

Sustainable Communities: Through the Lens of Cherokee Youth

by

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ABSTRACT

This study argues for Indigenous-led community development as a salient field of study whereby both theory and practice would be held to the goals of decolonizing entrenched systems that suppress indigeneity, as well as embodying processes to rediscover, regain, and reimagine aspects integral to Indigenous well-being and sustainability. Building on fieldwork with Cherokee youth in Stilwell, OK using community mapping and photovoice methods, it is argued that holistic and culturally relevant frameworks that fully situate such salient factors are needed when examining topics related to sustainability, well-being, and resurgence in Native American communities. Utilizing youth narratives, the study proposes a starting point for a Cherokee-led community development framework.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my daughter, Ella, for whom I strive to embody ideals and actions for a more just and healthy world for her and her children. She has been my compass and my mirror.

As well as the past, present, and future generations of Cherokee people.

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OTHER LISTS: TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Culture: Culture viewed *as practice* (everyday acts, ways people interact with one another, with the land and non-human beings” (Carroll, 2015, p. 20).

EuroAmerican/Western epistemology: “Epistemology deals with questions of what knowledges are and how they are acquired- in other words, the nature, scope, and sources of knowledges” (Breidlid, 2013, p. 2). As does Breidlid (2013), this study will utilize the terms *EuroAmerican* or *Western* to,

“identify the hegemonic Eurocentric knowledge system, which originated in 16th-century Europe and together with industrial capitalism produced a specific kind of knowledge that is embodied in modern science...with its mechanistic view of the world [it] is founded on the Cartesian-Newtonian version of science as something universal and objective.” (p. 1)

Indigenous: When utilizing the term *Indigenous*, my work follows the thoughts of Alfred & Corntassel (2005) that the identity of being Indigenous is a constructed identity that is,

“shaped and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism. The communities, clans, nations and tribes we call Indigenous peoples are just that: Indigenous to the lands they inhabit, in contrast to and in contention with the colonial societies and states that have spread out from Europe and other centres of empire. It is this oppositional, place-based existence, along with the consciousness of being in struggle against the dispossessing and demeaning fact of colonization by foreign peoples, that fundamentally distinguishes Indigenous peoples from other peoples of the world.” (pg. 597)

Colonization: Defined as “both the formal and informal methods (behavioral, ideological, institutional, political, and economical) that maintain the subjugation and/or exploitation of Indigenous Peoples, lands, and resources” (Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2005, p. 2).

Dominant paradigm: Prevailing way of seeing and acting in society, social norms are “normalized” meaning they are such powerful assumptions that they are not even

appropriate literature, and in dialogue with community members and alongside the Cherokee youth that participated in the study. During the beginning part of the study it became very clear, that to the youth, the term meant very simply “to sustain or continue”. During the opening of the culminating Community Event, fluent speaker and elder Lawrence Panther defined *sustainable* as “to provide nourishment and to keep going”. Being that the project centered upon community well-being and identifying salient cultural *iyunadvnelidasdi* (ᏓᏁᏍᏏᏁᏍᏏᏁᏍᏏ/life ways), I believe it is fair to say that sustainability can be seen as perpetuation of peoplehood. (Details of the Community Event will be presented in Chapter Four: Study Processes.)

Decolonization: The uncovering or stripping away of an externally imposed worldview, *iyunadvnelidasdi* (ᏓᏁᏍᏏᏁᏍᏏᏁᏍᏏ/life ways), and language that inhibit Cherokee-led individual, community and national sovereignty

Resurgence: Regenerating all that we are as Tsalagi/Cherokee to achieve individual and collective well-being through representing and embodying *iyunadvnelidasdi* (ᏓᏁᏍᏏᏁᏍᏏᏁᏍᏏ/life ways).

Nation: Sovereign tribal nation (e.g. Cherokee Nation)

Community: The focus of the study is family and community level sustainability rather than broader discourse surrounding nation building or sovereignty. This study speaks of community, not only in the context of nationhood, but rather as more autonomous social groupings. This appeared to be underlying assumption of the participants therefore self-sufficient and individual/community agency and self-determination will guide this study.

Sovereignty: Usually meant to describe the inherent roles and responsibilities afforded to tribal nations based upon a government-to-government relationship. It is a huge and much discussed concept. In the context of this study, it also used to describe the autonomy and self-determination afforded to individuals, families and communities to actively participate and guide their own choices.

Re(member) or (re)membering: According to Haig-Brown (2005) the term *(re)member* “is an effort to capture the idea that such knowledge[s] must be put back together out of

fragments held by individuals and communities who have had their traditional ways attacked as wrong for generations” (p. 90). I view this conception of remembrance as recognizing and reconciling with the individual/family/community disconnection and loss associated with colonization and assimilation, but also recognizing and reconciling who we are, our stories, knowledge, language and *iyunadvnelidasdi* (ᏒᏃᏅᏍᏗᏁᏍᏗ/life ways), and Cherokee conceptions of individual and community well-being that are required for Cherokee-led community development.

CHAPTER ONE: STUDY OVERVIEW



Project Participants (from left to right):

Kelen Pritchett (18), Cody Chewey (17), Shania Brown (15), Justine Littlehead (15), Shameka Cochran (18), Kali Sawney (17) and December Rider (18). Taken May 2016 at Stilwell High School by Tiffanie Hardbarger. All permissions given by participants.

Being Indigenous today means struggling to reclaim and regenerate one's relational, place-based existence by challenging the ongoing, destructive forces of colonization. Whether through ceremony or through other ways that Indigenous peoples (re)connect to the natural world, processes of resurgence are often contentious and reflect the spiritual, cultural, economic, social and political scope of the struggle.

(Corntassel, 2012a, p. 88)

Introduction

There is an increasing urgency and Indigenous movements to regenerate *iyunadvnelidasdi* (ᑕᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ/life ways) in order to strengthen Indigenous individual and community well-being and sustainability. The foundation of the complex systems in the United States has been built and perpetuated through historical, social and cultural oppression, marginalization and assimilation of peoples guided by a EuroAmerican/Western hegemonic epistemology. Increasingly, the discourse in academia (at least in areas of critical and Indigenous studies) and Indigenous-led activism has turned to not only focusing on the increasing threat of climate change but also aggressively challenging the hegemonic paradigm founded upon colonization (Corntassel & Bryce, 2011) in areas such as planning and development, natural resource management, education, health/medicine, and STEM, among others. This global chorus of voices challenges such hegemonic structures and is pressing for space to (re)discover other ‘ways of knowing and being’ that “afford more sustainable human, social-economic, and ecological ways of living” (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. xxvii). This study seeks to contribute to the discourse surrounding the ever-growing call to sustain or rediscover *iyunadvnelidasdi* (ᑕᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ/life ways) in order to strengthen Indigenous community and cultural sustainability.

Using photography, seven Cherokee young people ranging in age from 15 to 18 from Stilwell High School shared their voices and visions of a sustainable community

and *iyunadvnelidasdi*¹ (ᏉᏍᏅᏎᏁᏍᏏ/life ways) they believe we need to sustain as Tsalagi (Cherokee people). Multiple strategies of inquiry were utilized including community mapping, photovoice, individual interviews and group interviews. The purpose of this qualitative study was to utilize decolonizing methodologies in the exploration of the qualities of *sustainable communities*, the relationship between these qualities and salient practices of cultural continuance, and the implications for future action based on these assertions (Altman & Belt, 2008, 2009; Barnhardt & Kawagley 2005; Carroll 2015; Chilisa 2011; Gaudry 2011; Kovach 2009; Teuton 2012; Smith 2012; Wilson 2008).

The Tsalagi (Cherokee), as well as many other native/indigenous communities around the world, have had their communities intentionally dismantled and destroyed based upon a EuroAmerican hegemonic paradigm enforced through ongoing settler colonization and more recently neoliberal ideology rooted in development and globalization (Carm 2014, LaDuke 2005, Stremlau 2011). The historical trauma of violence (e.g. direct, structural, and lateral) has included forced resettlement and the attempted eradication of educational, cultural, environmental, spiritual/religious, kinship, gender-based practices, language and governance that sustained and structured relationships and values from time immemorial. These disruptions have contributed to health issues and disparities (Indian Health Service, 2015), language loss (Peter & Hirata-Edds, 2006), disconnection from cultural and community values and practices (Stremlau,

¹ For the remainder of the document, Cherokee syllabary (ᏉᏍᏅᏎᏁᏍᏏ) will be utilized rather than the English phonetics (*iyunadvnelidasdi*) or English (life ways).

2011), and other multi-faceted outcomes. The internal disconnection experienced by Cherokee youth, through a lack of connection to their identity as a Cherokee or through internalized oppression and/or racism, is due to the long history of dislocation, marginalization, racism, assimilation and colonization. Many far-reaching changes have taken place over the generations that have altered our values, practices and relationships. These multi-faceted disruptions have severely impacted individual and community wellbeing and overall cultural continuance.

As noted by Smith (2012), “imperialism and colonization are the specific formations through which the West came to ‘see’ to ‘name’ [i.e. classify] and to ‘know’ indigenous communities” (p. 63). Indigenous peoples worldwide have been deeply and profoundly impacted by this cognitive genocide as the core epistemology of their cultural knowledge and ways of interacting with other beings and the environment were disrupted, labeled and delegitimized. According to Matunga (2013), “Western/metropolitan [development] planning has generally been complicit in the colonial project, a weapon brandished to erase/eradicate Indigenous peoples” (p. 4). Therefore, the question of how individuals, families and communities heal from the trauma of the past amidst an ongoing “structure” of settler colonialism is core to sustainable communities. This question of healing stemmed from Winona LaDuke’s (Mississippi Band Anishinaabeg enrolled at White Earth) 2005 work *Recovering the sacred: The power of naming and claiming*; as well as the assertions by Wolfe (1999) in *Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native*, that settler colonialism is a “structure, not an event” and operates using a “logic of elimination”. As noted by (LaDuke, 2005), what is “at stake is nothing less than the ecological integrity of the land

base and the physical and social health of Native Americans throughout the continent” (p. 11).

A key thread, and point of reference intersecting other comparative English-based concepts (e.g. sustainability, resurgence), is the collective/plural Cherokee concept of ᏓᏁᏅᏁᏅᏁᏅ. Along with the space to represent and embody ᏓᏁᏅᏁᏅᏁᏅ, this paper argues that a foundational tenant for community (and therefore individual) well-being and the resulting aspects linked to the concept of “sustainable communities”, is the regeneration and perpetuation of ᏓᏁᏅᏁᏅᏁᏅ. As illustrated by youth narratives outlined in Chapter Five, there are many dynamic aspects of ᏓᏁᏅᏁᏅᏁᏅ being taught and lived on a daily basis in homes and communities in and around the Stilwell, OK area. These relationships, values, and activities provide the basis for identity and cultural continuance. Therefore, this study provides literature on resurgence, decolonization, settler colonialism and colonizing ideologies, sustainability, and development to illustrate the need for Cherokee-led community development based upon the regeneration of ᏓᏁᏅᏁᏅᏁᏅ.

There is a significant absence of community development literature (especially in a U.S. context) that discusses Indigenous-led community development, especially from an Indigenous worldview (Gilberthorpe 2013, among others). Indigenous scholars and/or critical scholars in fields such as education, sociology, postcolonial studies, American Indian/Native American/Indigenous studies, social work, anthropology, history, and others often do work that is relevant to Indigenous-led community development. Much of the Indigenous-led community development literature and practice is based outside the

U.S. (predominantly in Canada, Australia and New Zealand). Although the Cherokee people have been the “subjects” of countless research studies, there are no studies, of which I am aware, that have examined such topics with Cherokee youth located in the tribal jurisdiction of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.

Synopsis of Chapters

Chapter One provides an overview of the study including purpose, research questions, study location information, methods and my assumptions. Chapter Two provides salient literature in order to contextualize the study and development of a Cherokee-led community development framework. Chapter Three provides an overview of the methodological grounding of the study and the methods utilized. Chapter Four reviews the processes utilized including participant recruitment, relationship to community, informed consent, training, among others. Chapter Five contains reflections and specifics on the process of the study and outcomes. Drawing upon the data analysis contained in Chapter Six, aspects of a Cherokee-led framework are offered as a starting point for dialogue. Chapter Seven discusses the action element embedded in the methodology and Chapter Eight covers limitations, and recommendations for further research and potential action.

Purpose

There are many small tight-knit communities in the Cherokee Nation tribal area that highly value interpersonal relationships, consensus and community harmony (Wahrhaftig 1975, Nelson 2014, Carroll 2015). However, there was a deliberate and strategic destruction of traditional Cherokee community and kinship structures (Ife 2013,

TG̃Θ̃Ɔ̃Ń̃Ń̃Ɔ̃ and sustainable community development (“sustainable communities”), and to begin theorization of a Cherokee-centered and led framework. I attempted to do so within a dialogic process by remaining reflective and reflexive in my dedication to a Cherokee-centered paradigmatic orientation and strategies of inquiry that I felt honored the ontological, epistemological, axiological approaches to ‘ways of knowing and being’ underpinning conception of sustainability (as defined and conceptualized by the youth during the study).

Research Questions

By creating participatory spaces for Cherokee decolonizing praxis (theory, action and reflection), the study explored the following through co-collaboration with Cherokee youth and in dialogue with the community in Tahlequah, OK and Stilwell, OK:

- 1) How do the Tsalagi (Cherokee) youth participants conceptualize the salient qualities of sustainable communities on and in their own terms?
- 2) What values, practices, relationships and/or responsibilities do the participants believe need to be perpetuated to sustain our *iyunadvnelidasdi* (TG̃Θ̃Ɔ̃Ń̃Ń̃Ɔ̃) (life ways) as Cherokee people for generations to come?
- 3) How do the participants envision taking action on future commitments relating to the project themes?

Attempting to honor a decolonizing or Indigenous/Cherokee-centered paradigm requires thoroughly outlining the interwoven relationship between colonization (and linked concepts such as development, education, etc.) and the deep importance of an Indigenous knowledges and self-determination in regards to individual and community well-being. When utilizing a decolonizing lens, the sustainability of communities would be held to the goals of decolonizing entrenched systems that continue to suppress indigeneity

through normative discourses and rediscovering, regaining, and reimagining aspects integral to individual and communal Indigenous well-being and sustainability. The intent of this study is to bring together multiple discourses in order to further strengthen Indigenous-led community development, and specifically to this context, Cherokee-led community development.

Study Overview

In this section I begin by reflecting on my positionality, followed by a brief outline of historic factors that impacted the modern day community and cultural reality. A detailed research journal was kept throughout the duration of the study and data analysis. A research journal, meant to “help avoid blind spots that come with unexamined beliefs” (Herr and Anderson, 2015, p. 55), is where I noted my impressions, observations, and reflections on the process and my positionality.

As a researcher I must be aware of my positionality in relation to research participants (Brayboy and Deyhle, 2000). According to Opaskwayak Cree scholar Wilson (2008), scholars must ask themselves "how and why I decide to research this topic, where it fits into my life and some of the factors that have influenced my point of view" (p. 22). It is paramount that researchers express their positionality (Wilson & Pence 2006) and remain reflective, reflexive and committed to the participatory process within an indigenous paradigm. The role of a researcher in an Indigenous participatory action research study will be that of co-collaborator and facilitator. I am a citizen of the Cherokee Nation with a familiarity of the social, political and geographic terrain in the study area. My role is one of a co-collaborator working in solidarity with and walking

along side (Ledwith 2011, Ife 2013, Wilson 2008) those involved in research study or in the community. The young people, the Advisory Committee, and I all brought different types of knowledge to the process. All of this knowledge, experience and ways of knowing are relevant and useful and may be drawn upon at various times. I also understood prior to beginning the study that my role, and the role of the Advisory Committee and participants, would probably shift as the process unfolded (McHugh & Kowalski, 2009).

My position is one of an insider/outsider. As noted by Herr and Anderson (2015), “each of us as researchers occupies multiple positions that intersect... [whereby] we may occupy positions where we are included as insiders while simultaneously, in some dimensions, we identity as outsiders” (p. 55). I’m a Cherokee Nation citizen, raised in the study area of Stilwell, OK. I attended Stilwell Public Schools from pre-school through high school.

From the small amount of recorded information I have found thus far, I know that my paternal side of the family migrated from Cherokee Nation East to Indian Territory, yet I am unsure of the details of their exact journeys and experiences. My paternal great-grandmother’s side of the family had the name “Bigfeather”, but I don’t know much about them. My great-great grandfather *Tahlahlah* "Woodpecker" (John) Hardbarger was born about 1811, in Cherokee County, Georgia. John married *Tsuyolosi* (Betsy) Shaver in 1847. Their son, my great-grandpa *Gasakosd* (John) Hardbarger was born in Flint District, Indian Territory. (When Oklahoma became a state in 1907 the Goingsnake and Flint districts of the Cherokee Nation were combined to form a new county, Adair County, where present-day Stilwell, OK is located.) My great-grandmother, *Quegi*

The choice to name the research “Cherokee-centered” is deliberate as this form of naming is about bringing to the center and privileging indigenous values, attitudes and practices. The ultimate goal and intent of the study is positive and productive community discussion surrounding sustainable community development and the continuance of ᏌᏊᏁᏍᏏᏁᏍᏏᏁᏍᏏ. The choice to engage with my home community and my nation (Cherokee Nation) was purposeful and I have strategically chosen to privilege Cherokee (and other native/Indigenous) scholars and knowledge systems. There are elements specifically relevant to Cherokee ethics, norms and values, which I attempt to incorporate in the following, however this is meant as a beginning guide from which to work. Over the coming months and years, I anticipate these to be refined and reworked through continual relationship with community. The ethical guidelines inherent in how research is approached and carried out within tribal boundaries and with communities and peoples with deep histories of oppression, dislocation and marginalized must also be subjected to rigorous and constant praxis.

Educators, researchers and workers in community development where people and communities have a past or ongoing relationship with racism, marginalization, oppression and colonization/settler colonialism must be aware, reflective, and reflexive on the role of internalized oppression and violence for the people with whom they work. Community-based researchers must continually practice critical self-reflection to reduce the chance for the researcher’s agenda becoming the community’s agenda thereby reproducing colonialism. According to Ife (2013), "colonialism is an ideology of which perpetrators are usually unaware, and colonists will usually have the best of intentions...In reality, it is usually the case that the community work will represent in some way the dominant or

colonizing culture" (Ife, 2013, p 204-205). When working in the area of what Ife (2013) terms *counter-oppressive community development* we 'must guard against colonialist practice (personal self-awareness, encourage spaces of critical dialogue and action, listen and learn without setting the agenda and provide for time to build relationships and be guided by the community' (p. 206). I attempted to embrace the purpose of decolonization as noted by Kovach (2009), whereby "the organic process of critical self-reflection is an essential part of a decolonizing mindset [in order to]...create space in everyday life, research, academia, and society for an Indigenous perspective without it being neglected, shunted aside, mocked, or dismissed" (p. 85).

