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Michelle M. Jacob

Heritage University University of San Diego

Sarah Augustine

Heritage University

Corey Hodge

Heritage University

Mary James

Heritage University

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**Indigenous Methodology in Practice:
Starting a Community-Based Research Center on the Yakama
Reservation**

Michelle M. Jacob
Heritage University
University of San Diego

Sarah Augustine
Heritage University

Corey Hodge
Heritage University

Mary James
Heritage University

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Abstract

In our paper, we examine the process, possibilities, and tensions of building a new community-based research center at a small liberal arts college on the Yakama Reservation. We view our work with the Center for Native Health & Culture as an example of human rights-based educational transformation, as our work is about honoring indigenous land, community, and values. This mission stands at odds with Western educational approaches, which typically view indigenous peoples, cultures, and well-being as a side note to frequently marginalized campus diversity initiatives. Our work to establish the new research center takes up the challenge of placing indigenous peoples' health and culture at the center of the academic enterprise. We, as academics engaging in this work on traditional Yakama homeland, are uniquely situated to analyze and articulate this form of academic decolonization work. We draw from the interwoven liberation model proposed by Falcón and Jacob to critically examine our center's work process and product to articulate our indigenous methodology in practice. Our indigenous methodology is guided by three principles: (a) understanding the importance of partnerships; (b) viewing our work in terms of building on existing strengths within campus and local tribal communities; (c) engaging in work that promotes a vision of academic excellence that has a "good spirit" and inspires all parties involved. We conclude by discussing some of the challenges faced in doing decolonizing work, and affirm the urgent need to further indigenize the academy.

Key Words

Indigenous research methodology, decolonization, Yakama Reservation, university-community partnerships

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Diversity initiatives are commonly embraced and publicized within the US academy. However, centering Indigenous peoples and perspectives within these initiatives is rare. Within the literature, there is a gap in knowledge about the actual process used to embrace a human rights-based form of education that places Indigenous peoples and concerns at the center of academic institution-building. Too often, Indigenous peoples and cultures are ignored, further contributing to Western education as a form of structural violence that undermines indigenous efforts to build strong, healthy, and self-determined indigenous communities. In this paper, we discuss the process of developing of our indigenous methodology through the establishment of a community-based research center at a non-tribal, small liberal arts college in the Pacific Northwest. We analyze the Center for Native Health & Culture (CNHC) as a case study of efforts to indigenize the academy. We begin by offering the historical background and context of our particular campus, then engage the indigenous studies literature that critiques the colonial and assimilationist agendas of western educational institutions, followed by articulating our recent institution-building efforts, focusing on one particular initiative of the center, and finally articulating our particular methodology in practice along with comments on the challenges of engaging in this work. We view our analysis as a contribution to the literature on educational transformation.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Heritage University, a private, independent liberal arts university that has no tribal affiliation, was called into being in 1982 by two Yakama Nation women, Violet Lumley Rau and Martha Yallup, whose initial vision was to improve education for children and their Head Start teachers. In the shadow of Pahto, a mountain sacred to the Yakama people, the first Heritage University President, a white woman, Dr. Kathleen Ross, snjm, together with Violet and Martha, invited a board of directors, students and faculty from many cultures to come together “across cultural boundaries—whether they are geographic, ethnic, racial, religious, or economic. . .” (“Vision” 2012) to work and study together with the purpose of creating stronger, healthier communities. The founding mothers were committed to, and intentional about, creating an inclusive, “good spirit,” for this academic community of diverse learners. Their vision of diversity came from the people of the Yakima Valley and

the Yakama Nations lands; the ideas took shape in conversations around Violet Rau's breakfast table, establishing the beginning of a new synthesis of community and academia.

Heritage University is within the boundaries of Washington State; it is within traditional lands ceded to the United States government in the Treaty with the Yakima, 1855 (known as the Treaty of 1855); and it is within the boundaries of the land reserved through that Treaty to the Yakama Nation (U.S. Department of Interior 1859: Article 2). A map showing an indigenous perspective of Heritage University's location can be viewed on page 3 of our Annual Report on the CNHC webpage at: http://www.heritage.edu/Portals/0/pdfs/Community/Center%20for%20Native%20Health/AnnualReport_Final.pdf.

