturally relevant way. As stated in one of the interviews, we must relearn the lessons that we taught those groups that came into our lands and now control them. We are being shown that we have to return to some of the traditional ways. One of those traditions is that change, though difficult at times, can be done with the right kind of pride.

Lack of Awareness of Resources

The lack of awareness of resources is an issue that should not exist, yet it does. It is a widely held belief around the southwestern mountains of North Carolina that the Cherokee language is not only the oldest language spoken in the area, but also the one that is at risk of disappearing forever. Like any language or culture, its survival depends on transmission to succeeding generations. The Cherokee culture itself has very few traditions and practices that still exist, combined with a history that is at risk of vanishing because too few people know and understand it. This is a unique issue within Western North Carolina, but not a unique issue within Indian Country. Given this condition and its well documented state, there is urgency in promoting and preserving this culture.

The EBCI has been blessed with monetary and technological resources. EBCI has access to more written documentation, both in English and Cherokee written language than, arguably, any other indigenous group of people in the United States, yet its own people are unaware of most of it. Every interviewee, survey taker and student participant in the course studied has stated to some degree that they had more to learn or needed to learn more about their own history and culture. Many expressed frustrations about not knowing where to even begin.

The EBCI has both an excellent museum, complete with archives full of valuable and vital information, and a Tribal Historic Preservation Center (THPC) available to those who wish to learn from the resources they have. Yet, there are few people that even know about these resources or do not think about them as such because of a lack of visibility. The town of Cherokee has a historical district, where the museum is located, along with a co-op where people can buy authentic Cherokee made crafts. There is also an outdoor drama during the summer and a replica Indian Village located within this district. The ceremonial grounds are also a prominent

part of this district. Yet, many people that have lived in the community their entire lives never think of these places, let alone know their hours of operation or how to go about getting time in the archives or THPC.

Lack of Access to Knowledge

There are people, according to the surveys and interviews, that are willing and ready to help spread the knowledge, that want people to learn and have that desire to learn, yet it is not happening. Several interviewees expressed frustration that they were denied access, were lost as to where to find access or who to even approach to request access to this very knowledge that is at risk of being lost. Educators are requesting access in order to be more impactful and effective in their incorporation of the language and culture, yet they are not getting access to this knowledge. This is an example of hypocrisy to expect teachers to do these things without being granted the knowledge to do it.

There exists a willingness and desire on the part of the teachers of CCS to learn from the community and a desire and willingness expressed by the community to be a part of this learning and development of standards, as indicated in the surveys. The next step is to bring these ideas and people together in order to fulfill this goal. Though there are more issues within this particular idea that need to be worked out, there is at least a mutual goal and desire, which will help make completion much easier.

Our elders want to be able to share what they know with the people of the community, yet many community members do not know how to contact them or that they are in the know. This may very well be an example of the effectiveness of assimilation. A community that is so small, where everyone knows everyone else, yet they don't know who is knowledgeable of the culture and language. It may be that they intend to contact them and just lose track of time,

cannot connect with them at a time that works for both parties, or worse, they are so ingrained in the workings of modern society, they don't even think of them.

There are individuals that do what they can, but this is also unfair and unrealistic to expect these few individuals to bear the burden of an entire nation on their shoulders. These individuals are also not getting younger, neither are those individuals that have this knowledge, but have no outlet or access to willing learners. What ensues is several people attempting to do similar things at the same time in the name of preservation (language and cultural). Each group petitions the EBCI government for financial backing or authority over this particular area. This is nothing more than a free for all and everyone is blindly running around causing more distress and mayhem. When someone does try to step in and try to form some semblance of organization and order, they are highly criticized and accused of acting out of their place. This level of discouragement also leads to many that could help and are qualified to help to not even bother, adding to the general apathy that persists within the EBCI. Leading to the final concern, the lack of a clear vision for the future.

Lack of a Clear Vision for EBCI Youth/Future

Once again, the EBCI is in a crisis situation when it comes to the preservation of our language, history and culture. However, despite efforts being made to curb this trend through various programs being funded through numerous grants and tribal funding, there is still no progress. There is no progress because there is no vision. There is no vision because when some progress is made, there is a trend to either end this progress out of jealousy or people put too much value on their own importance and become a roadblock to the very goal they wish to obtain.

This vision needs to be something that the EBCI wants to have, to do or to be. It can and has been argued by many of those interviewed that this lack of vision is a direct cause of many of the issues brought up in this research. There were many suggestions as to what should be done, but can a real vision be extracted from all these ideas? I believe that there can be. What is that vision? Leading our future through the voices of the past. Our future cannot occur without knowing where we come from and our past prepares us for our future.

The youth of today need to learn the lessons of the past, as hard as those lessons may be to learn, they are vital to knowing where we come from and will help us to determine where we are going. They need to learn these lessons from our elders. In turn, our elders need our youth. They need to see where their works are leading and they need to know that the future has learned all that they can from them. This cannot be achieved in one classroom lecture; but that is a starting point. The first step of a long journey. This will also help revitalize and cultivate one of our oldest and possibly our greatest traditions, learning to respect those who came before us and understanding the sacrifices that were made in hope that future generations will have better.

For the EBCI, our greatest resources are our elders. Rather than push them aside and ignore them, we need to relearn that our elders are in that position because they have learned a thing or two about life and this knowledge needs to be accessed and utilized. We need to have the expectation that our future learns from our past and our past sees that the future is set on a clear path for success. We will all be held accountable through the survival of the language, the culture and the knowledge of the past. We will also be held accountable by the path that we lay for our future and how we ourselves walk the path laid for us.

Implications

One implication of this study is that the community and the students want the Cherokee school system to be teaching Cherokee history and culture. What does this involve, from CCS? With the efforts that are being made to teach Cherokee language we need to do everything we can to help these programs fully utilize all their available resources and to make sure that all programs dealing with the Cherokee culture receive all the support they need. By showing community and cultural support we can break the ever-growing sense of apathy and begin to build a better future for the students. Our unique culture makes us who we are and this is what needs to be preserved.

In addition, we have to take a serious look at the community's perception of the school, what the school claims it does, and what it actually does. Simply put, there is no confidence within the community that culture is actually being infused in the curriculum. Survey responses, interview responses, and even the reactions and student responses in both journal entries and surveys indicate this to be true. These quotes stand out among them:

> I feel that I wasn't taught very much of my culture or history at Cherokee. If anything, it was the bare minimum and I had to seek outside sources for more information. They do a lot to try, but I feel it could be done better especially in class.

And,

> Where is the culture? Once a month is traditional dress day - wow. There should be more immersion of language, and students should be mandated to learn it. They need identity!!!!

This boils down to leadership. If CCS wants to truly deliver what it claims, the quality of leadership either needs to improve or change. This means improvement or change at all

levels. The seriousness and bluntness of this statement matches the seriousness of the crisis we face. Improvements are not only necessary, but critical.

These changes can be accomplished through better cultural training of teachers, both Cherokee and non-Cherokee staff, involving knowledgeable community members, utilizing the resources available to the school system through the community and maintaining consistent and effective accountability for students, staff, administration, families, the community and the EBCI government. The school can better utilize knowledgeable staff members and community members for increasing and improving the cultural training of CCS staff at all levels.