I thoughtfully chose to utilize *we* and *our* in the study to show my solidarity as a Cherokee person committed to positive change in my home community (for a critique of utilizing *we* see Hall (2008). When attempting to utilize "research as resurgence" or decolonizing methodologies, it is paramount that those participating in research projects recognize their role and the impact on a community. The Western scientific/academic stance has been that of separation and objectivity. However, when an article or book is written and disseminated publicly, it perpetuates the "knowledge" about a people or place in a particular way, through the lens of the author and even the reader. There is no value-neutral research, therefore there is no such neutral impact upon dissemination. When I thought of reciprocity as a guiding aspect I thought deeply about the knowledge held by the young people participating in the project as well as many (what I considered "knowledgeable") community members, such as the Advisory Committee. I saw my role as one that honored the reciprocal relationship through remaining reflective and reflective during the process to be respectful to the people and information shared. I hadn't

considered myself as fully being a partner in the process. I saw others as holding perhaps more important or relevant knowledge and positionality, but upon further reflection during the writing process I began to wonder if I was actually a key piece as well. What if my involvement was just as unique, needed and impactful? Upon this reflection, I felt that I understood reciprocity more than I had before. I had, perhaps unknowingly, attempted to separate myself as more of an “objective outsider” versus fully embracing my role and impact, for better or worse.

As a Cherokee person that grew up in the area and now plan to remain in the area in the Cherokee & Indigenous Studies Department at Northeastern State University, I must remain accountable for my actions and the way I go about building and maintaining relationships. This integrity and accountability is not only for myself but also for my family, my community and my students (Rowe 2014, Kovach, 2010).

Remembering and honoring histories: people, place and community

As noted by Ife (2013), “for community development, it is important to remember history: the history of a community and society in which it is embedded... [There’s not one official version of history, rather] it is important to remember ‘histories’ [as]...there is more than one voice, and more than one set of memories...[and] stories (p. 100).

The Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma, a tri-partite government (i.e., executive, judicial, legislative), is now one of the largest federally recognized U.S. tribes, with enrollment growing from 41,440 in 1983 to over 315,000 in 2016 (Tulsa World 1994, Cherokee Nation website). The Cherokee Nation is not a reservation but a jurisdictional service area spanning across 14 counties in northeastern Oklahoma. Tahlequah, OK

serves as the capitol of the Cherokee Nation, which is a 30-minute drive from the study location in Stilwell, OK. One of the seven Cherokee detachments arriving from the Trail of Tears disbanded in present-day Stilwell, OK (National Park Service website).

According to Ife (2013), in practice there are two community development contexts with Indigenous Peoples:

1. Indigenous communities where all (or most) are Indigenous peoples.
2. Communities where Indigenous peoples belong to a community along with people of other cultural backgrounds.

In the case of the Cherokee Nation in northeastern Oklahoma, where this study is set, there are “rural areas...[where] whole towns are considered ‘Indian’ communities”, with Stilwell cited as an example that fits this category (Tulsa World, 2015). Although Cherokee citizens make up a large part of the population in this area, so does the White population. The “multi-ethnic rural communities [in this area are] mostly Native American (10% to 44%) and White (44% to 79%) populations” (Komro, et al, 2015).

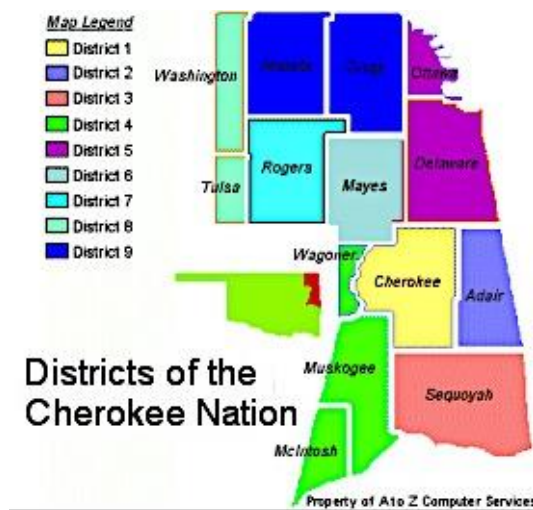


Figure 1. Area Map

The Cherokee Nation/ United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians are headquartered in Tahlequah, OK (Cherokee County, noted in yellow). The United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians (UKB) considers their tribal jurisdiction to be the same as the Cherokee Nation; this is highly contested by the Cherokee

Nation. The study location was Stilwell High School, located in Adair County, noted in purple. Source: Cherokee Nation's Eighth District website. For a more detailed map of the study area see Appendix A.

Of relevance to this study are the multi-faceted ways that Cherokee people (individuals, communities, families and as a communally based society) were systematically dismantled and destroyed over a period of time through both intentional and (somewhat) unintentional consequences of continued settler colonialism and neoliberal policies and practices. For the Cherokee, and many other Indigenous peoples, the EuroAmerican hegemonic paradigm guides policies and practices in all realms of U.S. society including the policies and practices associated with education, religion, development and economics (what's considered 'civilized' and/or 'modern'), environmental management, language, social behaviors, appropriate parenting, and gender roles, among many others. There are unique and diverse aspects of modern Cherokee peoplehood based upon historical and sociocultural factors. For example, the Trail of Tears in the 19th century impacted where families/clans settled together in certain areas in northeastern Oklahoma, so different communities and even individual families today have various dialects, traditions, values, and ways of *being* Cherokee. Even with these differences, there are some overarching similarities in how many Cherokee people view the world and their place in it. A very brief overview below attempts to provide some context to the many ways that ᏍᏏᏉᏃᏍᏏᏉᏃᏍᏏ of the Cherokee people have been disrupted and destroyed.

The resilience shown by the Cherokee people has been remarkable. The Cherokee had sustainable community structures in a multitude of semi-autonomous villages spread across a diverse geographic landscape for an unknown number of generations. After

European contact the Cherokee established a more centralized government. Since the original establishment of a centralized government, the nation has been rebuilt three times, following the events outlined below (as noted in Talbot, 2014, p. 169):

- Destruction at the hands of the southern states and U.S. government...[including] removal policy in the 1830s, which divided their population and sent the majority...on the Trail of Tears to Indian Territory. (Some Cherokees had already moved West, known as “Old Settlers” and others escaped into the mountains and hid from U.S. troops or returned, escaping removal. Those that stayed in the ancestral homelands are now a sovereign nation called the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.)
- Decimation following the Civil War.
- “Unilateral liquidation” by the federal government to make way for Oklahoma statehood in 1907.

Drawing on the work of Duane Champagne (Turtle Mountain Chippewa), Talbot notes that historically “the Cherokees were originally a structurally differentiated society”, with each part of the culture and social system working autonomously (p. 169). Seven matrilineal clans and semi-autonomous village governments defined the communally based structure. The clans were separate from the government and their function was “primarily judicial rather than political...economic life was left up to family households in the Cherokee settlements” (Talbot, 2014, p. 169; see also Mooney 1975 and Theda Perdue’s book on Cherokee women – gendered aspects of colonization). The foundation and “glue” were the clans and kinship. After contact, the Cherokee changed their economy over time by adapting to the commercial fur trade, animal husbandry, and by adopting “southern plantation agriculture, including slavery” (Talbot, 2014, p. 169). When the woman-focused matrilineal clan system became mixed through intermarriage with European culture (guided by men and specific gender roles through “appropriate” social, religious, cultural, and economic behaviors) it resulted in complex set of issues

including an imbalance in political influence and wealth inequality between the offspring of mixed marriages and those that continued to marry within the Cherokee tradition. Often, the Christian religion of the European fathers influenced the children to abandon the Cherokee religious traditions. These children became influential adults and became the ruling class (Talbot, 2014, p. 175). The villages/towns spread across the area that is now eight U.S. states were historically semi-autonomous, guided by the red (war)/white (peace) political balance, the clan system and cultural traditions. The villages/towns eventually gave way to a more centralized government and political system. According to Carroll, (2015), in the early 1800s Cherokees saw nationhood as a necessary measure for political survival, therefore effort to establish Cherokee ‘nationhood’ (focused on citizenship, loyalty to the national council, and residence within defined borders) was reiterated by political leaders more so than ‘peoplehood’ (shared history, ceremonial cycle, language and territory; Holm, 2003) (p. 46). By 1825, class differences and divisions were apparent due to the formation of an agrarian capitalistic economy (Carroll, 2015, p. 50). As noted by Carroll (2015), when the “semi-autonomous towns gave up some of their autonomy in exchange for centralized political unification” it drastically “alter[ed] the way they looked at the world”. The Cherokee “looked to a new central entity to represent them politically that was not embedded in their local community or local system of governance; [this] “decentering of the clan system and its role in everyday life” impact[ed] decision making based upon the relationships and worldview based within these clans (e.g. family and community roles, parenting, kinship, and relationships to plants, animals, landforms) (Carroll, 2015, p. 20). As noted by Treat (2003),

Those [Cherokees in the 1830's] that survived the trauma of the Trail of Tears settled in the wooded hill country at the western end of the Ozarks, where they quickly rebuilt homes and communities. They also worked to reestablish their constitutional government, though an uncivil War Between the States two decades later spilled over into the Cherokee Nation, exacerbating political factions that had crystallized during the removal era. By the end of the nineteenth century, the bluffs and hollows surrounding the nation's capital in Tahlequah were dotted with small settlements of people related by kinship and united around ceremonial grounds and churches.

The years following removal to Indian Territory included the land rush and a massive influx of illegal settlement from non-natives as well as the era of enrollment (Dawes Roll based on blood quantum) and land allotment.

As an example of the intentional dismantling of $TG\Theta\sigma\eta\rho\iota\omega\delta\chi$ the work of Stremlau (2011) will be utilized. Stremlau (2011) examines the allotment process as it "was intended to sever these fundamental relationships by preventing Cherokees from sustaining them and convincing them that doing so was wrong" (Stremlau, 2011, p. 4). The Cherokee people, along with many other native peoples, were looked upon as flawed and not conducive to the newly emerging nation based upon the EuroAmerican values of individualism, nuclear families, market- and resource-based economic enterprise based upon self-interest, private land ownership, the accumulation of wealth, specifically defined ("proper") gender roles, and a particular brand of religion and worship. Ife (2013) argues,

the history of industrial society- and indeed capitalism- has been a history of the destruction of traditional community structures, whether based on the village, the

extended family or the Church. This has been necessary for the development of industrial capitalism, which has required a mobile labor force, rising levels of individual and household consumption, increased personal mobility and the dominance of an individualist ideology. (p. 20)

As noted by Jaska (2006), “replacing indigenous systems of communal land tenure with...Anglo-American-style individual property rights destroys the essential character of the exclusionary right, fracturing it among all the members of the community and destroying its unitary force” (p. 187). This intentional destruction holds true when looking at the actions and subsequent impact of colonization on Cherokee society and community-based structures. Individual and community disconnection from Indigenous life ways and relationships to/with human and non-human beings was a strategic goal of settler colonialism in the United States. Stremlau’s work *Sustaining the Cherokee Family* (2011) clearly illustrates how the allotment policy in the 1800s to early 1900s was viewed as the solution to the “Indian problem” including communal land ownership and accompanying kinship-based social system (p. 74). The “Indian Problem” is conceptualized as “the refusal or inability of indigenous people to assimilate fully into American society” (Stremlau, 2011, p. 74). The United States government allotment process was intended to eradicate the method of ownership of Cherokee Nation lands by converting the ownership to individual rather than traditional tribal or communal ownership, ultimately enabling non-Indian ownership of those tribal lands. (Cherokee Nation website
<http://www.cherokee.org/Services/RealEstateServices/FrequentlyAskedQuestions.aspx>)

As noted by the published reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, from 1877-1880 in the era of allotment (post Trail of Tears), Ezra A. Hayt, states,

The system of title in common has also been pernicious to them [the Cherokee], in that it has prevented advancement and repressed that spirit of rivalry and the desire to accumulate property which is the source of success and advancement in all white communities. In the process of Indian civilization, it is necessary to build from the foundations, and therefore, *it is proper to begin with [dismantling] family relations* (speech from 1878).

With the Indian as well as the white man, industry and thrift have their root in ownership of the soil. The patenting of lands in severalty [that is, allotment] creates separate and individual interests, which are necessary in order to teach an Indian the benefit of labor and induce him to follow civilized pursuits (speech from 1879) (As quoted in Stremlau p. 78-79, 83, 85; my emphasis).

Stremlau's (2011) concept of *degrading dependency* comes from in-depth research into the dismantling of Cherokee ᏍᏏᏅᏍᏏᏁᏍᏏ during the era of allotment with particular focus upon social systems based upon communal land ownership, systems of kinship and gender domains. Although the quote below by is lengthy I believe it to be relevant. As noted by Stremlau (2011),

communal land empowered social systems based on kinship... [which had] impeded both Anglo-American acquisition of land [and assimilation] ...Because Indian people organized their societies according to the rules of kinship, reformers believed that extended families were the dysfunctional core of a flawed social system. They further

believed that by subdividing communal land into individual homesteads, they could fracture these networks into nuclear families, modeled after those typical among middle-class Anglo-Americans. [Reformers] criticized both the behaviors and the values associated with extended Indian families. They reasoned that the obligations of kinship, including living communally, visiting, redistributing goods and food, feasting, participating in ceremonies for extended periods of time, and sharing labor prevented Indian people from working steadily and accumulating wealth individually, a behavior valued in Anglo-American society. As a result, they believed that these customs fostered a *degrading dependency* among Indian people by encouraging them to rely upon each other, their tribal leaders, and the federal government for their subsistence. They recognized that Indian people had families and places to live, but not the right kind, and this supposedly pathological lifestyle justified legislation intended to destroy communalism. White supremacist laws created complicated programs that empowered outsiders whose work in Indian communities was to change the ways that Native people loved one another by destroying customs of kinship and networks of relatedness. (p. 75).

The “forcible dissolution of the Cherokee Government [a second time] paved the way for Oklahoma statehood in 1907. Unrestrained fraud and graft ensued, led by the new state’s founding fathers, and by the 1930s only a small fraction of the tribal territory remained in Cherokee hands...A century after forced removal from their ancient dominion, many rural Cherokees were landless and disenfranchised, living in grinding poverty” (Treat, 2003, p. 39). The ecology and landscape of our new homelands in northeastern Oklahoma have changed since our arrival in part due to the continued influx of settlers engaged in logging, cattle, unsustainable farming practices leading to depletion of the soil, overhunting, dam building projects to create lakes and rivers, the

discontinuation of Cherokee burning practices, and the impact of collectivity managed lands becoming individually owned through the allotment process (Carroll 2015, Sturm 2002, Wahraftig 1975). New laws have been established by the state and tribal government that regulated Cherokee Nation citizens' use of the land according to formalized mechanisms (calendar dates, legal mechanisms) replicating the (Western/colonial) systems of Natural Resource Management rather than Cherokee philosophies or traditional ecological knowledge (Carroll, 2015).

How the young people develop and negotiate their identity over time is of key importance to *being* Cherokee. In northeastern Oklahoma, "blood politics", as coined by Sturm (2002), come into play within individuals seeking connection to their Cherokee identity, as well as between Cherokees with varying ways of viewing identity. The ways that Cherokee people have identified as Cherokee have changed since European contact. The kinship participation in a clan defined who was or was not Cherokee prior to contact. The disbanding of the clan system led to identity becoming more of a sociocultural identifier based upon values, behaviors and Cherokee language use. Although the Cherokee value system still plays heavily into identity, following the allotment area, identity has come to be more politicized in the form of citizenship status and blood quantum.

Methods

The insurgent research and participatory action research (PAR) approaches provided relevant overarching guidelines for this work (Gaudry 2011, Shea et al. 2013, Castleden & Garvin 2008). Those participating in the study reflected their local

knowledge as rooted in their families, kinship relationships and communities. Although the categorization of tribal nation citizenship was utilized during the recruitment phase of the study, the salient factor was that the participant's self-identified as Cherokee (see below for how being identified as "Cherokee" has changed over time). Although not purposeful, all seven of the participants were citizens of the Cherokee Nation.

Over the course of the study there were two strategies of inquiry utilized: community mapping and photovoice. By engaging and encouraging the voices and visions of Cherokee youth, the intent was to provide space to journey through the process of liberatory praxis (i.e. conscientization or critical consciousness, Freire 1970) with the goal of discussing individual/community action on themes of collective importance. The intended process and outcomes included consciousness raising, empowerment (such as from an insurgent historiographical perspective), inclusion, dialogue, and action.

Throughout the study, participating Cherokee youth explored their visions of what a sustainable community entails as well as the relationship between cultural continuance (i.e. sustaining ᏍᏏᏅᏍᏏᏁᏍᏏ, honoring worldview) and *sustainable communities* as situated in their community, cultural knowledge, and experiences (Breidlid 2013, Barnhardt and Kawagley 2005). This study draws on the idea that "community is defined or imagined in multiple ways as physical, political, social, psychological, historical, linguistic, economic, cultural and spiritual spaces... [understanding that] the community itself makes its own definitions" (Smith, 2012, p. 128-129). The youth used their own conceptualizations of what was meant by "sustainable community", "a Cherokee worldview" and "Cherokee ᏍᏏᏅᏍᏏᏁᏍᏏ" during the community mapping activity and photovoice process. The young people guided the photograph and narrative selection for

public exhibition and publication. There were three group interviews, individual interviews with each participant, and multiple informal in-person group and individual conversations and email correspondence to get feedback regarding the data, project booklet, and final event. Initial discussion of what was experienced throughout the project and thoughts on future action took place during the final group interview.

The participatory process aspired to bring young people together with their communities (parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparent's, teachers, peers, elders, and the community at-large) to encourage intergenerational dialogue within families and communities. Such dialogue is seen as a step to foster interaction through the setting of a participatory space to continue engaging with the process of decolonization (Laenui, 2000) and Indigenous-led (i.e. Cherokee in this case) community development. The intent of the participatory focus with the young people, the Advisory Committee and the community was to model a collaborative dialogical process of knowledge building (Ife, 2013, p. 335). In such a process, researchers and community members are intertwined in a mutually beneficial relationship guided by responsibility to the process as well as the outcome, and beyond.