This geographic situating of Heritage, and our founding mothers' vision, require us to ask ourselves whether the University, a guest on the Yakama Nation lands, is welcoming to members of the Nation, who host us. Does our academic approach continue to be supportive of and compatible with the traditional ways of knowing, teaching, and learning of the Yakama people? To carry out its vision of education, Heritage University must purposefully resist perpetuating mainstream forms of Western education that serve as a form of structural violence within indigenous communities. Structural violence is a type of violence in which social institutions prevent people from meeting their most basic needs. Paul Farmer (1996) explains that individual experience is embedded in a larger social matrix where large scale social forces, such as poverty and racism, cause personal suffering and disease. When institutions unfairly benefit one category of people over another, they perpetrate structural violence by both penalizing specific people based on their group membership, and by constraining human agency. We are mindful of the ways in which Western education can uphold systems of violence that cause harm within indigenous communities. However, education can be a space of resistance and practice of freedom. Therefore, we must explore the ways in which educational initiatives contribute to the decolonization of education.

WHY INDIGENIZE THE ACADEMY?

Academic institutions, like all institutions, reflect the assumptions and values of the dominant society. In North America, the dominant public discourse is informed by a historical context where the laws and policies that have governed the land and its people prioritize expansion, racial exceptionalism, and commerce-driven development that assumes resource exploitation. Academic discourse reflects the dominant paradigm, and grants privilege to faculty, scholarship, and discourse that legitimize the structures of the dominant society. Faculty, students and communities of color are routinely excluded from this discourse. Course offerings, research opportunities, and collectively

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assumed reality are defined through the narrow lens of the dominant culture (Wright and Tierney 1991). In the same way, institutional priorities exclude peoples and perspectives outside the mainstream. Academic institutions that do not include decision-makers from diverse life ways and perspectives consistently exclude Native discourse. We must devise strategies to *indigenize* the academy, in order to include the priorities of Indigenous peoples in the academic setting.

By indigenizing the academy, we bring indigenous voices to academic discourse, and likewise to institutional culture and priorities. This process occurs through various mechanisms (Grande 2011; Wilson 2004; Mihesuah 2004; Denzin and Lincoln 2008; Dei 2000). Indigenous scholars discuss bringing about indigenization through including culturally relevant content within the academy, including language preservation, recovery of Native agricultural techniques, and preserving traditional cultural patterns (Morgan 2005). Other scholars focus on developing an Indigenous pedagogy, or culturally relevant methods for finding and interpreting information (Williams and Tanaka 2007). A powerful perspective focuses on decolonization, where solutions to policy issues that face Indigenous peoples are critically considered, including policy relating to water, land, fishing rights, and healthcare (Deloria 2004). This effort focuses on empowering native peoples to form strategies to make the lives of tribal people better. Indigenizing the academy must also move beyond the historical process of unpacking indigenous cultures from *the outside in*, where outsiders *study* Indigenous peoples as research objects. An emphasis on research from the *inside out* is consistent with decolonization, where Indigenous peoples are empowered to describe their own experiences by themselves and for themselves (Smith 1999).

TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION: AN INDIGENOUS HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

Indigenization provides important contributions to human rights literatures. Indigenous communities question the legalistic concept of human rights because state authorities seeking to censure and restrain Indigenous communities can use human rights language to justify state intervention in Indigenous communities (Collier and Speed 2000). This process is consistent with other practices of colonization, where those in power use legitimate legal frameworks to eradicate the collective rights of Indigenous peoples to community land, resources and political self-determination (Twiss 2004). Wilson and Brown (2011) respond by framing human rights discourses as they are understood by those using them today, where social action seeks justice beyond simple concepts of definitions of rights. Speed (2006) addresses human rights and the politics of knowledge production, where concepts of human rights are grounded in activist research, and the result is political action that can

decolonize the research process. This approach builds from an understanding of human rights as organic, a point we discuss below in our articulation of our theoretical framework (Collins, Falcón, Lodhia, and Talcott 2010).

When interpreted by Indigenous peoples, human rights tools (moral, legal and political) become tools of liberation (Denzin and Lincoln 2008; Forst 2012). By indigenizing the academy, we imagine and create tools to contextualize human rights from our own point of view and in our own communities, consistent with articles 11 and 14 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). Articles 11 and 14 state that: Indigenous Peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs; and have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions (United Nations 2007). The development of the Center for Native Health & Culture can be viewed as a strategy to increase indigenization of the academy, as the center aims to bring Indigenous knowledge, cultures, and peoples into the center of the university.