This is not a berating of non-Cherokee staff or Cherokee staff that are less knowledgeable. This is a genuine effort to better inform and teach those that are making the conscious decision to enter into the community and educate not only EBCI students, but themselves as well. Staff and community buy-in are vital. We cannot afford to be afraid to hurt the feelings of those that do not wish to be a part of this change that has needed to occur for a long time.

Due to the seriousness of the current situation involving the Cherokee language, and to a degree, the passing of cultural knowledge and history, CCS needs to demonstrate the same seriousness when it comes to fulfilling its role in their preservation. Recognition that the approach taken in previous years has not been fruitful and demonstrable commitment to a new approach is vital. Yet, people are afraid of offending or upsetting others in the community, families, government or students, co-workers, school administration, etc.

Many identified this particular topic to be the source of many of the other issues preventing the school and ultimately the EBCI itself from achieving its full potential. However, the stakes are too high to allow anything less than success. We are at a point where letting ego,

pride, and fear stand in the way of progress is unconscionable. Having to explain to future generations why we failed to allow them the opportunity and right to learn, communicate and live their true language and culture is unimaginable and unacceptable.

This also includes the development and implementation of Cherokee based curriculum standards. This will be a gradual process for some subjects and teachers, but the ideal goal is to achieve a fully immersive learning environment enriched with the Cherokee language and cultural aspects where applicable. A core part of this immersive learning environment is that teachers will be learning the language along with their students, with the eventual goal of a blended Cherokee and English model of communication. This will be combined with a developed and implemented curriculum that combines the three, reinforcing each aspect of language, culture and history. This will provide not only cultural relevance for the students, but the opportunity to find what may be missing from their education—an identity that they cannot get from their current way of learning or life.

This also implies that tribal sovereignty may need to be further exercised by the EBCI government. It may be necessary for the EBCI to, as one interviewee so gracefully put it, "step up" and invest in our own youth. This may mean having to forgo federal funds, then again, it may not. It may mean looking closer at the treaties and the obligations that come with them and possibly pushing for greater control and autonomy from the Bureau of Indian Education. It could also mean that CCS takes a more proactive role when it comes to the freedom we have concerning curriculum development; allowing the BIE to assume a support role, rather than a leadership role.

It also implies that we, as adult EBCI members, take a deep and realistic look at the model that we are being for our youth and decide that we owe them better. We owe our elders

better. We have been blessed with so much, yet, what do we have to show for it? We may very well have to take those first steps of accountability and expectations upon ourselves and say good enough is no longer good enough. Mediocre is no longer acceptable. We will be better because we deserve better and we will be demanding better of our future. It is only fair that we do what we expect from them.

Looking beyond the EBCI and the implications this research can have on other Indigenous people and other students beyond the Qualla boundary, this model could potentially open opportunities for other people to begin to learn about their own history and culture, within the story of American history. Throughout the United States, there are other indigenous people that have long been denied the opportunity to learn about their own history. Groups such as the Dine (Navajo), Lakota, Coushatta and Seneca, just to name a few, have experienced similar scenarios where they have been forced into a one size fits all education. One that tells history from one perspective; a perspective that is not theirs.

This research is far-reaching and can be adapted and applied to a multitude of people and areas throughout the United States; not only providing an Indigenous perspective, but also a perspective that details the history of African Americans, Latin Americans, Hispanic Americans, along with the many other minority American peoples that form our country and make it the uniquely great country it is. Making education relevant to everyone, every student, is the goal; one that is absolutely attainable. Everyone's contribution to the history and development of the United States should be told and heard, especially by their descendants. The future of this country rests with our younger generations and they will form their opinions of this country through their education.

The education brought to these future leaders will best serve them if it is honest about the contributions of all people. It also will be determined by their ability to critically think. This research demonstrates that the younger generation not only deserves to know the truth (the good, the bad, and the ugly), but they crave it, they *desire* to know the truth. When we deny them the opportunity to know the truth, we limit their ability to see the big picture, thereby limiting their future potential and by default, the future potential for the United States as a whole. We also deny them the knowledge of the resiliency, not only of the United States, but of their own cultural and ethnic identities.

Every person has an identity they are searching, desiring and striving to find. Without it, they are lost and incomplete. This research and approach to teaching American history gave that to EBCI students. It can do the same for every student in this country, if it tells and teaches them *their* history; *their* story. Much like one student stated, "this should be taught in every state, in every school". They are right. Every student should know what they are, who they are, and where they come from.

The current public education offered throughout the United States provides a structure in which cultural kudzu uses to cover and systemically destroy the identities and contributions of not only the EBCI and historical Cherokee people, but of every unique contribution of the many people that comprise the United States. The lies of my education have fed the growth of this cultural kudzu. The truth, the good, the bad, and the ugly facts act as an herbicide that effectively culls back this powerful vine of deception and confusion. Multiple perspectives, providing more truth and facts do not take away from this country's greatness; they enhance it. By culling back, the cultural kudzu that infests the current education system, we can truly focus on not "Killing the Indian and saving the man", but prioritize, "Saving the child, and preserving

the Indian within them". E Pluribus Unum is the motto of the United States, but few truly know how the many, come together to work as one. Our current approach to education betrays our national founding principles, as well as our EBCI traditions.

There are many changes that need to occur within the EBCI if we are to achieve our true potential. Regardless of the degree of difficulty, when we look at the price our ancestors paid for us to be in the position we are, we owe them nothing but our absolute best. My generation never walked through the boarding schools, yet we carry many of those same lessons and scars in our minds. None of my generation or the one before fought in a war against a force that sought to oppress the world only to return home and have to fight for our basic right to vote, but we see those benefits. None that live today ever stayed in the stockades of Loudon, never hid in the mountains from federal troops, never had to hold our future and past in our arms as they left this world on a river of tears to Oklahoma, but we carry those scars and tears in our minds and hearts. We owe those that paid that price, that fought those battles and cried those tears everything within us. Just as much, we owe those we carried in our arms, held their little hands, and helped mold their minds for a future that *they* will have to determine—*everything* we have.

Kudzu, the invasive vine introduced in the Southern United States in the 19th century to provide forage for cattle but soon evolved into a scourge, serves well as an analogy to the way that European culture evolved to suppress and even eliminate Indigenous culture. Through education, e.g., the Boarding Schools, white Europeans sought to destroy the transmission of Cherokee culture with the intent of eliminating it and subjugating an entire nation. It is well worth noting that culture is fragile enough to be destroyed in one generation through intentional educational practices that ignore it or suppress. The results of this study emphasize the danger of continuing to suppress the Cherokee language, history and culture in our schools.

Future Recommendations for Research

There are many things that can be further researched based on the work conducted during this time. Yet, there were some that emerged as priorities for me. The first is that follow up research should be conducted to determine the long-term effects of this study on the students that participated. I think a follow-up study, or at least interviews should be conducted with the participants in intervals of five and ten years. This type of longitudinal study would determine the impact of the study during what would be a projected senior year of college and then a year prior to the students' ten-year high school graduation reunion.