The youth-selected photographs and narratives were exhibited at Cherokee Heritage Center in Tahlequah, OK from May 10-14, 2016. A Project Booklet was created that reflected the exhibited materials, some narratives and maps from the community mapping method, and initial synthesis of the project themes. The printed Project Booklet was not given out during the Exhibit but only at the Community Event and more locally in community. The Event at the Cherokee Heritage Center on May 13, 2016 was intended as an opportunity for the youth to present their work and for guided community dialogue

on the themes that emerged during the project. The hope was to engage elders (e.g. Medicine Keepers group, participant's families, etc.) in inter-generational dialogue. Encouraging dialogue between youth and elders brings together crucial elements (the knowledge keepers and an upcoming generation of Cherokee leaders) to (re)imagine the regeneration of land, culture and community in a community-based Cherokee context. The Event was meant to determine if the project was meaningful to the community (relevant), to cultivate inter-generational dialogue around building and maintaining sustainable communities, perpetuating ᏌᏍᏏᏁᏍᏏᏁᏍᏏ, and how such visions could potentially manifest in practice. I did not assume to discover a unified shared vision that would be acted upon immediately, if ever, as "the issues and problems Indigenous peoples face today are so complex and are mostly symptoms that reflect deeper underlying causes, uncovering the collective wisdom of a tribal group is difficult." (see <http://www.aio.org/projects/ilis>). Additional informal and community-based gatherings are needed to further these discussions (Hall, 2008).

Assumptions

My underlying assumptions that guided this study were as follows:

- Central to the discussion of (Oklahoma) Cherokee community and cultural sustainability is an acknowledgement of the continued legacy of a EuroAmerican hegemonic paradigm (and therefore practice) that impacted current community dynamics. It is paramount to community development practice and scholarship that community work and research be aware of the paradigm of colonization that systemically operates within most institutional and social spaces in settler societies such as the U.S.

- The field of community development (and development more broadly) would benefit greatly from additional research regarding Indigenous-led community development (i.e. sustainable self-determination, survivance, resurgence of land-and-water based practices).
- Research based on a holistic and ecological perspective (an indigenous self-determination lens) with the goal of liberatory praxis can be a decolonizing practice.
 - As noted by Wilson (2008), there is a need to develop theory, practice, and methods that are “uniquely Indigenous” that do not seek comparison to or validation from the “hierarchical structure of male-dominated EuroAmerican ethnocentricity that is prevalent in most social science theory” (p. 16).
 - There is a need for research frameworks and methodologies that can be utilized for community action and practices (*Kaupapa Māori Model, radical indigenism, insurgent research, TribalCrit, among others*)
- Attempting to honor a decolonizing or Indigenous/Cherokee-centered paradigm requires thoroughly outlining the interwoven relationship between colonization (and linked concepts such as development, education, etc.) and the deep importance of an Indigenous knowledges and self-determination in regards to individual and community well-being.
- The research would, even in a small way, benefit the Cherokee people and communities by expanding dialogue, awareness and potentially community action on aspects that would strengthen and perpetuate ᏆᏍᏁᏍᏁᏍᏁᏍᏁᏍᏁ.

CHAPTER TWO: RELEVANT LITERATURE

Overview

The literature below was chosen as I felt it provided salient aspects that clarify the larger rationale for the study. It is not meant to provide assumptions for the viewpoints of Cherokee youth or the broader community. Rather, the literature outlines what I feel to be relevant foundational aspects when working in a hegemonic paradigm in a settler nation toward Indigenous-led community development and synthesizes various viewpoints by providing salient theoretical approaches suggested by both Indigenous as well as non-Indigenous scholars. Although most of the literature presented in this chapter centers around epistemology, colonization, community development and sustainability, I want to begin by stressing the importance of cultural and language maintenance as well as Indigenous youth.

As noted above, ᏆᏍᏗᏓᏛᏗᏓ makes up everything that makes us and sustains us as Tsalagi (Cherokee people). Our language is an integral and imperative framework for ᏆᏍᏗᏓᏛᏗᏓ. As noted by Sumida Huaman, Martin, & Chosa, (2016), “when language becomes endangered, not only are methods of communication that are important for individual and community cohesion threatened, but so is the sociocultural knowledge, environmental knowledge, and political status of Indigenous nations (p. 4). Language is a key strategy in the arsenal of settler colonialism and assimilation. For example, Wa Thiong’o’s (2009) uses the phrase “dismembering practices” to illustrate that language was one of the ways colonizers changed thought processes by enacting a dominant language. It is for this reason (as noted by Battiste 2008) the UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN DRIPS) Article Nine, sought to set a ‘minimum

standard of survival, dignity and well-being...for Indigenous peoples to maintain control over their education/knowledge systems (including ‘their science, technologies and cultures’) for the purpose of protecting and perpetuating “histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and language’ for future generations” (Battiste 2008, UNDRIPS Article Nine).

There are a growing number of scholars that prioritize perspectives of Indigenous youth in research. Often Indigenous youth-centered research centers on various negative impacts of settler colonialism, assimilation and poverty including crime, low educational attainment, high rates of suicide etc. Encouragingly, more scholars are focusing on language and cultural maintenance and resurgence as well advocating for more youth-centered methods and policies. As an example, the article “*Stay with your words*”: *Indigenous youth, local policy, and the work of language fortification* (2016), focus on cultural and language maintenance from the perspective of Pueblo youth. This particular study focuses on the lack of youth-directed Indigenous language planning and policy (LPP) arguing that negating youth perspectives on language maintenance results in a direct impact on the success of such programs, thereby allowing continued Indigenous language loss (Huaman, Martin & Chosa, 2016). Another example is in the realm of education, where scholars are calling for more Indigenous focused content, pedagogy and methods that traverse multiple epistemologies (e.g. Bang & Medin 2010). Indigenous youth today are in precarious positions, as there are a multitude of intertwined and complex dynamics at work in most communities related to rapid cultural and sociolinguistic change and loss (Wyman, McCarty, & Nicholas, 2013).

The participants for this study were Cherokee youth 18 and under, although “youth” is a flexible term and can be thought of as around early 30s or even older. The Cherokee youth of today (and more broadly, Indigenous youth globally) are in a precarious position. The elders who guided their grandparents and parents often suffered from direct racism, and violent dislocation from cultural practices, land, medicine, language, knowledge, and life ways. Family and community kinship networks that provided emotional, spiritual and physical support have been brutally and systematically dismantled. The elders of today know a fraction of the knowledge their grandparents did and are severely conflicted on how to best pass on the knowledge (written versus orally, who should have access to knowledge and the process) and, even if unconsciously, between the “appropriate” religious or spiritual teachings to pass on.

As noted by Cajete (2015), “elements of Indigenous community are grounded in many generations of struggle against great odds to maintain Indigenous core values and cultural life ways. Learning about this legacy as well as about the collective history of colonization is the first step in re-educating ourselves on the path of healing and reestablishing healthy, nurturing communities” (p 57). The discourse surrounding sustainability, sustainable development, sustainable self-determination, continuance, survivance, resurgence, or any other term meant to describe honoring and renewing Indigenous life ways would be incomplete unless also contained a critique and movement towards decolonization (decoloniality) and sovereignty specifically tied to land and culture based knowledge systems and life ways. Another salient aspect of this literature review is outlining the objectives of ‘sustainable development’, as it heavily informs community development theory and practice.

In the section below I first take the opportunity to outline the dominant EuroAmerican epistemology/paradigm as practiced in the U.S. and beyond, impacts of development on Indigenous peoples, and a Cherokee-specific example (based on the work of Stremlau 2011). I will then bring in literature from Indigenous scholars on epistemology, cultural and language continuance, well-being and sustainability, the current gaps in community development literature, theory, and practice, and finally Indigenous-led community development. As a point of clarification, the U.S. has many tribes and sub-groups that do not agree with the dominant discourse and foundation of the establishment of the U.S. Both individual and community identity is complex and dynamic so even within tribal nations or indigenous groups you cannot generalize to say that all members operate from a pure ecological perspective. With the geographic area in and around northeast Oklahoma there are many tribes that were forcibly removed to the area (Indian Territory), within these tribal nations you have a varying degree of acceptance and conscious/unconscious embodiment of the dominant U.S./EuroAmerican paradigm.

The all-encompassing gaze of development

“The worldview that predominates Western societies- and indeed in the culture of global capitalism- is heavily influenced by the ideas of the European Enlightenment. It is important to understand how these ideas have shaped our understandings both of ‘community’ and of ‘development’” (Ife 2013, p. 82).

When using the term sustainability many will immediately link to sustainable development as sustainability is thought of as the goal, and sustainable development the process to achieve the goal. Since the release of the Brundtland Report in 1987 there has

been growing attention surrounding the need for sustainability and the multiple benefits communities receive from sustainable development. The Brundtland Report definition of “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” has become the most utilized and globally endorsed definition (WCED, 1987, p. 8). This definition is “widely used in development discourse and practice and reflects persistent concepts of progress, transformation and adaptation through processes of modernization, economic transition, materialism and capitalism” (Gilberthorpe, 2013, p. 469). As noted by Gilberthorpe (2013), ‘sustainable development’ is a bedfellow of ‘globalization’ with implicit long-term, economic growth objectives (p. 469). As Esteva (1992) contends, ‘sustainable development’ is still actually just a new turn of phrase for “sustaining development, not for supporting the flourishing and enduring of an infinitely diverse natural and social life” (p. 13). As noted by Mowforth & Munt (2013), “while the roots of sustainability are found in the western fad for ecology and environmental issues, it has been interpreted in economic, cultural and social terms (in fact so much so that all aspects of contemporary life have been subjected to the *gaze of development*)” (p. 35, my emphasis). Sustainable development provided “legitimizing camouflage” (Rist 1997, p. 174), therefore there is an intense “need to face up to the global ills of ecological meltdown and compounding poverty, but with a business-as-usual mentality to global economic growth” (Mowforth & Munt, p. 35).

Practitioners and scholars in the overarching fields of “development” (coined international development, sustainable development, community development, tourism development, human development, among others) need to better understand and recognize that the hegemonic paradigm of settler nations is not and never has been

“value-neutral” or “common sense/natural/the correct or best way”. Peterson and Knopf (2015) assert, “wisdom and values have too often been wrung out of scientific conversations. They have often been deemed subjective and thereby irrelevant to empirical science. However, the resultant arguments for [sustainable development], built on empiricism and a commitment to “objective” and “dispassionate” data, have thus far failed to create a sufficiently broad or deep transformation toward a more sustainable world” (p. 2). As a caution to development theorists and practitioners, Peterson and Knopf (2015) remind those working in community that they do not represent a “value neutral” stance; “when we discuss or teach *best practices*, it is wise to avoid celebrating best techniques and technical fixes at the expense of ethics, values, and wisdom. The temptation here is to appeal to so-called “facts” that are in reality embedded in value claims but presented as neutral (*my emphasis*). What the authors are speaking to is the predilection of community developers to reproduce dominant ideology within communities regardless of sociocultural or historical differences in and between communities.

The dominant paradigm within the development realm, even one presented as sustainable, remains built upon a specific set of value assumptions about how the world works. In speaking of the United States, Vesely-Flad, E. (2011) notes that some of “our society's most powerful assumptions [are deeply held beliefs] such as "more money is better," "time is money" and "economic growth is an unquestioned societal good“” (p. 10). There is not a unified and universal consensus on what constitutes the dominant social paradigm of Western industrial societies, but to dominate, it must be held only by dominant groups in society, not necessarily by a majority of people. The dominant social

paradigm then can legitimize and justify prevailing institutions that serve the interests of dominant groups, providing a mechanism for re-enforcing specific social, political, or economic courses of action. The essential requirement is to embed the dominant social paradigm in society, in which case “its directions and justifications become accepted as truth that demands no further examination.” (Borland & Lindgreen, 2013, p. 176).

The paradigm of development, even so called “sustainable” development, rests upon a foundation of an anthropocentric, hierarchical viewpoint that the Earth is not only dead but that nature has no inherent value past what can be gained for human pursuits (economic growth, recreation, tourism, etc.) exclusive to human survival, comfort or pleasure. According to Goldbard (2006), “implicit in the notion of development is the notion of progress, assuming societies move forward in stages of development much as an infant grows into an adult. The earliest phase is regarded as primitive, simple, and emotional. As societies develop they become less primitive, move Civilized, more rational (complex and bureaucratic)” (p. 31).

The dominant paradigm of highly scientific, technical, industrialized societies such as the U.S. can be described as entrenched in the hegemonic ideology of economic rationality. This paradigm infiltrates not only economic systems but sociocultural and kinship/community structures. The dominant paradigm of economic rationality separates and breaks things down into manageable parts to examine them for short-term economic sustainability but doesn’t take into account the long-term implications of these interconnections relating to the global system. As stated by Handcock (2003), “The paradigm of economic rationality assumes the Greco-Christian position that everything on earth is for the sole use of humankind and that that species is at liberty to modify the

environment as it will...the value of the environment is determined by economic rationality as a monetary price reflecting market forces of supply and demand” (pg. 22). This anthropocentrism is a “tradition of thought that underlies the Industrial Revolution has its origins in the Biblical mythopoetic narrative of creation: that is, that ‘man’ was created as superior and separate from the natural world” (Bowers, 2002, pg. 6). Mastnak, et al. (2014) asserts the phenomena of *botanical colonization* as being central to the rise of the Anthropocene (p. 364). They argue the production of a new landscape was intentionally crafted through the “mindscape” of the settlers, as establishing dominion “was always about the ‘settling’ of plants[/land] as well as people (Mastnak, et al., 2014, p. 365). Economic rationality (also termed "industrial thinking" by LaDuke) is in direct conflict with paradigms that expose a more "ecological" perspective, including those that advocate for indigenous self-determination. (It is important to note that not all "green" or "anti-growth perspectives also consider indigenous rights as inherent to the reforming of the system).

The hegemonic Western/EuroAmerican epistemology perpetuated through settler colonialism and modern neocolonialism has been governed through power dynamics allowing gatekeepers of ideology to guard the production and dissemination of what is considered, ‘truth’, ‘knowledge’, ‘development/developed’, ‘civilization’, ‘progress’, ‘modern’, and ‘success’. This dominant ideology, rooted in a patriarchal power structure, ethnocentricity, anthropocentrism and economic rationality, has historically led to a narrow view of accepted ways of ‘knowing and being’. The repercussion of the hegemonic ideology is the legitimization of certain systems knowledge production (e.g. development, education, research, spiritual practices, etc.) that result in certain measures

while obscuring others that do not conform to this ideology. Our global ecological system and an ideology that works in tandem with such a system have both been disrupted by continued Western imperialistic style exploitation and Cartesian-inspired knowledge systems and practices. The normative epistemological underpinnings of colonialism have now manifested themselves as neo-colonialism, a deeply entrenched and powerful globalized corporatized liberal capitalism. According to LaDuke (1994), "three basic connects govern relations between colonial 'settlers' and indigenous nations. Colonialism has been extended through a set of 'center periphery relations' in which the center has expanded through: 1) the cultural practice of Christianity and, later Western science and other forms of Western thought, 2) the socioeconomic practice of capitalism; and 3) the military-political practice of colonialism" (p. 131). These practices perpetuate certain accepted economic, sociocultural and educational values and practices, therefore over time they have become normalized as natural or superior. The contention between these paradigms (and accompanying value systems/life ways) as well as "issues of sovereignty and control over natural resources" become central in our current situation of environmental, economic, cultural, social, linguistic crises (LaDuke, 1994, p. 133).

As stated by Hall (2008), "the process of both direct and structural violence is one that begins with values, ethics, and wisdom that form concepts of the way the world works. And it is the language about these concepts that reveals the origins of dismissal, dehumanization, and degradation of people and ecosystems". There has been global imposition of a specific economic development model and monoculture onto diverse peoples for the sake of economic "efficiency" by powerful nations and interests. As an example, subsistence economy has been considered a threat to capital accumulation,

therefore self-determination and a right to subsistence are interrelated. It is by “dismissing subsistence economies as backward and primitive, it is possible to devalue them and make them invisible while at the same time to exploit them to subsidize and uphold the process of capital accumulation” (Kuokkanen, 2011, p. 227). This hegemonic structure relies on not only human capital (labor) but ever increasing amounts of natural resources (land, timber, coal, oil, natural gas, etc.) that are increasingly requiring more intense extractive processes that directly cause long-lasting toxic impacts to environmental and human health.

Coloniality of power

When attempting to synthesize the various long-lasting impacts of such a hegemonic paradigm as well as how these power dynamics are deeply and unconsciously (for many) embedded within our modern global situation the concept of *coloniality* might be helpful.

The “coloniality of power” was originally introduced by Quijano in 1989 to “theorize global Eurocentered capitalism”. *Coloniality* “refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243). Maldonado-Torres (2007) explains,

The idea was that colonial relations of power left profound marked not only in the areas of authority, sexuality, knowledge and the economy, but on the general understanding of being as well. And, while the coloniality of power referred to the interrelation among modern forms of exploitation and domination (power), and the coloniality of knowledge had to do with impact

of colonization on the different areas of knowledge production, coloniality of being would make primary reference to the lived experience of colonization and its impact on language. (p. 242)

The hegemonic and embedded nature of the coloniality of power is “maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243).

According to Maldonado-Torres (2007),

it was in the context of this massive colonial enterprise [discovery and conquest of the Americas] ... that capitalism, an already existing form of economic relation, became tied with forms of domination and subordination that were central to maintaining colonial control first in the Americas, and then elsewhere... [thusly becoming the] model of power...for modern identity. (p. 243-244)

Challenging the dominant development paradigm would require the critique of economic rationality and the assumed (cultural, economic, educational, social) supremacy embedded in EuroAmerican epistemologies as well as the rarely questioned good-intentioned rhetoric of “progress” and “development”. An individualistic *consumption rhetoric* pervades all aspects as it is built upon a certain set of social, cultural and especially economic values.

Drawing upon the work of multiple scholars, Table 1 below outlines the foundational beliefs and implicit assumptions of what can be considered the “dominant paradigm” in the U.S. (and other settler and/or highly industrialized nations).