A primary strategy employed by the CNHC is to provide a context for transformative education to occur, where we define “research” from an indigenous perspective: it is the mutual participation of Indigenous peoples and academics in the creation and interpretation of knowledge; this collaborative work is transformative because it defines the values and aims of the university and empowers Indigenous peoples simultaneously. Boyd and Myers (1988) define transformative education as the expansion of personal consciousness evidenced by authentic relationship with self and others. These ideas expand upon the work of Illich (1971) and Freire (1970), who define education as embedded in social-political context and moral values.

Ivan Illich (1971) argued that didactic instruction provides a mechanism for dominant cultural actors to manipulate the populace, while participation in meaningful experiences provides the context for real learning. Paulo Friere (1970) extended this idea, writing that true learning takes place in respectful dialogue between the teacher and learner, where intellectual work must be tied to action that is value-driven, and true education develops consciousness that transforms reality via social action. Indigenous scholars have extended these ideas to the indigenous context, where the identity of indigenous educators can effectively transform institutional practices and priorities (Orr and Friesen, 1999; Malin, 1994). Indigenous models of education are further shaped by indigenous analysis of colonial systems of education, and the validation and integration of indigenous humanities, sciences, languages into the education system (Battiste, 2013).

By applying an organic human rights frame to research, we are able to engage indigenous methodology, where the creation and interpretation of knowledge are a mutual enterprise through a dialogic

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exchange between presenters and the audience on a basis of “good spirit.” This is consistent with post-secondary pedagogy explored by Anuik and Gillies (2012), where learning in practice takes place among life-long learners, and teachers and students learn from each other mutually. We engage this transformative educational work within a multicultural institution that exists on indigenous homeland, yet indigenous peoples are a small minority within the actual institution. In Fall 2012, 870 undergraduate students were enrolled at Heritage. Of these, over half (52.8%) were Hispanic and 10.1% were American Indian. Nearly all (98%) of Heritage students qualify for need-based financial aid, reflecting the overall high rates of poverty on and around the reservation (“Fast Facts” 2012). A further contribution of our work is to engage non-Native students into a vision that simultaneously respects and empowers Yakama peoples, and the majority of students, faculty and staff, who are non-Yakama Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples. In our data below, we show findings that support our claim that indigenizing the academy benefits indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. This is a challenge within our work, as we seek to build a model of indigenous and transformative education within an institution that does not readily have the infrastructure for doing so. However, establishing CNHC as a visible and important leader in this effort is a promising example of working through the challenges to decolonize our educational systems.

HISTORY OF THE CENTER

The Center for Native Health & Culture at Heritage University was first conceptualized by the University president, John Bassett, and a Yakama tribal member, Michelle Jacob. In a series of discussions during 2011 and 2012, Bassett and Jacob brainstormed ideas for increasing the capacity and visibility for research at Heritage. In the spring of 2012, Jacob visited the Heritage University main campus in Toppenish, WA, on the Yakama Reservation, to discuss the CNHC idea with a team of administrators, faculty, staff, students, and community members. Discussions indicated widespread support to launch the new center. Jacob began her work as a Faculty Fellow and Director of the Center for Native Health & Culture in July 2012. The center secured permanent office space at the main campus in Toppenish, WA, during September 2012. The Center for Native Health and Culture’s Grand Opening was held in October 2012. During the first semester of the center’s existence, we worked on four separate research projects, submitted two conference presentation proposals, and engaged in a series of on-campus initiatives to help support interdisciplinary research dialogue. In total, these activities helped achieve our goal of raising the research profile of the university and formalized some of the important work that faculty were accomplishing on campus. For example, CNHC successfully worked

with the Faculty Senate, the Academic Affairs Assembly, and university administrators to implement an affiliate faculty policy, the first policy of its kind at the university. This policy helps to honor the research work in which faculty engage. Additionally, the center provides an institutional home for research projects that engage the broader Native American community, thus creating space that honors this work as important.

Along with the programmatic work of CNHC, an important part of the young center's identity included the visual representation or "branding" of the center—how might this represent local indigenous peoples? After a couple of missteps, in which center staff and advancement personnel disagreed on who had authority to design the CNHC logo, center staff engaged in a series of discussions with university advancement personnel, who are responsible for the university's public image. Through this process, the top priority was that the center's graphic identity be designed to honor indigenous peoples and cultures. The pattern at the top of our logo honors the Klickitat (one band of the Yakama Nation) world-renowned basketry tradition. Three eagle feathers represent the holistic Native health philosophy of mind, body, and spirit. One cannot think merely of one aspect of health without considering how they impact the other two. Please see the logo on the center's website, available at: <http://www.heritage.edu/Community/CenterforNativeHealthandCulture.aspx>.