Each of the participants are considered honors students and at the top of their class. Traditionally, these are the students most likely to attend college and remain in college for the duration. It would also be beneficial to compare the college graduation rate between the same groups that were compared in the study. The five groups that were compared to for Final average and final semester average were class of 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and the study group, Class of 2022. Though the numbers of each group vary greatly, it would still be beneficial to see the comparisons.

Another area of future research is one that looks at the perceived contradiction that was brought up during the community survey: The education at Cherokee schools is culturally relevant, yet there is also a lack of understanding of the Cherokee culture. This should be looked into further and tracked over the same course of time recommended for the follow-up study. If the suggestions from this study are considered and implemented, it would be interesting to see if there was a change in this perception by the community or if it is an ingrained bias towards CCS or education in general.

If it determined that this is an ingrained bias, investigation into why that bias exists and its origins should make for an even more interesting study. It would also be beneficial to determine, if the changes are implemented, if there is a difference in the perception of the community towards language and cultural preservation. It is possible that all these things are linked together somehow.

The final area of future study would be determining the impact on perceptions of non-Cherokee students towards the Cherokee culture and the differences between the perceptions of non-Cherokee and Cherokee students about Cherokee culture. It is regrettable this study was unable to answer those questions due to a lack of non-Cherokee participants. Whether this was due to the COVID restrictions and the numerous schedule changes that occurred because of certain classes being offered at different times is unclear. It could also be that some parents did not want to have their children as part of this study and they made the decision to rearrange their child's schedule to avoid this possibility. Whatever the reason, it matters little. This only serves as a missed opportunity and, hopefully, not the last opportunity.

This study serves to inform the treatment of other cultures within our American history curriculum. While a controversy over the revision of our North Carolina Social Studies standards rages in this state, the treatment of any curriculum depends on the intent of the teacher. Educating our teachers and administrators in how to deliver all curriculum with the intent of fairness and equity must be a high priority. The lessons of this study apply not only to Cherokee but to any ethical or cultural group as we struggle to understand our past and grow in the future as a diverse nation on a global stage.

Final Thoughts

This research study was a personal experience for me. Personal in that it was not only one that will have a profound and long-term impact on my teaching moving forward, but it also served as a way of facing personal fears. My time as a teacher has been one of many lows and few highs. I have long faced the agony that many teachers face when it comes to questioning how well I have done my job and if I have done right by my students. In fifteen years of teaching, I have buried more students than I have seen walk at their college graduation. During the summer before this study began, I received news that four of my former students had died. These were not COVID related deaths. Most of these deaths are from societal issues and despair.

This study allowed me to revitalize my thirst for cultural knowledge because there was something missing. The more I have learned about my culture and history, the more I fill that void. During this study, when I could get those moments where you could see the click in the students' heads, that void was filled more and more. This study revitalized my desire to continue to teach.

For these students, their journal entries revealed more about their learning than the Post-Test. The tests are important, but they are not the final or even close to the final determination of whether learning has occurred. These students bought in to learning about their history and American history because it wasn't just America's story, it was theirs. Their connections to this story were revealed to them in ways that were never even intended. This way of teaching is powerful for these students. It is powerful for the teacher. We all found the relevance in this story of the Cherokee and America. Now that we all know where we come from, we will be resilient in whatever comes to us in the future. We are standing on a foundation that was built

with the blood, sweat and tears of those that came before us. Our ancestors did not build us crutches to limp with, they gave us a solid foundation to proudly *walk upon*.

References

Allaire, F. S. (2018). Themes from a narrative analysis of Native Hawaiian experiences in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, *12*, 21.

Appleby, J. O., Hunt, L., & Jacob, M. (1995). *Telling the truth about history*. Norton.

Austin, R. D. (2005). Perspectives of American Indian nation parents and leaders. *New Directions for Student Services*, *2005*(109), 41–48. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.152

Bacchi, C. L., & Goodwin, S. (2016). *Post structural policy analysis: A guide to practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Baldy, C. R. (2016). The new Native intellectualism: Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, social media movements, and the millennial Native American studies scholar. *Wicazo Sa Review*, *31*(1), 90. https://doi.org/10.5749/wicazosareview.31.1.0090

Ball, J. (2004). As if Indigenous knowledge and communities mattered: Transformative education in First Nations communities in Canada. *The American Indian Quarterly*, *28*(3), 454–479. https://doi.org/10.1353/aiq.2004.0090

Beaulieu, D. (2006). A survey and assessment of culturally based education programs for Native American students in the United States. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 45(2), 50–61.

Bell, R., Tumilty, S., Kira, G., Smith, C., & Hale, L. (2016). Using a community based participatory research model within an indigenous framework to establish an exploratory platform of investigation into obesity. *Obesity Medicine*, *2*, 19–24. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obmed.2016.03.001

Boone, K. (2019, August 19). Opinion: Culture-based education — a path to healing for Native youth? *The Hechinger Report*. https://hechingerreport.org/opinion-culture-based-education-a-path-to-healing-for-native-youth/

Butterfield, H. (1965). *The Whig interpretation of history*. Norton.

Carney, V. M. (2005). *Eastern Band Cherokee women: Cultural persistence in their letters and speeches* (1st ed). University of Tennessee Press.

Carter, N. P., & Vavrus, M. J. (Eds.). (2018). *Intersectionality of race, ethnicity, class, and gender in teaching and teacher education: Movement toward equity in education*. Brill Sense.

Castagno, A. E., & Brayboy, B. M. J. (2008). Culturally Responsive Schooling for Indigenous Youth: A Review of the Literature. *Review of Educational Research*, *78*(4), 941–993. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308323036

Cavanagh, S. (2004, July 28). Indian schools struggling with federal mandates—Education Week. *Education Week*. https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2004/07/28/43bia.h23.html

Ciotti, K., Shriner, M., & Shriner, B. (2019). Leadership for Indigenous education: Culture-based communication and the impact on student achievement in Hawaii. *Journal of International Education & Leadership*, *9*(2), 1–20.

Conley, R. J. (2005). *The Cherokee Nation: A history*. University of New Mexico Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (third edition). SAGE.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Sage Publications.

DeConcini, D., McCain, J., & Daschle, T. (1989). *A report of the special committee on investigations of the select committee on Indian affairs. Final Report and Legislative Recommendations. Senate, 101st Congress, 1st session (November 6, 1989)*. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED325263.pdf

Deloria, V. (1988). *Custer died for your sins: An Indian manifesto*. University of Oklahoma Press.

Deloria, V. (2003). *God is red: A native view of religion* (3rd ed). Fulcrum Pub.