Table 1: Dominant paradigm foundational beliefs and implicit assumptions

Foundational Belief	Implicit Assumption
Greco-Christian tradition	Everything on earth is for the sole use of humankind, there is a natural liberty, even a responsibility, to modify the environment; Biblical mythopoetic narrative of creation: man was created as superior and separate from the natural world
Natural world consists of 'resources'	Nature can (and should) be utilized, regardless of whether it is for economic, entertainment or aesthetic purposes
Undeveloped land as underutilized or surplus	Efficient land use resulting in maximum profitability is seen as both a right and a responsibility; unused land seen as a waste of resources
Separation and disconnection	Humans are exempt from the constraints of nature, and the whole of nature exists primarily for human use with no inherent value of its own.
Anthropocentric epistemology/ Speciesism	Socially constructed hierarchy: Humans are regarded as superior and the only important life form regardless of the costs to other animals or the environment.
Ownership of "Resources"	Private property rights, land ownership as the "cornerstone of [white] civilization"
Hyper-Individualism	Individual freedom, responsibility and superiority
Conception of Time and Perspective	Linear
Conception of Progress	Progress through "human development": benefits of abundance and progress using labor and natural resources to advance a specific conception of "civilization"
Economic rationality	<p>Superiority of the private market as the best way to allocate wealth and resources.</p> <p>Accepts inequality as both necessary and desirable if economic growth and individual prosperity are to be maximized.</p> <p>Pursuit of unlimited growth and prosperity, faith in science and technology, and commitments to a laissez-faire economy, limited government planning or intervention.</p> <p>Separates and breaks things down into manageable parts to examine them for short-term economic sustainability but doesn't take into account the long-term implications of these interconnections relating to the global system.</p>

	<p>Rationality assumes people are “logical” therefore (in an economic sense) they will naturally attempt to maximize economic gain and efficiency</p> <p><i>Consumption rhetoric</i> perpetuated through predatory capitalism: Maintaining or increasing consumption levels (i.e. consumerism) as normative.</p> <p>The fear-based paradigm surrounding scarcity and its relation to power, corruption, and greed in a neo-liberal framework guides the contention surrounding what human beings should and should not be entitled to based upon their ability to purchase access to the resources some have in abundance.</p>
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Handcock (2003), Bowers (2002), Pierotti (2010), Borland & Lindgreen (2013)

Impact of colonization and colonizing development practices on Indigenous communities

“When asked about living sustainably today, Indigenous peoples inevitably confront the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have disrupted their individual and community relationships with the natural world.” (Corntassel, 2012a, p. 87)

As noted above, “one of the most devastating losses we have experienced from colonization has been the loss of community... [being that it is] a direct attack on the existence of Indigenous people as Peoples” (Cajete, 2015, p. 57). Indigenous peoples worldwide have been deeply and profoundly impacted by this cognitive genocide as the core epistemology of their cultural knowledge and ways of interacting with other beings and the environment were disrupted, labeled and delegitimized first by the hegemonic systems of colonialism and more recently neocolonialism (Carm 2014).

In following Breidlid (2013) that “physical colonization is closely linked with epistemological colonization...[therefore] there can be no social justice without cognitive justice” and therefore should be explored in the context of social action currently taking place in Indigenous resurgence (p. 38). Indigenous epistemologies have been severely marginalized and oppressed by the hegemonic structure built on a colonizing

epistemology. As noted by Jaska (2006), “Traditional ecological knowledge is complex, sophisticated, and critically relevant to understanding how to conserve forest ecosystems and to utilize them sustainably. Unfortunately, since the complex links between biological and cultural diversity have not been generally recognized in the past, this has led to the destruction of biological diversity and to the disappearance of languages, cultures and societies” (p. 193).

In the 2006 book published by the Sierra Club Books edited by Mander and Tauli-Corpuz, the topic of indigenous resistance to globalization is aptly titled *Paradigm Wars*. The case is made that globalization (and the underlying foundation itself) is an assault on indigenous resources with international organization, especially those such as the World Bank, IMF, World Trade Organization, and transnational corporations, are diminishing native sovereignty, invading and stealing knowledge through biocolonialism, commodifying culture through tourism, creating "conservation refugees" and destroying access to clean water and land for everyone through extractive industry.

Indigenous peoples around the world have been deeply harmed by not only colonization but also from “sustainable development” as an extension of this ongoing process. The intertwining of colonization and progress/development often results in Indigenous peoples being removed from their homelands and subjected to the political, religions, economic, social and cultural ways of the colonizers/developers. Anishinaabe scholar Leanne Simpson, in a March 2013 interview with Canadian activist and journalist Naomi Klein, speaks of extraction as encapsulating the dominant economic vision,

Extraction and assimilation go together. Colonialism and capitalism are based on extracting and assimilating. My land is seen as a resource. My relatives in the plant and animal worlds are seen as resources. My culture and knowledge is a resource. My body is a resource and my children are a resource because they are the potential to grow, maintain, and uphold the extraction-assimilation system. The act of extraction removes all of the relationships that give whatever is being extracted meaning...Colonialism has always extracted the indigenous—extraction of indigenous knowledge, indigenous women, indigenous peoples.

Indigenous peoples are rarely fully consulted prior to projects beginning. Even when communities are “consulted” it usually consists of a negligible level of consultation as a good-will formality, often after contracts have been signed to move forward, therefore negating any real “free and prior consent” process (Carm 2014). Eviction, resettlement and assimilation result in violence on Indigenous bodies, minds, spirits, lands, languages and cultures. As noted by First Peoples Worldwide,

Indigenous people are often beaten or killed during evictions, or to intimidate them into giving up their rights. Violence is more prevalent in resettlement situations, where Indigenous people are forced to compete for limited resources. Indigenous women and children are often more likely to be raped than other groups because of their less-than-human status in the dominant culture. Indigenous health systems are intimately linked to the health of the ecosystem, both physical and spiritual. When our environment is destroyed or we are removed from it, our ability to obtain these necessities collapses. Cultural norms collapse when a community is stripped of its assets, displaced from its homeland and denied access to its sacred places. As Indigenous Peoples are forced to assimilate into the dominant culture, we lose the essential cultural practices that preserve

our well being and make us who we are. (Website: <http://www.firstpeoples.org/who-are-indigenous-peoples/the-challenges-we-face>)

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and the Huffington Post estimate that 3.4 million people have been physically or economically displaced by World Bank-backed development projects since 2004 (Chavkin et al., Huffington Post, 2015). Eviction, environmental degradation and assimilation result in a loss of language, cultural knowledge, and social systems founded on clan and kinship that profoundly impact identity and a sense of community belonging. The loss of language is devastating as many Indigenous peoples “rely heavily on oral communication in every aspect of life...Legal structures, cultural practices, and the sharing of traditional knowledge are all inextricably linked to the specific language of the community. Without it the society breaks down” (First Peoples). As noted by Davis (2013), the loss of a language is equivalent to the destruction of an “old growth forest of the mind”. Davis (2013) argues,

The problem isn't change. All cultures through all time have constantly been engaged in a dance with new possibilities of life. And the problem is not technology itself. The Sioux Indians did not stop being Sioux when they gave up the bow and arrow any more than an American stopped being an American when he gave up the horse and buggy. It's not change or technology that threatens the integrity of the *ethnosphere*. It is power, the crude face of domination. Wherever you look around the world, you discover that these are not cultures destined to fade away; these are dynamic living peoples being driven out of existence by identifiable forces that are beyond their capacity to adapt to...genocide, the physical extinction of a people is universally condemned, but ethnocide, the destruction of people's way of life, is not only not condemned, it's universally, in many

quarters, celebrated as part of a development strategy. (transcript from TED Talk video, http://www.ted.com/talks/wade_davis_on_endangered_cultures/transcript?language=en)

In our current neoliberal/neocolonial globalized system there is a need for greater awareness and critical discourse surrounding such an extractive and financial driven paradigm based.

Altamirano-Jiménez's (2013) work builds upon the idea that "identity and the environment constitute two axes of neoliberalism and that state practices shape the spatial and social reconfigurations of landscapes and communities; [whereby] relationships between the market, colonialism, Indigenous peoples, and gender" are created and recreated within the ever expanding neoliberal system. Her work explores how the continued demand for natural resources creates a situation where Indigenous peoples evicted from their homelands are unable to resist such dispossession and environmental degradation without being framed as a threat to progress and the corporate control of natural resources (often white, male dominated domains). Additionally, Altamirano-Jiménez's (2013) asserts, "whereas natural resources are considered a white, male domain, caring for the environment is Indigenous peoples' and women's responsibility" (p. 2). There is a confounding dynamic where Indigenous peoples are considered both an impediment to progress yet at the same time are expected to be the front-line protectors of some of the most biodiverse areas on the planet; such a threatening position has resulted in the loss of life for many outspoken community activists.

Jaska (2006) posits the dominant paradigm of global "colonialist expansionism" (p. 183) that leads to "non-indigenous encroachment and acculturation" (p. 194) can be altered by "rejecting the colonialist norms regarding the treatment of indigenous peoples

that precipitated many of the problems in the first place” (p. 162). Laenui (2000), outlines the process of decolonization as: 1) Rediscovery and Recovery, 2) Mourning, 3) Dreaming, 4) Commitment, and 5) Action.

Laenui (2000) recognizes that colonization, and by extension decolonization, is a messy process noting that these phases are dynamic, do not always go in order, occur simultaneously and even jump from one phase to another over time. Phase One consists of Rediscovery and Recovery, which is the possibility of resistance manifested through the process of conscientization (Freire 1970). Historic and political realities make their way into people’s awareness in a wide variety of ways, thus laying the foundation for the other phases to take place as the “rediscovery of one’s history and recovery of one’s culture, language and identity, etc. is fundamental to the movement for decolonization” (p. 3). Laenui (2000) warns that the deep disconnection felt in today’s indigenous communities and cultures could result in tokenism from indigenous people themselves related to their own cultural traditions, stating, “the difference, therefore, between the final stage of colonization-exploitation, and the initial stage of decolonization-rediscovery & recovery, must be carefully distinguished” (p. 3).

After the realization of the situation fully infiltrates a person or community’s psyche it manifests as mourning, which is an “essential phase in healing” (p. 4). Some scholars may posit that historical trauma is caused by the rejection or suppression of this stage. In this stage, the warning is to not get stuck in this phase where it becomes entrenched and unmovable leading to a feeling of “justified violence” against colonizers and symbols of colonization which further divides people in negative ways. The “most crucial phase”, as outlined Laenui, is *Dreaming*. Phase four refers to Commitment, which

is similar to consensus building/governing by consensus; participatory and community-based methods would be of use in this phase. This consensus driven process fits well with the Cherokee worldview of governing by consensus. The fifth stage, as outlined Laenui (2000,) is a pro-active strategy based on consensus of the people, determining the appropriate “weapons” whether they be rifles or the internet.

Alfred (2005) argues that effectively confronting colonialism requires "an internal struggle to deconstruct the structures of colonial power as they manifest through patterns of behavior and institutions of power in our own minds and in our communities" (Alfred, p. 187). Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird (2005) view decolonization as “both an event and a process” with the event involving an individual reaching a point of critical consciousness that colonization has or is occurring to them “thus [they are] responding to life circumstances in ways that are limited, destructive, and externally controlled” (p. 3). The conceptual process of decolonization, according to Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird (2005), involves the conscious and active engagement with activities “of creating, restoring, and birthing...using various strategies to liberate oneself, adapt to or survive oppressive conditions; [ultimately] it means restoring cultural practices, thinking, beliefs, and values that were taken away or abandoned but are still relevant and necessary to survival; and it means the birthing of new ideas, thinking, technologies, and lifestyles that contribute to the advancement and empowerment of Indigenous Peoples” (p. 3). The critical pedagogy advocated by Freire (1970) serves as a theoretical basis for the process self-reflective practice leading to critical consciousness (i.e. conscientization). The active use of *praxis* in the decolonizing process guides the resistance to structural components of colonization as deeply embedded and normalized in U.S. educational, economic,

social, cultural, institutions and ideologies (Corntassel 2012, Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird 2005).

Indigenous communities with histories rooted in colonization, assimilation, and marginalization often struggle with lateral and internalized oppression and issues of identity, which can be especially harmful to our youth. In Young's 2011 thesis work with Indigenous Chicano individuals that are federally recognized and individuals that are not federally recognized, he defines lateral violence as "the indirect expression of aggressive behavior, internalized hostility, and divisiveness" (p. 3). Lateral violence encompasses "pull-down dynamics", such as bullying or physical violence, and is "common to groups who are or feel oppressed or disempowered" (Doyle, & Hungerford, 2015, p. 341). Internalized oppression operates on two levels, the individual basis and between members of the same group, where the stereotypes and negative misinformation espoused by greater society about their group manifest in self-defeating behavior on behalf of the individual and lateral violence within the group. According to Pyke (2010), "despite sociology's longstanding interest in inequality, the internalization of racial oppression among the racially subordinated and its contribution to the reproduction of racial inequality has been largely ignored, reflecting a taboo on the subject. Consequently, internalized racism remains one of the most neglected and misunderstood components of racism" (p. 551).

As Young (2011) moved forward in his research, he notes, "it became apparent that before lateral violence could be addressed it was necessary to first understand how Indigenous identity has been constructed over time and how history informs contemporary constructions of Indigenous identity" (p. 6). As Young asserts,

For too long the Indigenous communities have had their identities shaped by U.S. policy, historians, anthropologists and researchers. The result has been a chaotic junction where (mis)understandings of race, ethnicity and nationality have played out in myriad expressions of violence, including racism and lateral hostility. What we have left are historically impoverished orphans ignorant of their ancestral parents, disconnected from them linguistically, culturally and geographically. Living in such isolation results in an adoption of the white supremacist eugenic fantasy that elevates “whiteness” and all of its components to a deified status. The ramifications are an inability to develop an Indigenous critical consciousness capable of encouraging agency in achieving solidarity with other Indigenous communities resulting in true sovereignty and the normalization of the forms of lateral violence which have been prevalent over four hundred years. (p. 13)

Young advocates for the “restructuring of Indigenous identity: that is not based on an external frame of reference (based on constructs such as race, ethnicity and nationality, and identifying such as American Indian/Native American) but an internal frame of reference. In his study with Indigenous Chicano youth he develops the term *Susto heredado*. Citing “the internal struggle to find a place on earth, in society, within social groups, and historically resulting in an identification that is telling and revealing about historical impacts, trauma and *susto* [which] references the inherited psychosocial trauma that is passed down from generation to generation following extreme traumatic experiences that result in a “soul loss” or “soul wounding” (For more on soul wounding see Duran & Duran, 1995) (Young, 2010, p. 112).

Educators, researchers and workers in community development where people and communities have a past or ongoing relationship with racism, marginalization, oppression and colonization/settler colonialism must be aware, reflective, and reflexive on the role of internalized oppression and violence for the people they work with. Concepts related to internalized oppression, violence and racism must be addressed in studies with indigenous youth as these aspects are an integral part of the process to decolonize how individuals see themselves, their families, communities and culture; and their place in these as situated in a diverse and dynamic globalized society. Such aspects must be taken into account when developing appropriate frameworks as they provide the foundation for awareness, healing and action (working towards decolonization).

Indigenous views on family, community, planning/development and sustainability

The following section provides viewpoints on family, community, planning/development, and sustainability from the perspective of Indigenous scholars. The process of long-term sustainability can be seen as being enacted on a daily basis through consistent and intentional actions. Corntassel (2012a) asserts that we must “mov[e] beyond political awareness and/or symbolic gestures to [embody] *everyday practices of resurgence* (p. 89). For Corntassel and Bryce (Songhees First Nation) (2011) everyday practices are “about reconnecting with homelands, cultural practices, and communities, and is centered on reclaiming, restoring, and regenerating homeland relationships” (p. 153).

Alfred (Kahnawake Mohawk) and Corntassel (2005) assert that, “it is ultimately our lived collective and individual experiences as Indigenous peoples that yield the

clearest and most useful insights for establishing culturally sound strategies to resist colonialism and regenerate our communities” (p. 600-601). As an example of such theories, the five mantras of a resurgent Indigenous movement are reconnection to the land to understand the teachings of our ancestors, reclaiming ways of knowing through language, overcoming control and manipulation of colonial powers by “confront[ing] our fears head-on through spiritually grounded action”, developing “the self-sufficient capacity to provide our own food, clothing, shelter and medicines”, and finally “reconstitute[ing] the mentoring and learning–teaching relationships that foster real and meaningful human development and community solidarity” (Alfred and Corntassel, 2005, p. 613).

Many Indigenous scholars are attempting to utilize Indigenous ways of knowing and practice in their research. In the section below I provide what I believe to be an overview of various salient examples of scholarly work that provide excellent starting points for further discourse. In the dissertation by Hart (2008) *radical indigenism*, as suggested by Garrouette (2003), was used in a Cree community. Other work to draw from in this regard would be Coulthard’s (2014) *Five Theses on Indigenous Resurgence and Decolonization*, Brayboy’s *tribalcraft theory* (2005), Breidlid’s (2013) conceptualization of epistemological colonization and *cognitive justice*, Bruyneel’s (2007) ‘*thirdspace*’ of Indigenous sovereignty, Corntassel’s *sustainable self-determination* (Alfred & Corntassel 2005, Corntassel, & Bryce 2011, Corntassel’s (2008, 2012a, 2012b, 2014), *survivance* (Vizenor, 1999), Eve Tuck’s (2009) Indigenous epistemological “vantage points” of sovereignty, contention, balance, relationship, Thomas-Muller’s (2014) Keynote speech at the Bioneers Summit, and pathways of Indigenous resurgence presented by Alfred

(2005). Also, the concept of *aboriginal nationalism*, reflecting the land rights of First Nation peoples and not only cultural aspects of Indigenous epistemologies, has been growing both in private as well as public discourse (Fagan, 2004).

The EuroAmerican hegemonic paradigm noted throughout this section, has also largely driven global planning and development practice (broadly defined and also when couched as community development, sustainable development and especially economic development). Matunga (2013) in a chapter titled *Theorizing Indigenous Planning* argues,

the critical questions for Indigenous peoples have always been: Whose future? Who decides what this future should and could look like? Who is doing the analysis and making the decision? Who has the authority, the control, the final decision-making power? Whose values, ethics, concepts, and knowledge? Whose methods and approaches? What frameworks, institutions, and organizations are being used to guide the planning process that most affect Indigenous peoples? Where are Indigenous peoples positioned in the construction of that future? (p. 4)

Matunga (2013) notes, “until recently the locus of power and ultimate right to determine this future (questioned above) rested almost exclusively with colonizing non-Indigenous settler governments, either through power of the musket or the power of law, [development] planning, and technology” (p. 4). According to Matunga (2013), since [development] “planning has generally been complicit...in the aim of the colonial project to clear the way for the settler state, its citizens and economy... ‘it’ has a responsibility not only to confront its own complicity but aid the recovery and re-inclusion of Indigenous communities in what is now largely ‘shared’ though nonetheless misappropriated space (p. 9).