Along with the CNHC graphic identity, a motto was needed that honored the indigenous language of the region, Sahaptin/Ichishkiin. Our center's motto was gifted to us by Dr. Virginia Beavert, longtime Heritage University faculty member and master Sahaptin/Ichishkiin speaker and teacher, as well as Yakama tribal elder. These two public statements (motto and graphic identity) help affirm the importance of a Native presence on campus and resist the erasure of Yakama culture within a Western institution of higher education; this approach is rooted in our theoretical approach to decolonizing the academy as part of a human rights-based education. The CNHC motto "We are strengthening mind, body, and spirit," is written in Sahaptin on the webpage: <http://www.heritage.edu/Community/CenterforNativeHealthandCulture.aspx>

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We draw from the human rights pedagogy and interwoven liberation model proposed by Falcón and Jacob (2011) to critically examine our center's work process and product. In doing so, we articulate our unique indigenous methodology in practice. Following the work of Collins, Falcón, Lodhia, and Talcott (2010), we understand human rights as organically rooted in culture and community. We also build on the work of Cornassel (2008), who argues that indigenous

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human rights work must prioritize the collective well-being in a “sustainable self-determination” over Western-defined individual legal/political rights. Our work supports the argument that “indigenizing the academy is a process in which Western academic institutions are transformed into sites that respect and include Native peoples and cultures” (Falcón and Jacob 2011: 38).

The four principles of the interwoven liberation model are: (a) reciprocity and sincerity are non-negotiable values; (b) achieving intercultural competence requires that we prioritize understanding the local context; (c) projects need to be justice-focused, and avoid paternalistic approaches such as “helping the poor;” and (d) assessment emphasizes how well we are meeting our responsibilities of reciprocity and respect as educators. We draw from this framework to help us describe and analyze the work we are doing to shape the CNHC identity and approach within the university and the broader community. In the next section, we examine one particular initiative of CNHC.

RESEARCH ROUNDTABLES

To provide an example of our center’s methodology in action, we will focus on one initiative, hosting Research Roundtables. By profiling this initiative and analyzing its impact through the interpretation of feedback forms data, we can assess the ways in which our work contributes to a vision of decolonizing education. The purpose of the Research Roundtable initiative is to increase visibility and support for research on the Heritage University campus and to serve as a model of applied scholarship. Research Roundtable sessions are scheduled for 60 minutes. Three presenters, ideally one faculty member and two students, each spend five minutes providing a brief description of their research projects. Because participants in the sessions are at various stages in their work, the presentations can consist of anything from an overview of the initial research and hypothesis to description of a completed project including data and analysis. Some participants provide a few slides for illustration, but this is not a requirement. Once the three presenters have completed their initial descriptions, the floor is opened for questions and comments from the audience members. With several minutes remaining in the hour, a facilitator closes the session and requests that all those in attendance complete a feedback form.

Initially, there was some concern that identifying presenters for the Research Roundtables would be challenging. Because Heritage University is a teaching institution, research is not an activity that is highly visible on campus. The Center for Native Health & Culture partnered with a faculty member from the College of Arts and Sciences to recruit presenters. The recruitment process focused on face-to-face contact with individual faculty members to discover both current and past research projects that might be of interest to the center. In addition,

the faculty members were asked if they had knowledge of student projects that might be featured.

The response to these initial inquiries was overwhelmingly positive. Faculty members were excited to share both their own research projects and also to highlight the work of their undergraduate students. Often this work was centered on fellowships and summer internship opportunities that involved partnerships with other institutions both academic and governmental. In addition to this recruitment strategy, two other strategies were employed. First, recruitment was conducted at two poster sessions held on campus. The first was for students in a minority fellowship program. The second was an end of semester poster session for science students. In addition, audience participants were asked about their interest in presenting as part of the evaluation form. The center soon found a good number of faculty and student volunteers.

One obstacle facing the success of the Research Roundtables was scheduling. As a commuter campus, it was somewhat challenging to find a time in the day when students were available but not in class. To address this challenge, it was helpful to identify the desired participants and work with them to choose a date and time for the roundtable.