Dorn, E., Hancock, B., Sarakatsannis, J., & Viruleg, E. (2020, December 8). *COVID-19 and learning loss—Disparities grow and students need help* [Article]. McKinsey & Company. https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-learning-loss-disparities-grow-and-students-need-help

Dudovskiy, J. (2019). *Interpretivism (interpretivist) research philosophy*. Research-Methodology. https://research-methodology.net/research-philosophy/interpretivism/

Echols, M. D. (2018, February 9). *Recounting of sexual torture by priests and nuns spurs S.D. bill*. Last Real Indians. https://lastrealindians.com/news/2018/2/9/feb-9-2018-recounting-of-sexual-torture-by-priests-and-nuns-spurs-sd-bill

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. (2021). *Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians—Higher Education and Training*. EBCI Higher Education and Training. https://ebcihighered.com/

EBCI. (2018). Economic Development. https://ebci.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2018-CEDS-Document-For-Public-Comment.pdf

Edwards, A. (2019). Unsettling the future by uncovering the past: Decolonizing academic libraries and librarianship. *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library & Information Practice & Research*, *14*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v14.i1.5161

Ekman, P. (2009). *Telling lies: Clues to deceit in the marketplace, politics, and marriage* (4th ed.). W.W. Norton.

Ergün, M. (2016). Philosophy of the reliability of qualitative data and interpretation. *Participatory Educational Research*, *2016*, 19.

Faircloth, S. C., Alcantar, C. M., & Stage, F. K. (2015). Use of large-scale data sets to study educational pathways of American Indian and Alaska Native students: Educational pathways of American Indian/Alaska Native students. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, *2014*(163), 5–24. https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.20083

Flynn, S. V., Duncan, K., & Jorgensen, M. F. (2012). An emergent phenomenon of American Indian postsecondary transition and retention. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *90*(4), 437–449. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2012.00055.x

Forbes, J. D. (2000). The new assimilation movement: Standards, tests, and Anglo-American supremacy. *Journal of American Indian Education*, *39*(2), 7–28.

Ford, E. (2020). Tell me your story: Narrative inquiry in LIS research. *College & Research Libraries*, *81*(2). https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.81.2.235

Gaddis, J. L. (2002). *The landscape of history: How historians map the past*. Oxford University Press.

Glesne, C. (2016). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. Pearson.

Goe, L., & Roth, A. (2019). Diversifying the teacher workforce: Evidence from surveys, phone interviews, and site visits with educator preparation programs. *ETS Research Reports Series*, *2019*(1), 1–33. https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12274

Graham, A. G. (2012). The power of boarding schools. *American Educational History Journal*, *39*(2), 16.

Haines, J., Du, J. T., Geursen, G., Jing Gao, & Trevorrow, E. (2017). Understanding Elders' knowledge creation to strengthen indigenous ethical knowledge sharing. *Information Research*, *22*(4), 1–12.

Hardbarger, T. (2019). Cherokee perspectives on Indigenous Rights Education (IRE) and Indigenous Participatory Action Research (IPAR) as decolonizing praxis. *International Journal of Human Rights Education*, *3*(1 Indigenous Women in Research: Global Conversations on Indigeneity, Rights, and Education), 38.

Hilberg, R. S., & Tharp, R. G. (2002). *Theoretical perspectives, research findings, and classroom implications of the learning styles of American Indian and Alaska Native students. ERIC Digest*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED468000

Himmelfarb, G. (2004). *The new history and the old: Critical essays and reappraisals* (Rev. ed). Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Johnson, J. L., Adkins, D., & Chauvin, S. (2020). A review of the quality indicators of rigor in qualitative research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, *84*(1), 7120. https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe7120

Johnson, P. R. (2016). Indigenous knowledge within academia: Exploring the tensions that exist between indigenous, decolonizing, and Nêhiyawak methodologies. *Totem: The University of Western Ontario Anthropology Journal*, *24*(1), 44–61.

Kays, H. (2018, October 31). *Cherokee considers abolishing Qualla Housing* [News]. Smoky Mountain News. https://www.smokymountainnews.com/news/item/25846-cherokee-considers-abolishing-qualla-housing

Kirkness, V. J., & Barnhardt, R. (2016). First nations and higher education: The four R's—respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility. *The Journal of College and University Student Housing*, *42*(2), 17.

Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*. University of Toronto Press.

Lajimodiere, D. K. (2016). *The sad legacy of American Indian boarding schools in Minnesota and the U.S.* MinnPost. https://www.minnpost.com/mnopedia/2016/06/sad-legacy-american-indian-boarding-schools-minnesota-and-us/

Littlechild, W., & Stamatopoulou, E. (Eds.). (2014). *Indigenous peoples' access to justice, including truth and reconciliation processes*. Institute for the Study of Human Rights; Columbia University. https://doi.org/10.7916/D8GT5M1F

López, F. A. 1, Schram, J., & Heilig, J. V. (2013). A story within a story: Culturally responsive schooling and American Indian and Alaska Native achievement in the National Indian education study. *American Journal of Education*, *119*(4), 513–538. https://doi.org/10.1086/670965

Madden, B. (2015). Pedagogical pathways for Indigenous education with/in teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *51*, 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.05.005

Mamaril, M. N., Cox, L. J., & Vaughan, M. (2018). Weaving evaluation into the Waipā ecosystem: Placing evaluation in an indigenous place-based educational program. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, *56*, 42–51. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2017.10.005

Martell, C. C., & Stevens, K. M. (2019). Culturally sustaining social studies teachers: Understanding models of practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *86*, 102897. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.102897

Matengu, M., Korkeamäki, R.-L., & Cleghorn, A. (2018). Conceptualizing meaningful education: The voices of indigenous parents of young children. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 100242. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2018.05.007

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed). SAGE Publications.

McKie, S. (2019, June 27). Tri-Council declares State of Emergency for Cherokee language. *The Cherokee One Feather*. https://www.theonefeather.com/2019/06/tri-council-declares-state-of-emergency-for-cherokee-language/

Miller, S. A., & Riding In, J. (Eds.). (2011). *Native historians write back: Decolonizing American Indian history*. Texas Tech University Press.

Native American Rights Fund. (2019). *Trigger points: current state of research on history, impacts, and healing related to the United States' Indian industrial/boarding school policy*. Native American Rights Fund. https://www.narf.org/nill/documents/trigger-points.pdf

National Congress of American Indians. (2019). *Becoming visible: A landscape of state efforts to provide Native American education for all*. National Congress of American Indians. https://www.ncai.org/policy-research-center/research-data/prc-publications/NCAI-Becoming_Visible_Report-Digital_FINAL_10_2019.pdf

Nealon, J. T., & Giroux, S. S. (2012). *The theory toolbox: Critical concepts for the humanities, arts, and social sciences* (2nd ed). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Nerburn, K. (2002). *Neither wolf nor dog: On forgotten roads with an Indian elder* (1st rev. print). New World Library.

Niles, M. D., & Byers, L. G. (2008). History matters: United States policy and Indigenous early childhood intervention. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *9*(3), 191–201. https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2008.9.3.191

O' Grady, G., Clandinin, D. J., & O' Toole, J. (2018). Engaging in educational narrative inquiry: Making visible alternative knowledge. *Irish Educational Studies*, *37*(2), 153–157. https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2018.1475149

RedCorn, A. (2016). Stitching a new pattern in educational leadership: Reinterpreting a university partnership academy model for Native nations. *Educational Considerations*, *43*(4), 60–69.