As the saying goes we ‘cannot solve a problem with the thinking that creates it’ (quote attributed to Albert Einstein, *Spiritual Ecology*, p.109). In *Red Skin, White Masks* Coulthard, from the Yellowknives (Weledeh) Dene First Nation, (2014) asks how we can “create Indigenous alternatives” to the all-consuming and “destructive effects of capital” as being the guiding focus for our nations, communities and families (p. 170). I argue that instead of “creating” alternatives that it’s more of a reconnecting to and reasserting of time-tested Indigenous community-based values and practices mixed with new or modified practices.

There is a significant absence of community development literature that discusses Indigenous community development, especially from an Indigenous perspective.

Although Jim Ife’s 2013 book *Community Development in an Uncertain World* comes from his perspective as a white Australian it devotes more time and thought to issues of decolonization in community development than any other community development book I have found thus far. Therefore, Ife’s work will serve as a salient resource to further illustrate the contradiction in current community development practice. As noted by Ife (2013), much harm has been done in the past in the name of good intentioned community development; many times it has been simply a euphemism for control, domination, colonialism, racism, and the imposition of dominant (usually Western) cultural values and traditions at the expense of Indigenous peoples (p. 241). Ife (2013) asserts there are eight dimensions of community development (social, economic, political, cultural, environmental, spiritual, personal, survival) that have varying priority depending upon the situation, but broadly speaking, but the “different dynamics surrounding Indigenous culture means it has to be treated as a separate case” (p. 213). This is due to Indigenous

people's relationship to land and community practices/structures, which have been developed and honed over long periods of time. Also, the integrity of community is an essential aspect to Indigenous cultural and spiritual survival (Cajete 2015).

Ife (2013), a critical community development scholar, provides a foundation from which to work in addressing the severe lack of decolonizing discourse in the field of community development, and development more generally. As noted by Ife (2103), *community* is “subjective experience” (p. 116). The characteristics that make up a “healthy”, “sustainable” or “desirable” community vary from person to person and have embedded geographical and sociocultural aspects. A foundational belief of Indigenous-led community development is reflected by Ife (2013) in saying that “community development with Indigenous communities makes sense only if it is undertaken with Indigenous cultural traditions. To attempt otherwise is to participate in the further colonization of Indigenous peoples and to reinforce structures and discourses of domination” (p. 241). Ife (2013) asserts, the “primary aim of community development is to legitimize and strengthen Indigenous culture, through an effective empowerment strategy that enables Indigenous peoples to have genuine control over their own community and their own destiny. Indigenous peoples themselves must set the agenda for development and have complete control over processes and structures” (p. 242). Matunga (2013) defines *Indigenous Planning* as “Indigenous peoples making decisions about their lives, their environments, and their futures” (p. 27). Although I agree with the premise of these arguments, the dominant paradigm doesn't currently manifest this way in scholarship or practice. Even tribal entities that have direct impact on policy and community development are often founded on EuroAmerican/Western ideals and values

thus perpetuating the dominant paradigm. Matunga (2013) states, “the trick for Indigenous planning is to frame itself against the backdrop of virulent (meaning: (of a disease or poison) extremely severe or harmful in its effects, or bitterly hostile) racist discourse but not to get consumed by it” (p. 3).

Family is the core unit for Cherokees. LaBoucane-Benson’s dissertation (2009) examines family connectedness and resilience within an Aboriginal worldview, arguing, “the strength of the Aboriginal family is the ability to stay connected despite hardship, trauma and separation, and that connectedness is central to the resilience of the Aboriginal family”. Furthermore,

Aboriginal family resilience is synonymous with the state of connectedness of the members of the family (broadly defined): it is the ability to maintain connectedness to family, clan and society, as well as the natural environment and the spiritual cosmos. The more connected the family is (internally between members and externally with community and the natural/spiritual environments) the more resilience it will realize. (LaBoucane-Benson, 2009, p. 205)

LaBoucane-Benson (2009) suggests building family resilience as an act of healing in order to “transform relationships that have been damaged by the effects of intergenerational trauma, into relationships that are founded on the principles of natural law: caring, sharing, kindness, respect, honesty and self-determination” (p. 209).

LaBoucane-Benson (2009), notes that building family resilience, defined as

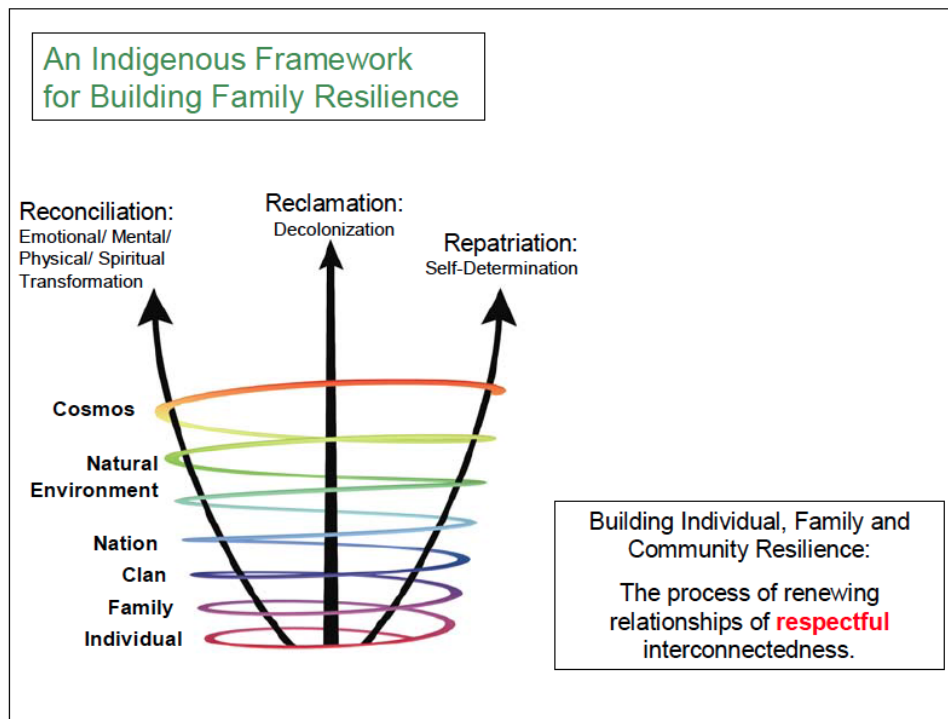
“the process of seeking the good family life through the renewal and transformation of relationships, is supported by three interconnected dimensions: (1) reclamation of an interconnected worldview; (2) reconciliation of disenfranchised/historical,

intergenerational and personal trauma; and (3) repatriation of the power to respectfully self-determine. For healing to occur, all three dimensions of the healing process need to be engaged at many different levels: individual, family, clan, and nation (community).

(p. 209-210)

The framework proposed by LaBoucane-Benson (2009) is illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 2. An Indigenous Framework for Building Family Resilience



p. 210

Community is a dynamic and always-changing term with no set definition. There are factors that influence community and the normative assumptions about what makes a viable, healthy, happy and sustainable place to call home. Cajete (2015) notes the deep importance of experiential learning and practicing life ways within a community context, saying,

community is the primary setting for traditional Indigenous education. [It is through community that Indigenous people] come to understand the nature of our personhood and our connection to the communal soul of our people...the context [to learn and emulate] a sense of identity and affective nature, the nature of relationship, responsibility and participation as one of ‘the People’. (p. 23)

As noted above, much of the community development literature focuses on models and theories based upon certain value assumptions about community. In this section, drawing predominately on scholar Gregory Cajete (Santa Clara Pueblo), I offer a brief and very generalized description of some of the more commonly held attributes of community from an Indigenous perspective. The list below may look markedly different than many other community development conceptualizations of “community”. According to Cajete (2015), the following are attributes of Indigenous community. (The point is not to generalize and/or categorize but to continue the assertion that community development in Indigenous communities must begin with qualities and values relevant to that particular community.) I view these as aspects of Indigenous-led community development in an Indigenous community context:

- Community is the natural context of human life/activity and of deep importance
 - It's a metaphor for a person becoming and expressing their whole selves through interactions with others
 - Site of survival by relying on relations
- Community viewed as a complex adaptive system
 - Physical, social, and psychological relationships that continually change and evolve
- Relational thinking
 - Relationships are the cornerstone
 - Community is where we learn what is to be related
- Positive and sustainable revitalization and/or reinvention premised on a focus on Indigenous values and sense of histories as Indigenous communities

- Adoption of intentional practices of sustainability based on community-based education (involving community education and community-building) and Indigenous research
- Overall goal is fostering cultural survival and sustainable individual and community well-being for generations to come
- Community is both the medium as well as the message, meaning that “the survival of Indigenous cultures as unique and distinct cultures will possibility depend upon the process of Indigenous Peoples reengaging with the meaning and practices of community.
- Primary setting of Indigenous education (teaching and learning)
(Pgs. xiii-23)

Matunga (2013) outlines three traditions (classic, resistance, and resurgence) to assist [development] planning in “perceiving its own historicity, taking colonization as a “key reference point” (p. 9). Yet, as noted by the Kaupapa Māori Model (Smith, 1997), colonization shouldn’t be the core (thereby dominating) focus. According to Matunga (2013), the community development (referred to as “planning”) characterized by three defined time periods are as follows:

- 1) *Classic (pre-contact phase)*: based on long history of Indigenous worldviews and approaches
- 2) *Resistance (contact through 1970s)*: active and passive resistance to the aggressive hegemony of settler government
- 3) *Resurgence (1980s and beyond)*: planning that emerged in response to protests over land loss and environmental destruction
(p. 9-14)

The “Resurgence” time period, as defined by Matunga above, is when “Indigenous peoples locally and internationally...came to the recognition that expressions of Indigenous self-determination and its antecedent social, economic, cultural, political, and environmental aspirations needed to be more explicitly codified” (p. 14). Matunga (2013) advocates for *Indigenous Planning* (IP, see definition p. 45), which is founded on the recognition of the following:

- IP is an action-oriented political strategy aimed at improving the lives and environments of Indigenous peoples.
- IP maintains a strong commitment to political, social, economic, and environmental change.
- IP (i.e. Indigenous-led community development) has always existed in Indigenous communities based upon locally relevant sets of knowledge and practices
- Central tenants are community/kinship and place-based (experiences linked to specific places, lands, and resources)
- IP requires it be done in/at the place *with* the people of that place

(Modified slightly from p.5)

Table 2: Indigenous planning as a tradition and methodology

Focus	Indigenous peoples and their environments (i.e., lands, resources, etc.)
Knowledge	Indigenous theories and knowledge including: Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) New indigenous knowledge, using indigenous epistemologies Community-based knowledge Other co-opted/adapted knowledge, e.g., science
Goals	Indigenous peoples' autonomy over themselves and their environments [territories/communities]
Objectives	Achievement for indigenous communities of the following: Improved environmental quality and quantity Political autonomy and advocacy Social cohesion and well-being Economic growth and distribution Cultural protection and enhancement
Planning Framework	Iterative Indigenous planning processes using: Indigenous planning tools, e.g., tribal management plans, cultural impact assessments Indigenous planning procedures, e.g., meetings, gatherings Indigenous planning practice, e.g., traditional and adapted approaches to planning, policy, analysis resource management

(Mantuga, 2013, p. 29)

I echo the assertions made by Mantunga (2013), what he calls Indigenous Planning and I term Indigenous-led community development, as a “need to uncover, prescribe, even create a range of iterative Indigenous planning process, approaches,

practices, and tools to underpin the dual process of international self-determination and expression, and external advocacy with the settler state and its [mainstream Western] planning system” (p. 14). As noted by Smith (2012), "Indigenous community development needs to be informed by community-based research that respects and enhances community processes...[However] this is a challenge as "so many communities are held hostage ...to models of development that negate local and indigenous knowledge" (p. 130-131).

Gilberthorpe (2013), using Papua New Guinea’s Ok Tedi mine as a case study regarding extractive industry, argues that although greater sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) measures have been implemented in development practices “the role played by indigenous actors and the social institutions that determine agency and action remains largely ignored” (p. 467). In development practice, “the indigenous actor is more often perceived as homogenous and stagnant, and community development programmes tend to deal with community elites or representatives acting on behalf of others” (Gilberthorpe, 2013, p. 467). Success is not measured by improved livelihoods as defined by the community itself; rather success is predominantly based upon quantifiable economic growth indicators (i.e. “individualism, entrepreneurship, private property and independent pursuits of wealth determine economic growth”) (Gilberthorpe, 2013, p. 467). Therefore, according to Gilberthorpe (2013), “recommendations and strategies are implemented with indifference to incompatibilities with the cultural landscapes on which they are imposed and with the objectives of ‘sustainable development’ that inform community development practice (p. 467). Gilberthorpe (2013) advances the argument for an increased use of an anthropological approach (defined as the cultural mechanisms

of sustainability, human security and cultural reproduction) as well as less easily defined and quantified success variables (e.g. localized principles of connectivity, kinship, interaction, cooperation and sharing, hierarchy) in community development practice (p. 468).

While I concur with these assertions I do so from an Indigenous-led perspective versus an anthropological or economic development perspective. There is a growing amount of research and practice being done in Indigenous/Aboriginal/Tribal economic development, however such development still very much operates from the underlying hegemonic ideology even if it is done along-side or by tribally-run nonprofits or governments. The hegemonic discourse of development as value-neutral and for the greater good continues to disrupt and delegitimize the knowledge, sovereignty, and agency of Indigenous communities to fully embrace and embody “sustainability *on and in their own terms*” (Corntassel 2008, my emphasis). The field of community development rarely draws upon Indigenous-centered theory or in practice when working in Indigenous communities. Although not utilized in this study, one potential area of entry into furthering decolonizing community development dialogue is Community Cultural Development (CCD). CCD is the use of artistic expression to build sustainable communities and to address issues of social justice.

Although critical community development scholars offer some critique, the underlying epistemological and ontological assumptions still rest predominately on a Western worldview (Ledwith 2011, Ife 2013, Goldbard 2006, Peterson & Knopf 2015). Post-development approaches (alternatives to the dominant paradigm) have surfaced as a reaction to, and dissatisfaction with, development, and more broadly with

‘Westernization’ and homogenization (being fueled through development); not only because of its results but also because of the underlying world-view and mindset (Mowforth & Munt, p. 36-37). Ife (2013) and many other scholars advocate for more of an ecological perspective. Ife utilizes “as unifying themes five basic principles of ecology; namely holism, sustainability, diversity, equilibrium and interdependence” (p. 49). This study is focused on Indigenous-led planning and development, however there are approaches utilizing “ecological”, “bottom-up”, “grassroots” and “participatory” processes that may have similar characteristics.

“The major difference between American Indian views of the physical world and Western science lies in the premise accepted by Indians and rejected by scientists: the world in which we live is alive” (Deloria, p. 40).

Indigenous scholars have increasingly provided meaningful theoretical frameworks for community sustainability from an Indigenous perspective. Such work has theorized how sustainability could manifest in practice. Increasingly, there are more projects underway to put the resurgence of Indigenous land-and-water based life ways and pedagogies into practice. A few salient examples include: taro restoration and a culture-based public charter school in Hawaii (Goodyear, 2013), camas harvesting in Songhees First Nations (Corntassel & Bryce, 2012), and a cultural apprenticeship program in the Mohawk community of Akwesasne (Alfred, 2014). This study builds upon this work by bringing Cherokee-centered research into dialogue with the field of sustainable community development. My belief is the community will benefit from an action-oriented study and the field will benefit from a deeper understanding of sustainable communities from an Indigenous-led perspective.

Hall (2008) argues, for a real move toward sustainability and self-determination of Indigenous peoples to take place there “needs to be a change at all levels of the dominant Western culture, including deeply held worldviews” (p. i). Citing the work of Carolyn Merchant in *The Death of Nature*, Mander (1991) notes the prevailing view of peoples, of a "Western" orientation or otherwise, prior to the "scientific revolution," was the belief that Earth was a feminine being and a living organism. As stated by Mander (1991), this viewpoint was radically changed when "the idea was postulated that the earth is actually a kind of dead thing, a machine". This new viewpoint led to "scientific paradigms that gave impetus to the idea of human superiority over other animals and over nature...With the manmade technical machine spreading itself rapidly across the landscape, we had physical demonstrations of our power to alter nature, giving us "proof" of our superiority" (p. 211). The perspective of the Earth as a dead thing versus a living entity is not only a more recent development but also not universally held even today, with the exception of the majority of people in highly technological and industrialized Western nations such as the United States, Western Europe and the Soviet Union (Mander, 1991, p. 212). Some scientists argued on behalf of the "whole planet as a living system", such as *The Gaia Hypothesis* (Margulis and Lovelock 1974). Should the dominant EuroAmerican/Western perspective change to embrace the Earth as more than "resources" for the benefit of humans it would fundamentally change the foundation upon which the U.S. was built and maintained over generations (and more recently the globalized economic system). Cajete (2015) posits, “realigning ourselves and our communities with the natural world’s ecological order is the quintessential task of our time” (p. 75). A crucial step in building a more ecological worldview is not to merely

recognize, in the way a settler nation ‘grants’ rights to Indigenous peoples, but to truly respect and honor Indigenous epistemologies and life ways. One such example would be to honor Indigenous knowledges, which can be defined as "the culturally and spiritually based way in which indigenous peoples relate to their ecosystems" (LaDuke, 1994, p. 127). The reason being, as noted by Carroll (2015), for American Indians “the *political* is inherently *environmental*...[because] political struggles always come back to the issue of land and our connection to it” (p. 12, italics in original).

The differences in how Indigenous peoples view the world in relation to the Western/EuroAmerican worldview is well documented and such tensions are ongoing factors in continued power imbalances and detrimental mental, emotional and physical impacts on individuals and communities (Stanton 2014, Carroll 2015, Deloria 1998). Building upon this fundamental difference in viewing the world, Mander (1991, 2006) identifies a number of ways between what he terms "native peoples and the people of technologized societies". For example, viewing the Earth as being alive or dead has far-reaching and pervasive ramifications that permeate every system in our now globalized world, such as: economics, politics, systems of power, sociocultural arrangements, our relations to nature and the environment, our spatial constructions such as architecture and urban/community planning that impact individual and community social reality, religious and philosophical leanings including such aspects as our concept of time and how it is shared and measured, space, kinship relationships and identity, among others (Mander, 1991, p. 215-219). (This definition by Mander of the static binary between the two groups could be more nuanced than a categorical extrapolation of the pan-Indian viewpoint versus what is viewed as "technologized" societies. Regardless, the chart is

noted not to be "universally applicable to all Indian societies or all Western societies" and does provide some initial basis of understanding the inherent differences when viewing the Earth as either alive or dead.)