DATA AND ANALYSIS

We administered feedback forms to audience members immediately after the conclusion of the Research Roundtable sessions. Forms contained a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. After our November 13, 2012, session, 39 feedback forms were completed. Evidence suggests that attendees viewed the Research Roundtable as a way to learn about existing research projects, with sixty-seven percent (67%) of audience members agreeing or strongly agreeing that “attending the Research Roundtable made me more aware of research currently being conducted at Heritage.” A majority of the audience felt that the research presented was important, with sixty-one percent (61%) of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the Research Roundtable helped them feel that Heritage has an important contribution to make to research.” Additionally, attendees viewed the benefits of research projects as extending beyond the campus, with sixty-four percent (64%) of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that “attending this Research Roundtable helps me see how research has the potential to change the world for the better.” Overwhelmingly, attendees responded that they were engaged in some form of research, with only 10% of respondents reporting that they did not spend time during their week on research. Most of the attendees had never attended one of our Research Roundtables, with eighty-two percent (82%) of attendees reporting they had never attended a Research Roundtable, and 18% reporting that they had.

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While this quantitative data helped us understand some broad trends and attitudes among our audience participants, we were very interested in the qualitative data that participants shared in the open-ended questions on our feedback form. We transcribed the hand-written answers and then two separate coders coded to ensure reliability using three emergent themes. The three indigenous methodology themes within our analysis are: 1) Partnerships; 2) Building on existing strengths within campus and tribal communities; and 3) Academic excellence with a good spirit. Representative data from the three themes are presented in Tables 1-3.

Table 1. Qualitative Feedback: Partnerships

Question	Answer
What did you like most about this session?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I love how we can relate to other cultures.
In what ways could the sessions be improved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More interactive and crowd involvement. They could maybe ask a few more questions get the crowd involved.
In what ways might you be able to support research efforts at Heritage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a concerned member of the community. Collaborate. Collaboration. Be more involved with what's going on at Heritage.
What is <u>your</u> definition of "Research"?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping solve a problem that a community has identified.

Table 2. Qualitative Feedback: Building on Existing Strengths

Question	Answer
What did you like most about this session?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discovering HU contributes to research. The funding for tribal members.
In what ways might you be able to support research efforts at Heritage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To tell the stories of my ancestors with the people seeking to research on cultures.

Table 3. Qualitative Feedback: Academic Excellence with a Good Spirit

Question	Answer
What did you like most about this session?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing that the problems encourage more research for a solution. • Awareness of communities: self-determine language.
In what ways could the sessions be improved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More on how this roundtable will help our curiosity about cultural diversity.
In what ways might you be able to support research efforts at Heritage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I could contribute with my own topic and starting my own research, or I could volunteer and help those who have already started their research. • By researching my own heritage (Mexican-American).
What is <u>your</u> definition of “Research”?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To learn and improve. • Seeking answers to life’s questions. • Learn new things. • To tell the truth.

DISCUSSION

Feedback forms helped us gain insight into the perspectives of audience members who took time from their school, work, or family to attend our Research Roundtable event. When we first proposed the roundtable initiative as a formal activity of The Center for Native Health & Culture, we envisioned that it would be a mechanism to highlight research findings from faculty and a limited number of students who were engaging in research projects about Native American health and culture. However, we soon realized a broader effort was needed to build community, awareness, and capacity around research on our campus. This was part of the “build as you go” approach to founding the research center on our small liberal arts college campus. In order to thrive, we needed to help build capacity and visibility for research across all disciplines, developmental stages, and audiences. Thus, we opened up our topics to be general in nature, but still attempted to have Native American speakers or relevant topics (such as environmental issues on

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Yakama homeland addressed by non-Native speakers), to erode the common practice of rendering Indigenous peoples invisible, voiceless, and unrepresented within higher education forums.