Reyhner, J. (2013). *1819-2013: A history of American Indian education*. Education Week. https://www.edweek.org/ew/projects/2013/native-american-education/history-of-american-indian-education.html?cmp=SOC-SHR-FB

Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.

Smith, A. (2009). *Indigenous people and boarding schools: A comparative study*. United Nations, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/E_C_19_2009_crp1.pdf

Smith, L. T., Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (Eds.). (2019). *Indigenous and decolonizing studies in education: Mapping the long view*. Routledge.

Tessaro, D., Restoule, J.-P., Gaviria, P., Flessa, J., Lindeman, C., & Scully-Stewart, C. (2018). *The five R's for indigenizing online learning: A case study of the First Nations schools' principals Course*. *40*, 125–143.

The National Constitution Center. (n.d.). https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/blog/on-this-day-in-1924-all-indians-made-united-states-citizens

The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition. (n.d.). *US Indian Boarding School History.* The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition. https://boardingschoolhealing.org/education/us-indian-boarding-school-history/

Thompson, K. (2015). *Positivism and interpretivism in social research – ReviseSociology*. https://revisesociology.com/2015/05/18/positivism-interpretivism-sociology/

U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). Community facts. http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xh tml, September 1, 2015

U.S. Department of Interior. *Indian boarding schools*. (2019). https://www.doi.gov/ocl/indian-boarding-schools

Usher, A. (2009). The post-secondary student support program: An examination of alternative delivery mechanisms. *Education Policy Institute*, 31.

Wallace, A. J. (2020, November 27). *Navajo school, students fight to overcome amid COVID-19*. AP NEWS. https://apnews.com/article/technology-arizona-phoenix-coronavirus-pandemic-wi-fi-23a921f457ca55d8abd319e15f781b7d

Wilkins, T. (1989). *Cherokee tragedy: The Ridge family and the decimation of a people*. University of Oklahoma Press. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=15135

Windchief, S., & San Pedro, T. (Eds.). (2019). *Applying indigenous research methods: Storying with peoples and communities*. Routledge.

Yu, J. (2009). *Kill the Indian, save the man*. Pennsylvania Center for the Book. https://pabook.libraries.psu.edu/literary-cultural-heritage-map-pa/feature-articles/kill-indian-save-man

Appendix A

American History I Pre-Test (* denotes questions pertaining to Eastern Cherokee Culture or History)

Short Answer

1. What is the most accepted theory for the first inhabitants of North and South America?

2. Who were the first Europeans in North America?

*3. Who were the first Europeans to contact the Cherokee?

4. Who was the first President of the United States under the Constitution?

*5. What are the seven clans of the Cherokee?

6. What are the three branches of the United States government?

*7. What was the treaty that sent the Cherokee to Indian Territory?

8. Explain Manifest Destiny.

*9. What bill was responsible for sending Eastern Native Americans to the Great Plains?

10. Which states made up the Confederate States of America?

*11. What was the role of women in the Cherokee government?

12. What was the 13th Amendment?

*13. The original Cherokee country contained all or part of which states?

14. Describe Military Reconstruction.

*15. What is Kituwah and why is it important?

16. What is the 14th amendment?

*17. What were the two chiefs of every Cherokee town?

18. What was the first successful English Colony?

*19. Describe the role of women in Cherokee society.

20. What did Washington warn the nation about in his farewell address?

*21. Explain factionalism.

22. What was the biggest issue at the Constitutional Convention?

*23. How does syncretism pertain to the Cherokee?

24. What is the Bill of Rights?

*25. What was the significance of Sequoyah's development of the Cherokee Syllabary?

Appendix B

American History I Final/Post-Test (* denotes questions pertaining to Eastern Cherokee Culture or History)

Short Answer

1. What is the *most* accepted theory on how the first Americans arrived in North and South America?

2. What are the three branches of the government?

3. What document was signed on July 4, 1776?

4. What were the three groups of people in the colonies during the Revolutionary War?

5. What was the result of the War of 1812?

6. Who was the first President under the Constitution?

7. What did Thomas Jefferson do to double the size of the U.S. overnight?

8. Who were the first Europeans to arrive in North America?

9. How is seating in the House of Representatives determined?

10. What was the first English colony in North America and who founded it?

11. Explain Manifest Destiny.

12. Explain the Missouri Compromise.

*13. What was the treaty that sent the Cherokee to Indian Territory?

14. Between 1820-1860, what were the two largest groups of immigrants to this country and where did they settle?

15. Explain the suffrage requirements during the Election of 1828 and how that made a difference in the outcome of the election.

16. The telegraph was invented by?

17. What was the "dirtiest" election in U.S. History and who won it?

*18. What bill was responsible for sending Eastern Native Americans to the Great Plains?

19. Describe the American Party.

*20. Explain the decision in Worcester v. Georgia?

*21. What was the role of women in the Cherokee government?

*22. Name the seven clans of the Cherokee.

*23. What were the three dialects that were spoken in Cherokee country and where were they spoken?

*24. The original Cherokee country contained all or part of which states?

*25. What is Kituwah and why is it important?

*26. What were the two chiefs of every Cherokee town?

*27. How was Cherokee country divided?

*28. What event occurred in 1738 that would result in half of the Cherokee population being wiped out?

*29. What did Dragging Canoe fight against his whole life?

*30. Describe the role of women in Cherokee society.

31. Who won the Election of 1860? What did it lead to?

32. Which states made up the Confederate States of America?

33. What was the bloodiest one-day battle of the Civil War?

34. What was the 13th Amendment?

35. What was the Underground Railroad?

36. What was the turning point of the Civil War?

37. What major event occurred on April 14th, 1865?

38. Name the Border States.

39. Who was the author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin"?

40. Where did the Emancipation Proclamation free slaves?

41. Describe Military Reconstruction.

42. What ended Reconstruction in the South?

43. What was the Compromise of 1877?

44. Describe the Homestead Act

45. What was the Freedmen's Bureau?

46. What is a buffalo jump and what is the most famous one?

47. What were the names of the two railroads that built the first Transcontinental Railroad?

48. What is the 14th amendment?

49. What is the 15th amendment?

50. Who came up with the assimilation policy?

51. What landmass did Paleo-people have to cross in order to get to North America according to the theory above?

52. What was the biggest cash crop in the Southern Colonies?

53. What was the first successful English Colony?

54. How was John Smith important to the survival of Jamestown?

55. What role did John Rolfe play in the history of Jamestown?

56. What did Washington warn the nation about in his farewell address?

57. Who organized the constitutional convention?

58. What was the biggest issue at the convention?

59. What is an embargo?

60. What does cui bono mean?

61. Who led the Lewis and Clark Expedition?

62. When was the battle of New Orleans? Who won?

63. What was the Monroe Doctrine?

64. What was the Essex Junto?

65. Who did the U.S. purchase the Louisiana Territory from?

*66. Explain factionalism.

*67. What is the meaning of "Gadugi"?