Intersectionality between a worldview operating on “predict to control” (Western science and development) and an Indigenous worldview (knowledges and values of sacred cycles, flows, timing and ceremony) plays out locally in community. There can be a vast difference in how native and non-native peoples view the idea of private and public land ownership as well as the role of respecting divine processes. The knowledge systems of Indigenous peoples are diverse and constantly adapting in response to new conditions (Barnhardt, 2005, p. 11). Even though Indigenous knowledges may have some similar widespread aspects, the “situatedness” of Indigenous ways of knowing are rooted in a local context and “depend on local social mechanisms” (Breidlid, 2013, p. 39). It is a fairly recent phenomenon that literature reflects these knowledge systems as being a valid and respected ‘way of knowing and being’ in the world. Barnhardt (among others) feels a “significant paradigm shift is under way in which Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing are recognized as complex knowledge systems with an adaptive integrity of their own” (p. 9). There is an urgent need to “confront differences in epistemologies, connect to Native communities in appropriate and meaningful ways and to honor the history and potential of Native peoples...” (Stanton, 2014). As stated by Barnhardt (2005), it is “by utilizing strategies that link the study of learning to the knowledge base and ways of knowing already established in the local community and culture, Indigenous communities are more likely to find value in what emerges and to put new insights into practice as a meaningful exercise in self-determination” (p. 18).

Indigenous scholars have suggested many strategies to redefine community sustainability from an Indigenous perspective, such as the call for sustainable development based upon a location/tribal-specific worldview and reciprocal relationships honoring a web of life, continuing or renewing life ways based on land-and water-based practices, redefining what it means to live a “good life”, among others. Literature further explaining such strategies of envisioning and asserting alternative visions of sustainability and development is outlined below.

Ruttenberg (2013) argues, “understanding the development aspect of human security as ‘freedom from want’ is a useful point of departure for embarking on the task of designing development alternatives...The first step is to redefine what the ‘want’ encompasses” (p. 68). As noted in an earlier passage by Alfred (2015), there is a need to envision “other options for a healthy way of being”. One example of envisioning and asserting alternative visions of sustainability and development is the “*World Peoples’ Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth: Indigenous People’s Declaration*” (held in Bolivia in April 2010) which encouraged the redefinition of what “living well” entails thereby opening up space for “the construction of alternative ways of life” to the current development model. Thompson (2011) synthesizes three broad streams of global discourse surrounding alternatives to the dominant economic model, including: European degrowth, Latin American indigenous ‘live well/*buen vivir*’, and North American eco-economics (p. 448). (Also known as *vivir bien*, *buen vivir* in Spanish, *sumac kawsay* in Quechua, *suma qamaña* in Aymara’, *Ñande Reko* in Guarani, *shiir waras* in Ashuar, *küme mongen* in Mapuche, *teko kavi*, *qhapaj nan*, among others; Thompson 2011, Farthing & Kohl 2014)

Another salient example of an ongoing social movement (originating from Canada), Idle No More is an example of as a “‘movement moment’, characterized by innovative uses of online and direct action tactics designed to disrupt settler colonial space” (Baker, 2014, p. 2). The Idle No More movement has galvanized terms such as ‘settler’ and ‘colonial’ that has aided in a growing recognition for the neo-colonialism embedded in the Western system of knowledge and capitalist development (Baker, 2014). Citing other countries making sustainability a focused effort, the Idle No More Manifesto demands genuine sustainable development with the vision of “‘healthy, just, equitable and sustainable communities” being the end-goal.

The defense of indigeneity is a core tenant of self-determination, so how would alternative models built on Indigenous understandings of “‘living well” be constructed, implemented and lived in settler nations such as the United States? Mander (1991) asserts such a shift means the U.S. "would be hard-pressed to continue existing in anything like its present form" (p. 214). A crucial step is building a more ecological worldview is not to merely recognize (in the way a settler nation ‘grants’ rights to Indigenous peoples) but truly respect and honor Indigenous epistemologies.

In the 2008 dissertation by Hall, 13 indigenous leaders from the bioregion defined by the Pacific salmon runs were interviewed to explore their *mental models* of sustainability. From these interviews major themes emerged including “‘the role of the human being as caretaker actively participating in the web of life, the importance of simultaneously restoring culture and ecology due to interdependence, the need to educate and build awareness, and the importance of cooperation” (p. i). Hall’s (2008) study recommends “‘understanding who we are as a living species, including our profound

connection with nature, along with a holistic and intergenerational perspective...as [being a] prerequisite for balancing and aligning human modes of being with the larger patterns of life". Although the study did not deeply address or connect aspects such as language, epistemology, and neocolonialism to sustainability it has relevance and importance in the study of Indigenous-led sustainability.

When examining the life ways of subsistence based societies, the ability to sustain and continue community well-being (or the objective of the "good life" according to Cree and Anishinabeg people) are based upon "careful observation of the ecosystem and careful behavior determined by social values and cultural practices" (p. 128). LaDuke (1994) uses the alternative interpretation of sustaining well-being, or the good life, as "continuous rebirth" based upon the paradigm of "cyclical thinking and reciprocal relations and responsibilities to the Earth..." (p. 128). This view of sustainability is inherently value and ethics driven. Cyclical thinking is the "understanding that the world (time, and all parts of the natural order...) flows in cycles [therefore there is] a knowledge that what one does today will affect one in the future, on the return". Instead of viewing nature as resources for human development and/or economic gain, they are viewed as "gifts from the Creator" with an embedded sense of reciprocity, responsibility and relationship that requires limits, thoughtfulness, and balance (p. 128). According to LaDuke (1994), should development be based upon Indigenous values it would need to be "decentralized, self-reliant, and very closely based on the carrying capacity of that ecosystem" (p. 129). Such a perspective stands in sharp contrast to our current global system of externalities and profit margins. According to Corntassel (2008), sustainability,

is intrinsically linked to the transmission of traditional knowledge and cultural practices to future generations. Without the ability of community members to continuously renew their relationships with the natural world (i.e., gathering medicines, hunting and fishing, basket-making, etc.), indigenous languages, traditional teachings, family structures, and livelihoods of that community are all jeopardized. (p. 118).

Vizenor (1999) utilizes the term *survivance* to “describe the self-representation of Indigenous people against the subjugations, distortions, and erasures of White colonization and hegemony” (Greenwood, 2009, p. 3).

Many scholars refer to *resurgence* or a *resurgence paradigm*. For example, the insurgent research approach noted in this study is grounded in a movement towards an “Indigenous resurgence ideology” (Gaudry, 2001, p. 117). The use of terms such as related to mobilization or social movements often connote a highly coordinated large-scale uprising. Scholars, such as Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) (2011), see such “western theoretical constructions” delegitimizing the more local, daily, and long-term acts of resistance embodied by our ancestors (p. 15-16). Simpson (2011) argues that “much of what has kept our languages, cultures, and systems of governance alive... [has been] our Ancestors often act[ing] within the family unit to physically survive, to pass on what they could to their children, to occupy and use our lands as we always had” (p. 15-16). Occupying and utilizing the land/water to continue community-based practices is key component of all sustainability strategies advocated by Indigenous scholars. In a recent presentation, Alfred (2015) elaborated on the essence of *resurgence* in a way that speaks to the holistic and interconnected nature of such strategies. He views *resurgence* as,

elaborat[ing] a vision that allows Indigenous youth to think about other options for a healthy way of being, for creating happiness for themselves, for empowering themselves...to envision ways physically, culturally, psychologically to have that relationship to the land that can enable the other things...the accountability, recovery of culture, the transformation, the sustaining of a healthy physical body, of a healthy community that comes from that. There is no way to think about decolonization or resurgence without talking about how to get the youth back onto the land. (YouTube video)

The concept of *sustainable self-determination* (Alfred & Corntassel 2005, Corntassel, & Bryce 2011, Corntassel 2008, 2012a, 2012b, 2014) encompasses decolonizing aspects but also calls for “restoration of indigenous livelihoods and territories and for future indigenous political mobilization” (Corntassel, 2008, p. 109). As argued by Corntassel (2008), *sustainable self-determination* offers a new benchmark for the praxis of Indigenous livelihoods, food security, community governance, and relationships to the natural world and ceremonial life that enables the transmission of these cultural practices to future generations (p. 124). Other Indigenous scholars have begun to build upon this concept, using it as a starting point from which to build. As noted by Goodyear (2013) in the *Seeds We Planted*,

The hallmarks of *sustainable self-determination* include focusing on individual, family, and community responsibilities, regenerating local and regional Indigenous economies, and recognizing the interconnection of social, spiritual, environmental, and political aspects of self-determination. The ultimate goal is for Indigenous people to have the freedom to practice indigenous livelihoods, maintain food security, and apply natural laws on indigenous homelands in a sustainable manner. Critical to this

process is the long-term sustainability of indigenous livelihoods, which includes the transmission of these cultural practices to future generations. (p. 31)

CHAPTER THREE: STRATEGIES OF INQUIRY

Overview

Utilizing a transdisciplinary approach, this study draws upon notions of truth, power and the situated elements shared by constructivist and critical theory and is fundamentally grounded in Indigenous theory and decolonizing methodologies (with every effort made to adhere to a Cherokee-centered philosophy). In referring to a constructivist lens, such a lens views “truth” (therefore reality) as constructed knowledge based upon experience, worldview and values. Whereas, critical theory seeks to identify and explore systems of power, with focus on marginalized and oppressed groups by embracing the salience of power relationships and whose knowledge is considered valid or true. This work rests on the creation of participatory spaces for decolonizing praxis guided by indigenous communities for indigenous communities. In discussing “strategies of inquiry” grounded in indigenous (or Cherokee-specific) ways of knowing, being, and doing it becomes difficult to reduce theory, methods, and content-specific questions into distinct separate categories. As noted by Kovach, 2005, “Indigenous ways of knowing are intricately connecting to Indigenous ways of doing, [therefore]...epistemology, theory, methods, and ethical protocols are integral to Indigenous methodology...It is a methodology that shape shifts in the form of theory, methods, and ethics” (p. 32).

An Indigenous research paradigm shares an emancipatory objective with critical theory as well as other approaches such as feminism, postmodern, hermeneutics, among others. Among the “epistemological assumptions of these varied methodologies contend that those who live their lives in marginal places of society experience silencing and

injustice” (Kovach, 2009, p. 21). As noted by Stanton (2014), “determining epistemological difference between cultural groups involved in a PAR project is, in and of itself, not enough to ignite a transformation in scholarly practice [or in community practice]. Participants (including scholar-participants) must recognized that epistemological differences are not valued equitably within the broader social sphere” (p. 576). I view indigenous PAR/insurgent research as taking the critiques made visible through critical theory (e.g. critical feminist, postcolonial discourse) and moving it past the question of representation and “whose knowledge is allowed to speak?” (Spivak, 1998). As noted by Kovach (2005), “critical research can be emancipatory-or not- depending upon where you want to take it (either way it’s political)” (p. 20). The liberatory or emancipatory nature embedded insurgent research makes explicit the responsibility as researchers to honor and encompass Indigenous worldviews throughout the process with the community being the most important stakeholder and owner of the knowledge, the ultimate goal being *beneficial* community action (Gaudry, 2011). By extension, the usefulness of the research is the indicator of is it was or wasn’t beneficial, and that can only be determined by the community itself.

This study is situated geographically within the tribal jurisdiction of the Cherokee Nation and United Keetoowah Band. Those participating in the study reflect their local knowledge as rooted in their families, kinship relationships and communities in this particular place. As noted by Denzin and Lincoln (2008), “the ‘local’ that localizes critical theory is always historically specific. The local is grounded in the politics, circumstances, and economies of a particular moment, a particular time and place, a particular set of problems, struggles, and desires” (p. 9). Decolonizing methodologies

attempts to go further by utilizing the worldview of the community (versus the dominant worldview) as the framework from which to work from. The knowledge and experiences of the Cherokee youth is situated geographically, ontologically, epistemologically, and axiologically, therefore an appropriate framework must recognize and honor these foundations. Such a framework must be in constant dialogue with the historical, social, cultural, education and economic realities faced by Native American communities in settler nations. Frameworks built with the goal of Indigenous social justice “begin...from the assumption that Indigenous Peoples have the power, strength, and intelligence to develop culturally specific decolonization strategies to pursue our own strategies of liberation...” (Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2005, p. 1).

Strategies of Inquiry- Decolonizing methodologies

“Any discussion of incorporating cultural protocols into Aboriginal research requires a preliminary discussion of colonization and cultural genocide and of the effect that these have had on Aboriginal people. (Lavallee, 2009, p. 28)

Indigenous-led community development (as well as decolonizing research) encompasses decolonizing entrenched systems that continue to suppress indigeneity through normative discourses that marginalize Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing as well as processes to rediscover, regain, and reimagine aspects integral to individual and community well-being. Therefore, holistic and participatory frames that fully situate such salient factors are needed when examining topics related to identity, resurgence, and sustainability in Indigenous communities. When utilizing Indigenous research frameworks, “a decolonizing lens will remain until it is no longer needed” (Kovach, 2010, p. 87). Therefore, such a frame would reflect, “an epistemology of the

colonized, anchored in the indigenous sense of collective and common colonial consciousness” (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, p.300). For example, the anti-colonial discursive frame presented by Dei & Asgharzadeh (2001) is meant to allow, “for the effective theorizing of issues emerging from colonial and colonized relations by way of using indigenous knowledge as an important standpoint”. Such a framing has the following characteristics and foci according to Dei & Asgharzadeh (2001),

- Focuses on power configurations embedded in ideas, cultures, and histories of knowledge production, validation, and use.
- Focuses on our understanding of indigeneity, pursuit of agency, resistance, and subjective politics
- Acknowledges the role of societal/institutional structures in producing and reproducing endemic inequalities.
- Posits that institutional structures are sanctioned by the state to serve the material, political, and ideological interests of the state and the economic/social formation
- Acknowledges the power of local social practice and action in surviving the colonial and colonized encounters.
- Acknowledges that the colonized have discursive agency and power of resistance, therefore the power to question, challenge, and subsequently subvert the oppressive structures of power and privilege.
- Views race as an independent (and yet co-determinant) category that, while maintaining its autonomy, interrelates and interconnects with such other autonomous sites as class, gender, and sexuality.
- Seeks to work with alternative, oppositional paradigms based on the use of indigenous concepts and analytical systems and cultural frames of reference.
- Seen as a counter/oppositional discourse to the repressive presence of colonial oppression.
- Serves as an affirmation of the reality of re-colonization processes through the dictates of global capital.

- Seeks to identify a site of/in tradition, orality, visual representation, material and intangible culture, and aboriginality that is empowering to colonized and marginalized groups and to celebrate its strategic significance
(Modified slightly from p. 297-301)

Many indigenous scholars are attempting to utilize indigenous ways of knowing and practice in their research, in the dissertation by Hart (2008) *radical indigenism*, as suggested by Garrouette (2003), was used in a Cree community. Methodologically this study draws upon multiple approaches, broadly referred to as *decolonizing methodologies* (Smith 2012, Wilson 2008, Denzin, Lincoln and Smith 2008, Gaudry 2011). Denzin, Lincoln and Smith (2008), suggest utilizing a “merger between critical and indigenous methodologies” termed *critical indigenous pedagogy* (p. 2, italics in original). This approach makes explicit its commitment to social justice through the honoring of place-based indigenous knowledges and a goal of promoting self-determination for study participants.

More specifically, the approaches of *insurgent research* (Gaudry, 2011) and *participatory action research (PAR)* provide the overarching paradigmatic guidelines and strategies of inquiry. As the study progressed, the aim was to further hone the approach to honor a more specific “Cherokee-centered” worldview through co-collaboration between the Advisory Committee, the youth participants, and myself (Gaudry 2011, Shea et al. 2013, Castleden & Garvin 2008). (The choice to use the verb “co-collaborate” was an attempt to make explicit the balance of power between the various knowledge holders as well as the non-hierarchical nature the process intended to honor). Below is a brief overview of decolonizing methodologies and the two approaches, followed by a

synthesizing of these approaches resulting in my current “best thinking” on an applied Cherokee-centered framework. The insurgent research approach calls for the use of Cherokee language, values and concepts as much as possible. Prior to beginning the study, my assumption was this area of exploration would lead to examining connections to language and identity. As noted by Smith (2012), "...indigenous communities as a part of the self-determination agenda engage quite deliberately in naming the world according to an indigenous worldview" (p. 127-128). This study attempts to follow the connections made in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, as stated by Smith (2012), “between the indigenous agenda of self-determination, indigenous rights and sovereignty, on one hand, and, on the other, a complementary indigenous research agenda that was about building capacity and working towards healing, reconciliation and development.

The active use of *praxis* in the decolonizing process guides the resistance to structural components of colonization as being now deeply embedded and normalized in U.S. educational, economic, social, cultural, institutions and ideologies (Corntassel 2012, Wilson & Yellow Bird 2005). Corntassel (2012a) refers to the process as “decolonizing praxis” whereby it is manifested by “moving beyond political awareness and/or symbolic gestures to everyday practices of resurgence (p. 89). According to Wilson and Yellow Bird (2005), “working towards decolonization, then, requires us to consciously and critically assess how our minds have been affected by the cultural bomb of colonization” (p. 2). Gaudry (2011), a Métis scholar, posits “the ultimate goal of any liberatory praxis is to help revive the knowledge of what it means to be Indigenous among everyday Native people, and to articulate how it remains relevant in terms of decolonization and emancipation” (pg. 133).

Insurgent research approach

According to Gaudry (2011), the grounding for an insurgent research approach “is situated within a larger Indigenous movement that challenges colonialism and its ideological underpinnings and is working from within Indigenous frameworks to reimagine the world by putting Indigenous ideals into practice” (p. 117). The tenants embodied in insurgent research, as noted by Gaudry (2011), are as follows:

- 1) Research is grounded in, respects, and ultimately seeks to validate Indigenous worldviews.
- 2) Research output is geared toward use by Indigenous peoples and in Indigenous communities.
- 3) Research processes and final products are ultimately responsible to Indigenous communities, meaning that Indigenous communities are the final judges of the validity and effectiveness of insurgent research.
- 4) Research is action oriented and works as a motivating factor for practical and direct action among Indigenous peoples and in Indigenous communities.

The liberatory or emancipatory nature embedded in insurgent research makes explicit the responsibility of researchers to honor and encompass Indigenous worldviews throughout the process with the community being the most important stakeholder and owner of the knowledge. (Gaudry, 2011).