By broadening our focus we were able to reach a broader audience, yet still keep attention and visibility on an indigenous perspective of research, with Yakama peoples or homeland as a topic across the roundtables. Additionally, we sought to be as inclusive as possible by promoting research discussions at all stages of projects, whether a student or faculty member was currently conducting a literature review, crafting a research question, preparing for data collection, or was at the end of a project and ready to share findings. Our feedback forms helped affirm this vision of building research capacity, as participants' comments underscored that research is about awareness, relationship-building, highlighting strengths within the campus and community, and learning about a better way of being in the world. Data related to the partnerships theme (see Table 1) highlighted the importance for Research Roundtables to create a space to "relate to other cultures" and reinforced the idea that audience members are active participants in the co-production of knowledge with data such as "get the crowd involved" and calling for "more interactive and crowd involvement." Feedback also emphasized that research needs to benefit the community, where research "help[s] solve a problem that a community has identified." The partnership theme complemented the theme of building on existing strengths. This theme emphasizes the importance of viewing the assets (rather than only deficits) of communities of color. Feedback indicates that audience members viewed the session as valuable in teaching about opportunities and contributions of Heritage University and local people (tribal members). Additionally, telling one's own story or the "stories of my ancestors" was viewed as a contribution within research. Comments indicated that attending the Research Roundtable helped participants realize their potential contributions to research and affirmed the importance of one's cultural heritage and perspective.

We view these comments as evidence that the initiative empowered attendees. By centering the idea that our community already has strengths and contributions to make as knowledge producers, we achieve our goal of empowering community. Notably, this work is being done in a university setting that does not typically focus on research. Finally, the "spirit" of academic work was a key theme, with audience members commenting on the importance of solution-based work, awareness, self-determination, helping others, and using research as a tool to learn more about one's own heritage and to seek important answers for life and truth. Our Research Roundtable initiative is an example of what Rappaport (2005) calls co-theorizing as we, and the participants, operate within an indigenous-focused, yet intercultural

context. Overall, we were pleased with the ways in which our Research Roundtable sessions provided spaces for our participants to think about ways in which their voices and perspectives matter within the research enterprise.

This specific feedback matches well with our overall approach to “build as we go” and to promote and enact a vision of education that is guided by our indigenous methodology. As such, we are honoring indigenous principles of a human rights pedagogy, which insists that all peoples have important forms of knowledge and critique that can bring about a vision of social justice through education. Within our critical sociological approach, we understand that human rights is not limited to a legalistic paradigm, but must be understood “organically, culturally, and socially” (Falcón and Jacob 2011: 30). By broadening our idea of what the Research Roundtable initiative could be, we created a space within the university in which many more people could participate and visualize themselves as having a voice within the research enterprise. We agree that “when ‘many voices’ comprise academia, the institution itself becomes indigenized in that it no longer exclusively represents or embodies dominant society’s views” (Falcón and Jacob 2011: 38). We build upon the Interwoven Liberation Pedagogical Model by offering our analysis of the importance of human rights education as a foundation for building a research center within a space that historically would not have prioritized an initiative focused on Native health and culture led by a local Indigenous person. Our experience is one of resistance against a dominant narrative that insists small, rural, reservation schools do not have much to offer as agents within the research enterprise. We emphatically disagree and view the work of the Center for Native Health & Culture as an institutional example of the Interwoven Liberation model. As we have articulated, our indigenous methodology in practice has led us to question our own assumptions about center initiatives; our willingness to prioritize the local context has guided our decisions to be nimble in our planning and actions, placing reciprocity and respect as our highest priorities.

CHALLENGES IN DECOLONIZING WORK

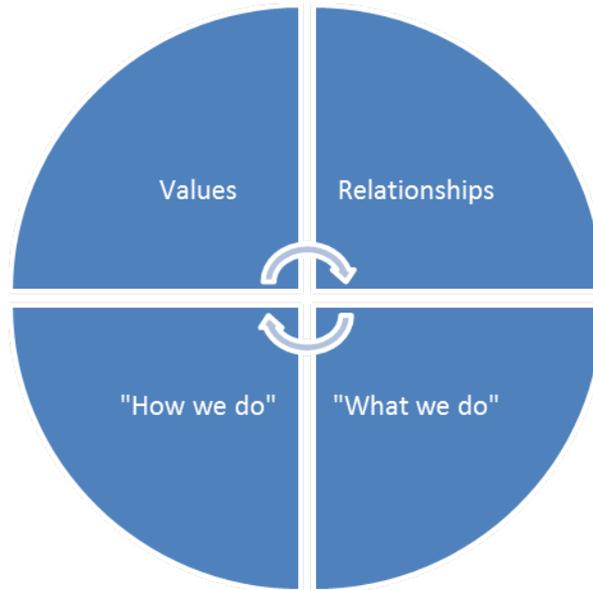
We feel it is important to discuss the ongoing challenges for placing “reciprocity and respect as our highest priorities” within the academic enterprise. Like many other institutions, our campus is placing more emphasis on quantitative assessment during a time when we are still learning to develop measures for “good spirit.” Building trust between community and academic institutions takes time. It can be a challenge to measure effectiveness within 15-week semesters: to show significant growth on outcomes such as “community members feeling welcome on campus,” or “persuading university officials to spend significant amounts of time at community events.” These time-intensive,