68. What event ended abolitionist debates and bills in congress between 1831 and 1840?

69. What event started the Women's rights movement and who was the main speaker?

70. Between 1820-1860, what were the two largest groups of immigrants to this country and where did they settle?

71. In an effort to "soften" the harshness of slavery, Southerners referred to it as _____.

72. Who were the "Favorite Sons"?

73. Define Nativism.

74. The Southern economy was based almost entirely on _____. The main one being _____.

75. Who was the leader of Mexico during the Texas war for Independence?

76. What was the impact of barbed wire?

77. What was the Battle of Little Bighorn?

78. What was Military Reconstruction?

79. Who was the first President to ever be impeached?

80. What was the Compromise of 1877?

81. Who made up the majority of Cowboys?

*82. How does syncretism pertain to the Cherokee?

83. Who was Thaddeus Stevens?

84. Explain sharecropping?

85. What was the organization that terrorized newly freed African-Americans and supporters of Reconstruction?

86. What was the name given to Southern supporters of Reconstruction?

87. What scandal plagued the second term of the Grant administration?

88. Who determined the outcome of the election of 1876?

89. What act of Congress granted an individual 160 acres of land if they improved it over five years?

90. What was a common type of home found on the Great Plains?
91. What was one concern that homesteaders on the Great Plains had to worry about?
92. Name given to African-American soldiers by Native Americans?
93. A device used to draw water from deep within the earth or grind grain into meal?
94. What is the Bill of Rights?
95. What was the name of the sight where the transcontinental railroad was completed?
*96. What was the name of the Eastern Cherokee Confederate regiment and who was its leader?
97. Chief, famous for his “I will fight no more forever” speech.
*98. What was the significance of Sequoyah’s development of the Cherokee Syllabary?
99. What was the most controversial part of the Fugitive Slave Act?
100. Who assassinated Abraham Lincoln?

Appendix C

Letter of Recruitment

ᏣᎳᎩ ᎠᏤᎯ ᎦᎸᎳᏗ ᏧᎾᏙᎴᏆᏍᏗᏳ
Tsa-la-gi A-tse-hi Ga-lv-la-di Tsu-na-do-le-gwa-s-di-yu
CHEROKEE HIGH SCHOOL
[redacted]
Cherokee, N.C. 28719
[redacted] *ax:* [redacted]
ᎯᏘ ᏆᏆᏌᏂ
Hi-ti Gwa-gwa-sa-ni
Mr. Heath R. Robertson
History and Technology, Engineering and Design Teacher

August 17, 2020

Students and Parents/Guardians:

My name is Coach Robertson and while I will be teaching the Honors American History I course this fall, I am also currently working on my dissertation for my doctorate at Appalachian State University. This fall's course is the focus of my dissertation study. The purpose of the study is to determine the impact on students of teaching the course through an Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians perspective. What this means is that along with teaching American History, students will also be taught Cherokee culture and history and how American History looks through EBCI eyes.

The study sets out to answer the following questions:

1) What is the impact of studying American History through the specific cultural lens of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians on student perception of their own culture?
2) What is the impact of studying American History through the specific cultural lens of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians on the perceptions of non-Cherokee students toward that culture?
3) What is the impact of decolonization of the North Carolina American History I curriculum through the specific cultural lens of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians on student world view?
4) Is there a significant difference in the perceptions of non-Cherokee and Cherokee students of the Cherokee culture due to the decolonization of the North Carolina American History I curriculum?

Participation is completely voluntary and there will be no penalty if your student or you do not wish for your student to participate in the study. The student will still be taught the course in the same manner, the only difference is that their work will not be used in the study. Participation will not require additional work for the student. If you choose to participate, there will be no identifying information attached to student work or information obtained in the study. If a student wishes to withdraw from the study, they may do so at any time without any consequence. If at any time there are questions from either the student or parents/guardians, please feel free to contact me. My email, school phone number and cell phone number will be provided below. I wish to make my class and study to positively impact our students and to further their cultural and historical knowledge. It is my hope that at the end of this semester, whether they participate in the study or not, that every student leaves the course better informed and a true critical thinker.

If you wish to contact me, my planning period everyday is during 4th period (1:05-2:30).
E-mail: [redacted]
School Phone: [redacted]
Cell Phone: [redacted]

Thank You,

ᎯᏘ ᏆᏆᏌᏂ
Hi-ti Gwa-gwa-sa-ni
Heath R. Robertson

Appendix D

Parental Consent Form

[Appalachian State University Letterhead]

CONSENT FROM PARENT OR GUARDIAN

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH
Your child is invited to participate in a research study designed to determine the impact on students of teaching the course through an Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians perspective.

ELIGIBILITY
Any student enrolled in the Honors American History I course offered Fall 2020 at Cherokee High school.

DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPATION
You agree to allow your child to participate in this project. Your consent allows us to collect your child's work, conduct formal classroom observations, and/or collect data from assessments administered as part of your child's curriculum. Your child may be asked to give an exit interview at the conclusion of the course. There will be no identifying information collected during the study and students will remain anonymous at all times.

There is no expectation for your child to do any extra work or activities for this study. There will be no change in course activity or requirements based on participation in the study.

Reasons your child may not want to participate in this study include no interest in participating or having their work evaluated for the purpose of the study.

VOLUNTEER STATEMENT
Your child is a volunteer. The decision to participate in this study is completely up to you and your child. If your child decides to be in this study, you or your child may end participation at any time without penalty. Neither you nor your child will be treated any differently if you or your child decides not to participate in this study. Your child's grade will not be affected in any way.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have any questions or concerns about this research project, please contact:
Coach Heath Robertson
Email: [redacted]
Phone: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]

☐ I give permission for my child to participate in this study

☐ I do not give permission for my child to participate in this study

_____ _____
Signature **[optional]** Date

Appalachian State University's Institutional Review Board has determined this study to be exempt from IRB oversight.

Appendix E

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Cultural Elements of the Education of Cherokee People

Interviews will be conducted one on one with key members of the Cherokee community. All interviews will be recorded with permission of the participant. The following questions will be used to guide the conversation, but not limit it. Data collected from interviews will be analyzed using coding to determine common themes. Participants will sign an informed consent letter prior to the interview. Each interview will be scheduled for 30-45 minutes.

1. **What would the ideal EBCI school curriculum look like?**

2. **Talk to me about your own educational experience in terms of the Cherokee culture?**

3. **What do you think is missing from Cherokee students' education today?**

4. **Is there anything else you would like to say about the relationship between education and Cherokee Culture and History?**

Appendix F

Survey for Community Members

Survey for Community Members

Cultural Elements of the Education of Cherokee People

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study on Cherokee education. You may choose to leave the study at any time with no questions asked. Your opinion is greatly appreciated. All responses will be kept confidential. Your answers will not identify you in any way.