Participatory action research (PAR)

The PAR method, especially when modified to encompass an Indigenous worldview, is being touted as a salient area for exploration in response to the repeated calls for decolonizing research strategies (Zavala 2013, Tuck 2009, Smith 2012). PAR strives to provide research data to encourage systemic change led by small groups of

people for the good of the community concerned. PAR assumes the community itself has the inherent capacity to guide and manifest positive change with or without the “help” of outside researchers (Blodgett et al., 2011). The scope of such endeavors is holistic in nature, thus broaching ways of knowing and being (as well as any subsequent action) that are aligned with the soul of the community that encompasses more sustainable human, social-economic, and ecological ways of interacting and impacting in the community. Action research values and respects the lived experiences of the community by not only reimagining the way knowledge is gathered but also how it is presented and shared with the community. Another core purpose is to “contribute to the ongoing re-visioning of the Western mindset-to add impetus to the movement away from a modernist worldview based on a positivist philosophy and a value system dominated by crude notions of economic progress” (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, xxiii).

In line with this praxis-focus (theory, action and reflection process) of PAR studies, many studies embed community engagement in the research process by creating interactive websites, hosting public community presentations or events, exhibiting work at art shows, etc. (Childers-McKee, 2014). PAR “is part of the broader legacy of activist scholarship...and can be traced to anti-colonial movements... [where] Fals-Borda and other Latin American scholar-activists worked within an explicit anti-colonial framework in their development and study of PAR projects” (Zavala, 2013, p. 57). PAR has been utilized in many contexts, such as Youth PAR (Childers-McKee 2014) and Community Based PAR (Castleden & Garvin 2008), utilizing a variety of participatory methodologies and creative techniques (e.g., photography, collage making, storytelling, digital storytelling, creative arts) (McIntyre 2000).

Youth PAR has been increasingly utilized with students/youth as a critical and collaborative framework to raise “critical consciousness of social justice issues that confront their school and community...that foster[s] positive interethnic relations” (Childers-McKee, 2014, p. 48) and to explore theories of change embedded in the process of Indigenous youth engagement and action (Tuck 2009, 2013). Youth-led PAR is defined by the following principles, as identified by Driskell (2002): 1) the process builds the capacity of youth, 2) youth perspectives are respected, 3) youth assets are mobilized, 4) youth have decision-making roles and 5) the process leads towards community development.

Regardless of the specific focus on either youth or community partnerships, as noted by Childers-McKee (2014), McIntyre (2000) outlines three major components of participatory action research (PAR): “(1) the collective investigation of a problem, (2) the reliance on indigenous knowledge to better understand that problem, and (3) the desire to take individual and/or collective action to deal with the stated problem” (p. 128).

Through the participatory and co-collaborative process PAR aims to “develop culturally relevant theories, which are typically determined by working closely with research participants to identify the most effective ways to answer particular research questions” (Castleden & Garvin 2008).

A criticism of PAR has been that it is too problem focused and may easily steer into the realm of deficit thinking. Therefore, some scholars utilize approaches such as appreciative inquiry (Chilisa, 2012). As noted by Chilisa (2012), the appreciative inquiry approach “is guided by affirmative assumptions about the researched people or communities” (p. 244). The methods and guiding questions have been intentionally

crafted to circumvent deficit based thinking as much as possible. I have chosen to utilize *decolonizing methodologies* in an effort to find a balance between the need for consciousness raising along with the need for envisioning a positive future for individuals and communities.

This study draws from PAR in some aspects and insurgent research on other aspects. They complement each other as both approaches are action-oriented, are guided by the community, seek to address power dynamics between the researcher and the researched, and attempt to honor participant's experiences and knowledge. Studies utilizing a PAR approach modified for Indigenous communities provide in-depth guidance on addressing hierarchy and power relations in the research process including recruitment, consent, researcher positionality and participatory methods (e.g. photovoice and community mapping). Insurgent research is a new twist on the broader discourse of decolonizing methodologies and provided some additional clarification on ways to approach research in a methodical and intentional way.

Drawing on the aforementioned concepts, the paradigm and strategies of inquiry follow indigenous methodologies centered on Cherokee decolonizing praxis. This action and reflection process fits well with Indigenous pedagogy (observation and action) where knowledge is acquired and practiced through direct experience with the natural world (experientially grounded). Such aspects must be taken into account when developing appropriate frameworks as they provide the foundation for decolonization. Although there has been a continued call for such approaches, especially for indigenous youth, there is an absence of frameworks from which to draw from as a community-based researcher (McHugh & Kowalski, 2009).

Co-collaboration through shared responsibility and authority were key aspects within the framework (McHugh & Kowalski, 2009). The study also aims to provide space for youth to embody the agency noted by Dozier Enos (2015) where “*how to protect community speaks to the sense of agency many Indigenous teenagers have, giving them focus for how to become involved as an act of Indigenous power, of self-determination in a continuing cycle addressing an ecology of place that sustains a way of life*” (p. 38, italics added). Another key aspect embedded in PAR/insurgent research approach and the method of Photovoice is the ability, through narratives and photography, to challenge official histories and binaries about Cherokee people and about youth specifically; basically “talking back” to those that so often speak for them or about them (both Cherokee and non-native).

Strategies of Inquiry- Methods

Community Mapping

There are differences within and between communities and families (as a general rule, including the study site of Stilwell, OK) therefore the study must make an attempt to clarify the meaning of community and how the youth situate themselves. Nelson (2014) states that Cherokee "identity [is] intimately connected with community" - therefore the specifics of what that community is need to be clearly defined (p. 91). According to Amsden & VanWynsberghe (2005), “community mapping can be defined as groups coming together to draw, mold, write, or express through any other means some aspect of local knowledge and experience” with the philosophy informing it being “to support the power and capacity of people to represent themselves and their understanding of the

world around them” (p. 360-361). The mapping process promotes and encourages: openness, dialogue, inclusion, collaboration, relationship building, and captures relationships between spatial/physical elements, cultural values, emotions and abstract connections (Amsden & VanWynsberghe, 2005).

Photovoice

Photovoice is utilized in this study as it fits well with the insurgent research and Indigenous participatory action research approaches (Shea et al., 2013). Photovoice is a method of inquiry and knowledge production developed by Wang & Burris (1997). According to Wang & Burris (1997), the goal of such a method is threefold: 1) to enable people to record and reflect their [perceptions of their] community’s strength and concerns, 2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important community issues through large and small group discussion of photographs, and 3) to reach policymakers (p. 370). Photovoice draws upon the theoretical underpinnings found in Paulo Freire’s (1970) approach to education for critical consciousness, feminist theory and community-based documentary photography and is founded upon health promotion principles (Wang, Cash & Powers, 2000). The photovoice method has been utilized in many disciplines, most notably health, education and youth studies. This approach fits well with the study as it is “highly flexible” and it “can be adapted to specific participatory goals” (Wang and Burris 1997, p. 370). In the study “Modifying Photovoice for community-based participatory Indigenous research” Castleden et al. (2008) modified the method for use with the Huu-ay-aht First Nation. The results suggested that

“photovoice was an effective method for sharing power, fostering trust, developing a sense of ownership, creating community change and building capacity” (p. 1401).

The young people individually took photographs in their home communities based on guiding questions. Individual interviews were conducted to explore the meanings behind the photographs. The photovoice method allows for the youth to actively engage with the world and the range of human and non-human kinship relationships embedded within. The youth-led nature of the process means they guide the subject of their photographs so the settings could be a landscape, tree, animal, bird, insect, flower, the sun, moon or sky- any element of the natural world can be brought into the discussion. The agency to engage with the natural world as an important aspect reinforces the values of interconnection, kinship and gratitude. The ability for the young people to interact and focus on a particular place and/or the land provides an opportunity for a place-and-land-based focus during the research process (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015).

Stemming from the photovoice process, salient themes as identified by the participants, were explored utilizing in-depth individual interviews and group interviews. Individual interviews will focus on the student telling the story behind the particular photographs they chose to submit. The group discussions were conducted in a circle based upon mutually agreed upon guidelines for the circle (i.e. confidentiality, respect). Basic guidelines of the circle are that everyone is equal and able to speak without criticism or interruption. Lavalley (2009) utilized this concept, describing this method of inquiry as “gathering stories through sharing circles” (p. 28). This practice isn’t exactly carried out in the same way in Cherokee tradition, however I felt the tenets of consensus, harmony, individual autonomy with collective intent, and the sacredness of the circle

would provide a more relevant and comfortable setting than the focus group method. I also felt that a discussion circle would result in more relational accountability than other dominant methods (Wilson, 2008, p. 39). It is important to be respectful of boundaries and limits. As noted by Teuton (2012), “sacred knowledge- of spiritual matters, family matters, and knowledge of medicine, among other kinds-are only shared with those who need to know those things. Many Cherokees do not want to share their knowledge with those outside their families and communities” (p. 4). It was of great importance that this study was strategic and respectful in the gaining and using of information using well thought out strategies and limits to information sharing. As a facilitator I attempted to not appear as being pushy to obtain personal information or knowledge viewed as taboo or sacred. It was also made clear both verbally as well as in a written Confidentiality Statement that everyone signed, that the group discussions in the circle were confidential. Due to the co-collaborative intent of the framework I attempted to engage the participants in guiding and analyzing the data however possible (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000).

CHAPTER FOUR: STUDY PROCESSES

Recruiting participants

Youth ages 13-18 were recruited from the Native American History and Cherokee Language classes at Stilwell High School during the spring 2016 semester.

Community Involvement/Advisory Committee

Rather than the community approaching me initially, as is more common in PAR /indigenous-led research, I initiated the study by approaching the preferred school site with the idea to conduct a photovoice project with the Cherokee students. Support was immediately and enthusiastically given from the principal and a teacher, as well as all of the community members approached about the project. An Advisory Committee was formed based upon feedback from elders and respected community members. Each member is personally and professionally engaged in Cherokee cultural education and TGΘΓΠΡΛΘΔ and has a commitment to participating in the study. See Appendix One for a list of Advisory Committee members. The Advisory Committee, along with three members of the Cherokee Nation IRB, took on various participatory roles in the project thereby encouraging the inclusion of the community in the process. The initial guiding questions and strategies of inquiry were crafted with feedback from the community-based Advisory Committee. The participants were integral in guiding how the project unfolded and the ultimate direction, along with feedback from the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee members were especially helpful in setting culturally appropriate (Cherokee-centered) protocols and providing guidance on how to best safe-guard sacred/culturally sensitive information and knowledge during the process, for the

community exhibit, and for publication. The community members that make up the Advisory Committee are all insiders as they have lived in the local area and worked in Cherokee cultural education for much of their adult lives, therefore they would be considered *insiders* in the research process. Building and maintaining strong relationships remained at the forefront of my actions and research processes (McHugh & Kowalski, 2009). Meetings with the Advisory Committee took place formally or informally at least twice a month during the study.

Relationship to Community

The building and maintaining of healthy relationships in community is about “establishing, maintaining, and nurturing reciprocal and respectful relationships” (Smith, 2005, p. 97) and therefore must be key in the research process in community as well (McHugh & Kowalski, 2009). The intent of the study is to be beneficial, relevant and useful to the participants and the community, therefore the participants and I worked as co-collaborators, with feedback from the Advisory Committee. As a condition of approval from the Cherokee Nation IRB, three members of the Cherokee Nation IRB would be consulted and informed throughout the process, done via in-person and email communications. Following the tenets of insurgent research/PAR (through the method of photovoice), a public Community Event & Exhibit was held at the Cherokee Heritage Center May 10-14, 2016. The photographs were exhibited along with the accompanying salient narratives. The youth that chose to attend the Event were allowed an opportunity to present their photographs and narratives and to answer questions from the community and the media in attendance. The intention was for the youths’ families and communities to attend as well as the broader community including tribal leadership, Stilwell High

School administration and educators, city officials, and community-based organizations. The ultimate goal of the Community Event was to have an inter-generational community dialogue surrounding the topics of interest as perceived by the Cherokee youth.

Informed Consent

Citing the informed consent process as a “barrier to establishing relationships” due to the inherent hierarchal nature, McHugh, & Kowalski (2009) noted that this aspect of the research process is “particularly detrimental in PAR because the hierarchies invoked by processes of consent can create barriers to shared ownership and authority, which are key guiding principles in PAR” (p. 122). The aspect of signing a paper for “consent” to “own knowledge” is especially relevant for indigenous communities due to the negative history surrounding the signing of government treaties and documents. The aspect of “owning” knowledge also is a source of discussion as indigenous peoples view the transmission and ownership of knowledge in ways that don’t always correlate to the informed consent process. The three ways I negotiated the process are as follows:

IRB Approvals

Since the study took place in the tribal jurisdiction of the Cherokee Nation and purposefully engages with Cherokee youth, permission was needed from the Cherokee Nation Institutional Review Board (IRB). The United Keetoowah Band (UKB) also considers this area their tribal jurisdiction but they do not have an IRB process or any measures in place for such approval. Final approval was given by the Cherokee Nation IRB to conduct this study in March 2016. It was then amended to extend the study site to include Stilwell High School. Following successful approval by the Cherokee Nation, Arizona State University granted IRB approval (ID: STUDY00003496) and then

approved the amended study location. For Cherokee Nation and Arizona State University IRB documentation see Appendix.

Youth participants

All participants and at least one parent or guardian (for participants under 18) signed an informed consent form to ensure they fully understand the reason for the study and portions of interview/group discussion transcripts and photographs will be exhibited and possibly published. The verbiage was clear and developmentally appropriate including a statement that youth can choose not to participate in the study at any time with no negative ramifications. In McHugh & Kowalski's 2009 article titled *Lessons learned: Participatory action research with young aboriginal women* they outline several lessons learned that are relevant in this study regarding consent, especially with young people. They note, "our experiences in this PAR project suggest that obtaining informed consent is not a simple methodological process that can be quickly and casually handled. Instead, consent, particularly with youth, is a significant process that requires constant dialogue throughout the entire research process" (p. 124). Therefore, I continually mentioned that they could stop participating at any time and that everyone would have the opportunity to review and edit all materials that would be utilized publicly.

Training

Following the study by H. Castleden et al. (2008), the mechanical and ethical aspects of student-led photography were handled using a four-part process to safeguard confidentiality. First, a photography ethics training took place during class prior to youth taking photographs. The purpose was to orient the youth to purpose of taking photographs as well as ethical aspects such as photo release forms and appropriate ways to photograph

difficult subject matter. The goal of such training was to ensure the youth were well informed and comfortable, and to minimize unintended consequences of the photographs to either the participant(s) or subject(s). Youth were trained on what is appropriate to photograph and what is dangerous or inappropriate, such as illegal activities or situations that would put them in harm's way. The training included discussion on acceptable ways to approach people and how to obtain their consent to be photographed. Second, youth were required to sign a document outlining their rights and responsibilities as a photographer and researcher in the project that included detailed information on ethics, obtaining consent, etc. Third, human subjects shown in the youth' photographs were required to sign an informed consent form noting the reason for the photographs and how they would be utilized (Wang, 2006). Fourth, participants were provided transcripts from their own individual interview and the two group discussions to remove any potentially damaging or sensitive information, thereby placing the "power to define what was included or excluded" with the youth (Castleden & Garvin, 2008, p. 1396).

Potential risks and benefits to involvement and confidentiality

Students were not required to share any personal thoughts, feelings or information or to participate in any conversation or activity that made them feel uncomfortable. All participants had the power to exclude or clarify any of their narratives over the course of the project. Knowledge considered sacred or taboo was not included in the published document or public event. The youth were critically thinking about and discussing topics related to personal identity and cultural continuation. A Stilwell High School counselor was available for emotional support if needed. There are also risks to any research done in a community, especially if it takes an extractive slant. Alternatively, there are also

potential opportunities for research to benefit the community, which is the intent of this research.

The young people that choose to be involved gained knowledge and direct experience with engaging in a research study aimed at strengthening their communities through community action on the topics that are considered the most important aspects to continue for future generations. This experience was unique; therefore, I contend that it will be highly regarded for future endeavors such as a college or job application. By creatively exploring and examining topics surrounding sustainable Cherokee communities, students played an active and important role in strengthening local Cherokee communities. In following with the intention of PAR methodology, great care was taken to ensure the participants receive positive benefits from the research experience (Khanlou & Peter, 2005). At the culmination of the Community Event a participant approached me. She told me how much she enjoyed being involved in the project and thanked me. I have since spoken with another participant who offered to be a part of any future projects I arrange at Stilwell High School.

Confidentiality

Being that the methodology and method were grounded in participants' full engagement in co-creating knowledge and then sharing this situated knowledge publicly with the community, confidentiality was not expected. Every participant was given the choice to be identified by name during the Exhibit or to remain anonymous. The same choices were offered for the photovoice portion as well as the community mapping portion of the Project Booklet. All participants chose to be identified by name for the Exhibit and

the photovoice portion of the Project Booklet. A few participants either refrained from adding their community maps and/or narratives to the community mapping portion of the Project Booklet or just chose to not be identified by name.

Flexibility and diligence

Flexibility and continual attention to the process was key. All aspects had to remain flexible to change if the approach in practice wasn't feasible or appropriate. As noted by Simonds & Christopher (2013), researchers "must be respectful and diligent in our implementation of decolonizing research, paying careful attention to the process and being ready to acknowledge and make appropriate changes..." (p. 2190). Such flexibility was key in this study as the project timeline and location changed fairly abruptly. Due to this situation, as well as the project taking place at a public high school during the final weeks of the school year, there were many unforeseen modifications that had to be made.

Study Evaluation

Guiding elements for study evaluation

In following a decolonizing methodologies approach where research is geared toward and judged by Cherokee people and communities, the validity and effectiveness "will depend on the usefulness of the findings for further theory, research, and practice" (Gaudry 2011; Carlson et al., 2006, p. 842). The Community Event provided the opportunity to explore if the community members felt the narratives and photos were relevant or of use to the community.

According to the mainstream Western research paradigm, validity refers to the accuracy and trustworthiness of instruments, data, and findings” whereas reliability refers to “whether or not you get the same answer by using the instrument to measure something more than once” (Bernard, 2013, p. 45-46). Based on “perceived expertise”, the standards for judging the value of research perceived to be credible in academic or professional settings has been validity, reliability, generalizability, and objectivity (Stanton, 2014, p. 577). However, these assumptions have been increasingly critiqued and alternatives are being explored (Rossman & Rallis 2102). The term *validity* is a criterion with roots in positivist research perspective whereas naturalistic researchers prefer the term *trustworthiness* (Herr & Anderson, 2014). It has been argued by Lincoln and Guba (1985) that the standard of *trustworthiness* to be more appropriate for qualitative inquiry; a study’s trustworthiness demonstrates that the interpretations of the data “ring true” to those who provided the data. As noted, the trustworthiness will be measured by its usefulness (Rossman & Rallis 2012). Rossman & Rallis (2012) suggest three questions when attempting to determine trustworthiness by asking if the study was: 1) conducted according to the norms for acceptable and competent research practice, 2) conducted ethically, constructed in a way that honored participants, and 3) conducted by a researcher that utilized sensitivity to the politics of the topics and setting (p. 60). *Relational accountability* (Rowe, 2014) and *relational validity* (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015) have been suggested as more appropriate ways of framing such aspects. In the study done by Rowe (2014) to develop a Muskego Inninuwuk methodology, the concept of *relationality* was utilized, inspired by the 2008 book by Wilson (*Research Is Ceremony*) and the 2010 book (*Indigenous Methodologies*) by Kovach.