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and necessary, outreach efforts can sometimes clash with funding sustainability concerns of the university (e.g. Is it more important to spend your time volunteering or participating at a community event, instead of writing a grant proposal that could bring funding to the university?)

It is crucial to create spaces on campus that welcome Indigenous peoples; where indigenous cultural practices are respected and embraced. Yet, the spaces designated for indigenous-focused activities are frequently lacking adequate technology and facilities. For example, an ongoing concern at our campus is the lack of adequate internet connectivity and hardware in the building in which elders prefer to gather; not coincidentally, the space features photos and artwork by indigenous students and their families. Because the space lacks the needed technology, our efforts to do collaborative partnerships with other indigenous language classes are undermined. The institutional response that “they can just go to another building” ignores the physical and cultural needs of tribal elders and families, who have traditionally gathered in the same classroom for years. The impact of this institutional decision-making process is that elders speaking our language at other places (with the technology) are denied the opportunity to speak with our elders and students at Heritage University. Our center budget does not have the resources or the authority to purchase or install the needed equipment. We can make the requests time and again, but until the decision-making process changes we are at a standstill on this issue. This example is meant to illustrate the challenges of doing decolonizing work. We note that small budgets and lack of decision-making authority impact critical decisions that affect our ability to work effectively with community members. Across academia, we note that many other financial and other challenges disproportionately impact small programs, which often represent some of the most meaningful community engagement on campus. We are in consensus that what matters most is staying true to our indigenous methodology, knowing what our values are, having strong relationships built around those values, keeping track of “what we do,” and educating administrators that “how we do” is just as important. We illustrate this process in Figure 1. These principles are key to engaging in decolonizing education. We feel it is necessary to continue to engage in this type of work within Western educational institutions, so that together we can dismantle systems of structural violence.

Figure 1. Center for Native Health & Culture Indigenous Methodology Practice



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Sarah Augustine, Assistant professor of Sociology and Assistant Director of the Center for a New Washington at Heritage University. She is the co-founder and co-director of Suriname Indigenous Health Fund, an independent international non-governmental organization that focuses on human rights, land rights, the social determinants of health, and community and environmental health. The focus of her scholarship is in community-based participatory research and intervention among rainforest peoples and public engagement in science. A mediator and facilitator, the focus of Sarah’s practice is in group conflict transformation and community engagement. Sarah is an Affiliated Faculty member with the Center for Native Health & Culture.

Corey Hodge, Assistant Professor of Social Work at Heritage University. A former program director in an agency providing services to survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence, her practice and research focuses on interpersonal violence and often includes collaboration with the Washington State Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs. Corey also coordinates and supervises community-based field practicum placements for baccalaureate students. She is an Affiliated Faculty Member with the Center for Native Health and Culture and a member of the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate at Heritage.

Michelle M. Jacob, Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies and Affiliated Faculty in Sociology at the University of San Diego. She also serves as the Founding Director of the Center for Native Health & Culture at Heritage University on the Yakama Reservation. Michelle is an enrolled member of the Yakama Nation in Washington State and she engages in scholarly and activist work that seeks to understand and work toward a holistic sense of health and well-being within indigenous communities.

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Dr. Jacob's book, *Yakama Rising: Indigenous Cultural Revitalization, Activism, and Healing*, was published by the University of Arizona Press as part of the First Peoples: New Directions in Indigenous Studies Series.

Mary James, Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences, has been involved with every aspect of student and faculty interaction at Heritage University. She has served as Director of the Academic Skills Center (ASC); Co-facilitator of the Center for Intercultural Learning and Teaching; and as a faculty member in English/Humanities. James was honored as Heritage Person of the Year (1998) for the inclusive, intercultural atmosphere in the ASC. Current initiatives include Project Coordination for an NEH grant: "*Somos Indios, We are Indian: Bridging Indigenous Identities*" and Affiliated Faculty Member with the Center for Native Health and Culture at Heritage.