Please respond using the following scale:

5) Strongly agree; 4) Agree; 3) No opinion; 2) Disagree; 1) Strongly disagree

STATEMENT	CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSE
Cherokee culture and history should be taught in Cherokee schools.	1 2 3 4 5
Students should be taught Cherokee history along with other histories taught in school.	1 2 3 4 5
The education received at Cherokee schools is culturally relevant.	1 2 3 4 5
It is important for Cherokee students to know their culture.	1 2 3 4 5
Cherokee students are taught Cherokee history in Cherokee Schools.	1 2 3 4 5
It is important that Cherokee students understand the progress of Cherokee history.	1 2 3 4 5
Cherokee culture should not be taught in Cherokee schools.	1 2 3 4 5
More should be done to encourage the study of Cherokee history.	1 2 3 4 5
Cherokee students understand their cultural beginnings.	1 2 3 4 5
A lack of cultural understanding is a problem in Cherokee schools.	1 2 3 4 5

Is there anything that you would like to say or share about the teaching of Cherokee history and culture in Cherokee schools?

Appendix G

Student Journal Entry Guide

Student Journal Entry Guide

The purpose of the journal entries is to allow the students the opportunity to put their feelings and thoughts to paper and develop their viewpoints and opinions. Not only is this a venue for the students to reflect, it allows me the opportunity to see what impact the course, material and the teaching perspective is having on the students and their way of thinking.

No two prompts will be the same. Each prompt will encourage critical thinking and connections to the material.

Students will be given a writing prompt every other Friday to address their developing understanding of the Cherokee culture and perspective. Other prompts will be developed based on student responses to the first two stated below.

Below are the first two journal prompts:

Journal Prompt #1 (August 28, 2020):

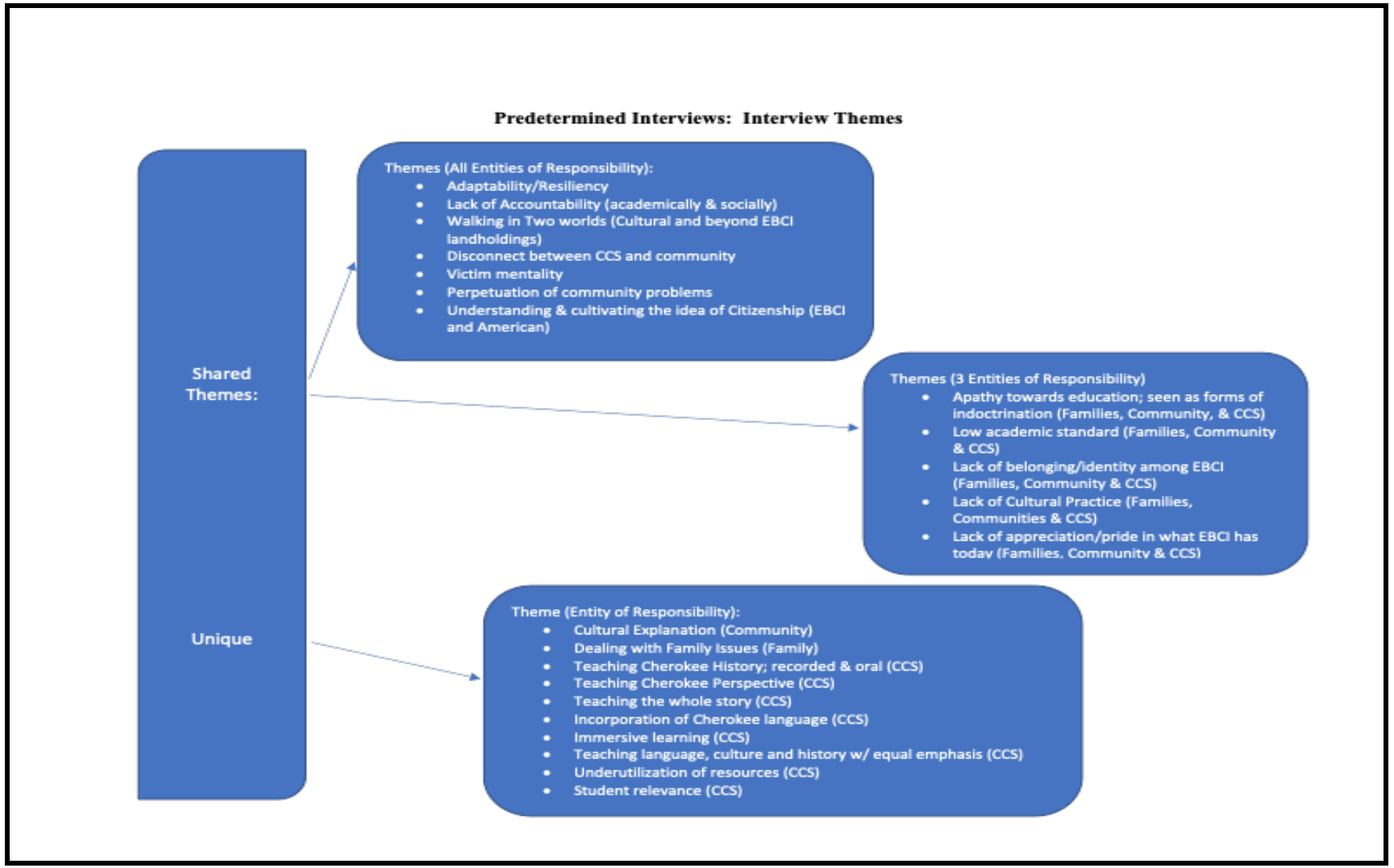
Describe your personal connection to the Cherokee.

Journal Prompt #2 (September 4, 2020):

What have you learned this week that has changed or supported your beliefs about Cherokee?

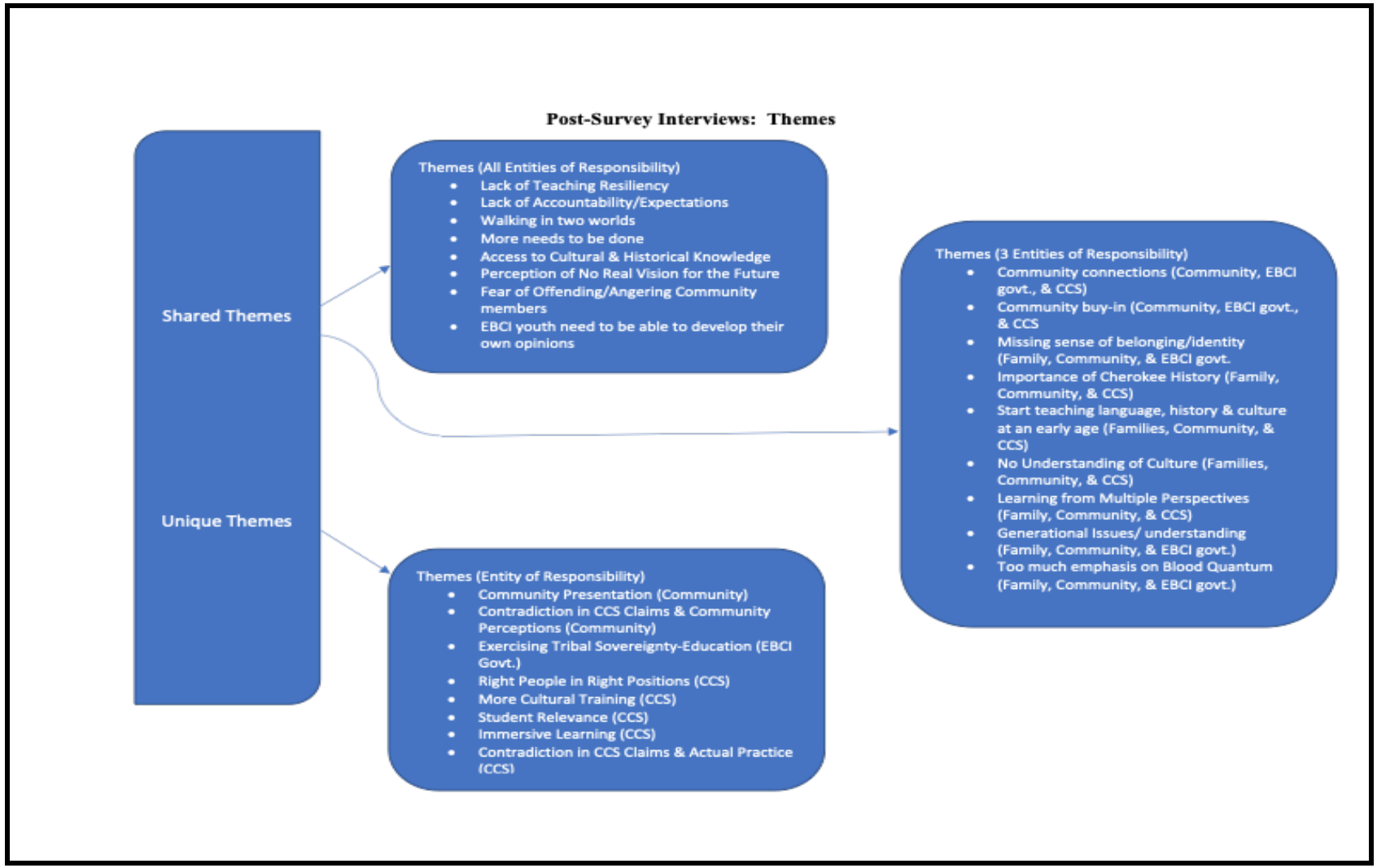
Appendix H

Predetermined Interviews: Interview Themes



Appendix I

Post-Survey Interviews: Themes



Appendix J

Themes from Student Journal Entries

Student Journal Entries

Journal Prompt 1

Common:	Unique:
• Cherokee blood • Little/No connection to culture • Little/No knowledge • Should Know More	• Didn't see point in learning • Felt they knew quite a lot • Very traditional family

Journal Prompt 2

Common:	Unique:
• Little/No knowledge • Should Know More • Were unaware of several topics covered • Knew the clans & Kituwah	• Aware of some of the traditions and aspects • Interesting

Journal Prompt 3

Common:	Unique:
• Different Perspective-better understanding overall • Different Perspective-understanding of events • Different Perspective-encouraged further learning • Only getting part of the story before course	• Wished to seek other different perspectives on events covered • Increasing interest in material

Journal Prompt 4

Common:	Unique:
• Understanding of AH has improved because of inclusion of Cherokee perspective & history • Multiple perspectives helped understand the actions of each side • Allowed them to develop own opinions • Learn new material	• Helped increase knowledge of *their* history • Saw the two histories as separate until now

Journal Prompt 5

Journal Prompt 6

Common:	Unique:	Common:	Unique:
• Opinion hadn't changed, but knowledge had increased • Frustration- treatment of ancestors & that they hadn't ever been taught these events with the inclusion of their people	• Want to know more	• Importance of understanding different perspective • Importance of compromise • Positive impact on understanding & worldview	• Perspective is influenced by values • Eye opening to have to defend someone you disagree with • Sometimes compromise will benefit all involved

Journal Prompt 7

Journal Prompt 8

Common:	Unique:	Common:	Unique:
• No useful responses	• No useful responses	• There were good things that emerged, but the bad were devastating • Blood Law was a good thing • Sequoyah & the Syllabary were the best • Loss of traditions were worst	• Disdain for the schools that were set up • More anger toward the people running the schools

Journal Prompt 9

Journal Prompt 10

Common:	Unique:	Common:	Unique:
• Like of new discussion-based approach • The way students think about the material is changing •	• Thinking expanded • Thinking in depth • Thinking evolved • More discussion with pupils • Hearing others ask questions helped them see things differently or think differently •	• Thought it was weird that what stuck out to them was what stuck out the most	• Dark moments in history (Donner Party) • Cannibalism in Jamestown • Texas War for Independence- cannon & the flag • Texas War for Independence- How it all happened

Journal Prompt 11

Journal Prompt 12

Common:	Unique:	Common:	Unique:
• Always two sides to every story • Perspective & presentation are important to know • Learning *their* history has helped w/ understanding	• History is more personal •	• Learned new information • Impacted perception of American & Cherokee history • Still have a lot to learn • Better understanding of American history • Multiple perspectives gives a better idea of the whole story	• Grow in Cherokee history & as a Cherokee person • Eye opening • "Should be taught in all schools."

Journal Prompt 13

Journal Prompt 14

Common:	Unique:	Common:	Unique:
• Helped understand American history better • Whole story/multiple perspectives	• Question everything • Not always told the truth/do own research	• Opinions hadn't changed • Appreciated the details of Civil War/Cherokee involvement	• Still no sympathy for South • Cherokee were in a no-win situation-can't be blamed

Journal Prompt 15

Common:	Unique:
• Perspective is important • Enjoyed the different viewpoints • New way of thinking & approach to history • New appreciation for their culture & history • Appreciation for the way they were taught •	• Make up *my* mind about things • Still uneducated, but have a better grasp of how to explore history

Vita

Heath Ryan Robertson (Hi-ti Gwa-gwa-sa-ni) was born and raised on the Qualla Boundary of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, in Cherokee, North Carolina to James Stanley, Sr. and Cinthia Dills Robertson. Heath was raised in the 3200 Acre Tract (Tso-sgo Ta-li I-sgo-hi-tsi-sgwa I-ya-tsi-lo-da) community and is part of the Deer Clan (A-ni-ka-wi). He graduated from Swain County High School in North Carolina in 2001. After being awarded his Associates in Arts degree from Southwestern Community College, in May of 2003, he enrolled at Appalachian State University to study History and Secondary History Education. He was awarded his Bachelor's Degree in History, Secondary Education in December of 2005.

After receiving his degree, Heath began teaching at Cherokee Central Schools in Cherokee, North Carolina as a substitute teacher in spring of 2006, then full-time as a high school Social Studies teacher the following fall. In 2014, Heath returned to Appalachian State University to begin work on his Master's degree in Educational Media, which was awarded in August of 2016. He was joined by his younger brother who also received the same degree.

Heath was accepted into the Educational Doctorate program in fall of 2017. Completion of the Educational Doctorate will make the third degree received at Appalachian State University for Heath, who currently remains at Cherokee High School where he teaches Honors American History, Technology and Engineering classes. The entirety of his teaching career has been dedicated to his home and tribal community, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. He currently resides in Sylva, North Carolina with his wife and two children.