In this study, relationality was seen as foundational to the entire process as it guided all aspects including how participants were encouraged to participate and selected. Wilson (2008) notes “that Indigenous epistemology and ontology are based on relationality. Our axiology and methodology are based upon maintaining relational accountability” (p. X). Rowe (2014) describes relational accountability as “a foundational principle that expresses the need to respect and maintain balance within each of these relationships...the way in which we are responsible for fulfilling our relationships and answering to all my relations with the world around us” (p. X). According to Tuck & McKenzie (2015), relational validity is based on the same “paradigmatic understandings of the relationality of life” but is also,

based on the understanding that the prioritization of “economic validity” is harmful for people, other forms of life, and places.... relational validity implies that research is not only about understanding or chronicling the relationality of life and the inadequacy of economic validity but also that research necessarily influences these conditions in small or significant ways; it thus impels action and increased accountability to people and place. Because no action is an action, and because not acting has implications, a more adequate response is required for current and future injustices. (p. 636)

Adding the additional requirement of being aware and responsive to complex dynamics such as power, gender, and internalized oppression, among others, is also salient in conducting meaningful research with native youth. It is of importance to note that the goal of PAR in working with specific communities (native or non-native) is not necessarily to be generalizable according to the mainstream Western research paradigm. (2001) instead have developed the “four Rs” to consider when developing and implementing community-based participatory research: respect, relevance, reciprocity,

and responsibility. The overall study strives to ensure these aspects as well as integrity, relational accountability and relational validity.

Analyzing and sharing knowledge

Analysis. Data for this study consist of the narratives generated during the process including individual interviews and group interviews. All individual interviews and group interviews were recorded via audio recording and transcribed verbatim. The participants had open access to their individual interview transcripts and final photographs. Data analysis was an ongoing process and was guided by the youth and myself, with feedback from the Advisory Committee. The participants had the opportunity to comment on the preliminary analysis (as seen in the Project Booklet) (Castleden & Garvin, 2008). A dissertation draft was provided to the Advisory Committee for their review via email on September 16, 2016 and September 28, 2016.

Sharing of Knowledge. As noted in the OCAP report, “ownership, control, access, and possession, or OCAP, is self-determination applied to research...[that] is a set of principles in evolution” (p. 1, OCAP report). In order to ensure accuracy and for clarification/comfort purposes the individual and group interviews will be shared with the interviewee. The study may be presented utilizing academic language for the purpose of the dissertation and journal articles but more appropriate materials will be developed for use within the community.

CHAPTER FIVE: PROCESSES & OUTCOME

Introduction

The intent of the study was to be highly participatory with the young people being co-collaborators from start to finish. Having the time and the space to explore the aforementioned strategies of inquiry and the research questions was paramount to the integrity of the intended process. However, due to the unmovable character of the public school calendar ending in mid-May as well as the pre-planned Exhibit at the Cherokee Heritage Center being mid-May the process took an expedited route. I am truly grateful to Stilwell High School administration and educators for their generous support, time and effort. The enthusiasm for the project and quick assistance in recruiting students allowed this project to happen. I am so honored by the fact that seven young people were able to participate in all the aspects of the project. I am so proud of the time, energy, and critical thinking these young leaders did to create such beautiful and impactful meanings for their community maps and photographs. Also of note, there is a spectrum of consciousness and differing levels of personal, family and community engagement. Some people are in a position to honor legacies, and some people aren't. I view having an opportunity to learn Cherokee language and ᏆᏚᏂᏛᏗᏁᏍᏔᏅᏍᏗ in families and communities as a "privilege", one that I was personally denied growing up, as were many others for reasons stemming from trauma, racism, lack of family ties, etc. The ramifications of the loss of connection to knowledge, language and ᏆᏚᏂᏛᏗᏁᏍᏔᏅᏍᏗ was expressed throughout the study, yet there was also a resounding note of hopefulness, resilience and sparks of awareness and reconnection.

Study Process and Outcomes

Over the course of the many months this project was being planned and carried out, the study location was changed from an after school class at Sequoyah High School (Tahlequah, OK) to an extracurricular project during the school day at Stilwell High School (Stilwell, OK). The reason for this change was because the minimum number of participants was not reached as Sequoyah High School has a number of after school activities for students.

The initial plan was to recruit young enrolled Cherokee Nation or UKB tribal members (Grades 9-12) attending Sequoyah High School during the time of the study (spring 2016) for a bi-weekly after school class. The project at Sequoyah High School was to take place for an hour and a half twice a week spanning over seven weeks. The original hope was to begin in January or February but I received final approval in early March as I had a series of entities to work with to get approval including my dissertation committee, the Cherokee Nation IRB and the Arizona State University IRB. The Exhibit at the Cherokee Heritage Center was confirmed for May 10-14, 2016. These specific dates were set as they had been on their public Schedule of Events since November 2015.

The group size was to range from a minimum of 6 to a maximum of 20 and be comprised of both males and females (ages 13-19). I created a recruitment video for teachers to play during class, designed and hung posters around the school, spoke to six after school classes, and requested the project/after school class be announced over the intercom multiple times. However, only two young people enrolled in the class. After three days of conducting the class from 3:30 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. there were only two students that consistently came on the first two days, then only one student came on the

third day. The minimum number of participants as noted in the Cherokee Nation and Arizona State IRBs was six so I saw no other option but to find another study location. After explaining my situation to a colleague that serves as my university's liaison to the Cherokee Nation I approached the superintendent of Stilwell High School. My colleague felt that Stilwell High School would provide a supportive, engaged and enthusiastic environment for the project. Stilwell Public Schools was my entire educational experience prior to attending Northeastern State University for my undergraduate degree so I felt connected and familiar with the setting. I also knew that my mother, a professor and administrator at Northeastern State University, had worked with the superintendent on various grants and projects and had a lot of respect for her. According to the Stilwell superintendent, 74% of the students are Cherokee. All of these factors led me to contact Stilwell High School as an emergency backup plan.

Research Process

Similar to qualitative research, the emergent design of participatory action research situates the role of the proposal to acting as an initial framework with some initial literature and current "best thinking" on behalf on the researcher, while understanding that the iterative process will emerge and be guided by the ongoing participatory process (Herr & Anderson, 2014, p. 87). As such, this study acts as a fluid beginning document "with a commitment to carefully documenting ongoing decision making and directions taken" throughout the "spiraling synergism of action and understanding" (Herr & Anderson, 2014, p. 87).

During group interviews and many individual interviews, we met in a computer lab in the library and kept the door shut for privacy. A few of the individual interviews

took place in the open area of the library or in another classroom if the library area was in use. I continually (verbally and in printed materials) reiterated that specific information considered sacred such as ceremonies/knowledge will be honored and not be a part of a public event or published.

The Cherokee language was utilized as much as possible but was difficult due to many factors. There were varying degrees of language contact and access within our group. We did not have any fluent or near fluent speakers present during our project. Therefore, using English as the main or only language severely restricts the study in its intent to be Cherokee-centered. As a part of the original research proposal, my intent was to utilize storytelling in the research process, however the timing and situation of the study simply did not allow for it.

In an attempt to recruit interested Stilwell High School (SHS) students there was a Project Information & Recruitment Meeting in the SHS library during the school day on March 21, 2016. Nineteen youth attended the meeting, with eighteen expressing interest in participating. On March 24, 2016 I met with the interested students to overview study in more depth. I reviewed study in more detail, answered questions, and provided the students with notebooks to serve as Reflection Journals. Multiple youth decided not to continue on either before the meeting began or after the meeting ended, for various reasons. Mrs. Sawney was present during the two initial meetings. She asked me questions to clarify my meaning and reiterated the meanings to the students, sometimes using different words or more detail. Once the project began I was the only adult/facilitator in the room with the participants. On March 29, 2016 there was a meeting that required attendance to proceed in the project. During this mandatory meeting,

cameras were assigned, I reviewed photography basics and ethics, and we developed and discussed group discussion ground rules (e.g. respect, confidentiality). Some youth were not able to attend the one mandatory group meeting on March 29, 2016 due to personal absence or school related activities (band, sports, etc.). The research process is outlined in further detail below beginning with the first group interview:

Group Interview One: Determining project values and defining concepts

In speaking with Advisory Committee members, they felt young people might understand the concept of *continuance* rather than *sustainability* or *sustainable self-determination*. Therefore, I initially utilized the more commonly used term *sustainability* as well as *continuance* during our first conversations then specifically asked the group about their thoughts on terms to use moving forward. A group interview (or “discussion circle”) was utilized at the beginning of the study to assist in defining concepts (such as “sustainability”) and in discussing the values that guided the entire project (e.g. respect, confidentiality, consent). I provided a packet during the first meeting that outlined what activities would be taking place during our time together. In this document I noted that the basic guidelines of the discussion circle were respect for one another and the ability for everyone to speak without being interrupted or criticized. The group felt that the guidelines I provided (respect and confidentiality) were sufficient. When asked about another word we could possibly use other than “sustainable” there were two words suggested: “productive” both individually as well as community productivity [meaningful, striving, valuable] and “comfortable” meaning the community feels comfortable, to feel “at home” and “at ease” [affect]. A week later, during our second

group interview regarding the community mapping activity, there was consensus that sustainability/sustainable was an acceptable word that seemed to fit the discussions.

The following guiding questions were utilized to encourage the discussion of Cherokee concepts and project values with the expectation that these concepts would help build the framework for the Cherokee-centered framework:

- What values should guide our process and project?
- Is there a better word/concept to use instead of sustainability or continuance?
- What would it mean for the project to be “Cherokee-centered”?
- How can Cherokee language be used?

What would it mean for the project to be “Cherokee-centered”? How can Cherokee language be used?

This question was included as I view the use of Cherokee language to be integral to a Cherokee-centered project framework. The Cherokee language differs greatly from English language as the "Cherokee [language] syntactical structure and the suffixes, prefixes and affixes of Cherokee verbs, which conjugate for time, direction, texture, number, causality, and animation, among other factors, also emphasize the primacy of process in Cherokee epistemology, in contrast to the noun-based structure in English" (Nelson, 2014, p. 88). The young people didn't bring up the Cherokee language in our first discussion and seemed hesitant or unsure on how to answer my question of how to best incorporate Cherokee into the project. There was also uncertainty (silence) related to question on using of Cherokee concepts or worldview so the project would be more “Cherokee-centered”.

Community Mapping Method and Group Interview Two

Everyone was given instructions on the community mapping method activity, paper and markers. The participants were asked to draw their idea of a “sustainable community” on a sheet of paper. I wrote the guiding questions on a large piece of poster board and taped it to the wall so they could look at it during the activity. The group was given over 30 minutes to complete their maps. They were then given the following questions and asked to respond to these questions one at a time moving clockwise in a circle (although I will go counter clockwise in future groups as it is more culturally relevant).

Group Interview Two Guiding Questions

- Describe your map
- What are the qualities of a “sustainable community”?
- Does your map reflect a Cherokee worldview?
- How would your ancestors recognize you as a Cherokee?
- What are Cherokee “life ways”?

During the first group meeting, one of the initial things that struck me was the almost immediate discussion about hardships. The young people were profoundly aware of hardships in their daily lives and in the lives of their families and communities. The young people reflected an awareness of poverty and hardships with statement such as [life being] “more hardships than good times” and with one person telling a story of when her mom grew up there were times that the only food they had to eat were the acorns that fell from the trees in their front yard. There was a group consensus that people don’t help each other enough in hard times.

There were nine students involved at this point of the project so nine maps were turned in, however only five of the maps and narratives were utilized in the Project

Booklet. Two maps were identified by name and three were labeled as “anonymous” as the young people didn’t want to include their names. Two people didn’t want their map included in the booklet.

Photovoice Method

The SHOWeD method is arguably the most often used in the photovoice process. As noted by Strack, Magill & McDonagh (2004), this method generally utilizes five guiding questions followed by discussion on potential action including: “What do you see here? What is really happening here? How does this relate to our lives? Why does this situation, concern, or strength exist? and What can we do about it?” (p. 51). However, I wanted to utilize more of “storytelling” approach in the individual interviews by asking each participant to tell me the story or the meaning behind the photographs they chose to submit. If needed, I asked further clarification questions such as “how does this photo reflect the guiding questions?” The instructions were to submit 3-5 photographs as their response to the following research questions: From your perspective as a Cherokee young person, take photographs that represent:

- 1) your understanding of what a sustainable community is
- 2) the values, practices, and relationships we need to perpetuate to sustain our life ways for generations to come

Two students quit the project prior to submitting photos. One student had a personal situation that made it difficult to find the time to take photographs; the other student didn’t provide a reason other than not turning in any photographs.

The individual and group interviews were transcribed verbatim. The individual transcripts were provided to the participants along with a letter with detailed instructions

asking them to each review their transcripts and to provide feedback when I visited the research site (Stilwell High School) again the following week. The intent was to 1) ensure the young people fully understood that the photographs and their narratives would be on display publicly during the exhibit and 2) to ensure every young person had an opportunity to speak with me privately to review and potentially edit their words shared during the first group interview. It was during these private meetings that I also inquired as to their desire to have their names on their work and if there were any titles they wanted to accompany their photographs. These edited and approved narratives accompanied the photographs meant for exhibition.

As per the photovoice method, the intent was for everyone to see each other's photos and to select themes as a group. However, 3 participants didn't return their photos or do their interview until the morning of the 8th. Therefore, it was impossible to follow the intended process; also the participants didn't have much time to meet as a group, as there was a lot of state/federal-mandated testing happening. This was unfortunate, however, I attempted to reach out in multiple ways to get the group's feedback before anything was published or presented publicly.

It was during the final group interview that I asked about how action could be taken on the aspects we had talked about as a group. The participants did not appear ready to be asked action-oriented questions as indicated through group silence and just a few short answers. This could be due to the fact that we were unable to view all of the photographs as a group and to collectively choose the themes as originally intended or possibly due to the short timeframe as critical reflection takes a period of time [more guidance from knowledge holders/speakers could also be beneficial].

The final group consisted of seven young people, two males and five females ranging in age from 15 to 18. After the last interview I began exploring the idea for a Project Booklet that would encompass this additional data and could be handed out to the communities and those not able to visit the exhibit or event. At this point in the project I had only been given 3 of the 7 participants' email addresses. I emailed these three young women about the idea and they responded favorably. As I reviewed the transcribed data the themes found in the narratives from the individual interviews (regarding the photovoice research questions) it became clear that the group interview during the community mapping method activity also lent additional rich data to the conversation, as did the final group interview. Also of note, the deeply engrained value of humility may have caused some students to downplay certain aspects that would make them stand out during group discussion, therefore individual interviews were better to discuss topics more in-depth. Also many students were very shy speaking in front of the group but were more open and relaxed one-on-one.

Community Event

Along with the Exhibit, I also coordinated a public Community Event to share the project. The two young people that were able to attend shared their experiences and perspectives with the community during a Community Event on May 13, 2016 at the Cherokee Heritage Center. This was an important part of the project as it provides the opportunity for the youth to showcase their work and perspectives and to have open discussion with elders and others from the community on the photographs, narratives and themes brought up by the youth. There were approximately 40 people from the

community that attended, including families of the youth, my family, Stilwell High School and Northeastern State University administration, and Cherokee Nation officials. My daughter and Chief Baker's two granddaughters passed out the Project Booklet to attendees so everyone in attendance received at least one copy. Some people choose to take multiple copies to share with their colleagues. The main gathering area, where the podium and chairs were set up, was lined by tables containing drinks and various dessert items, handmade by a generous friend. The quotes below were transcribed from the video recording of the event done by Northeastern State University videographer Mike Allen.

I was given the advice by an Advisory Committee Member to begin the program with a prayer and welcome in Cherokee by an elder so I reached out to the coordinator of the Speaker's Bureau at the Cherokee Nation, Roy Boney. Roy kindly offered to reach out to a couple of elders he thought might be appropriate and interested. After Lawrence Panther accepted the invitation I asked if he would add his personal reflections of the youth photographs and narratives. Therefore, the Event opened with a recitation of the Lord's Prayer in Cherokee by fluent speaker Lawrence Panther. Lawrence then provided and his thoughts on the photographs, narratives and overall project. Lawrence, speaking of the project he said, "I'm glad young students are recognizing their culture. I'm proud of these Stilwell students for taking their time, seeking their culture through photography". Lawrence then share his reflections of the Exhibit; these quotes will be included in the Analysis section as they reflect the relevance of the generative themes.

Cherokee Nation Chief, Bill John Baker spoke, as well as Stilwell High School Principal, Ramona Ketcher and Dr. Candessa Tehee, Executive Director of the venue (Cherokee Heritage Center) and an Advisory Committee member. Dr. Tehee and Chief

Baker both praised the creative talent shown in the photographs and encouraged the youth to follow this artistic talent in the future as a possible opportunity for art contests or even employment. The event attendees were then invited to view the exhibit in the Main Gallery. The two students that attended stood next to their photos so they could personally talk with people about their work. The Event ended with the floor being opened to those that attended to share their thoughts on the themes addressed in the project. Some people choose to speak to the group about their perspectives. The entire Event was filmed by a NSU videographer Mike Allen and a short video was also done by the Cherokee Phoenix. Two students were able to attend, the three of us answered questions from the people that attended the event as well as media (Tahlequah Daily Press and the Cherokee Phoenix). As noted previously, the transcript from the Event was taken from the video recording and will be included in the Analysis section. Their reflections on the value of the project will be explored in the Conclusion as such community perspectives offers some indication as to the *validity* of the project (as defined by the study's methodology).

Reflections

Control and Influence in Participatory Projects

The youth had agency in what was photographed and what narratives and photographs were shared with the group and the community. They had the ability to voice, what they perceived to be, salient Cherokee beliefs, values, worldview, and *TG'ƏŠ'ŃŃŁəƏJ*. The individual and group interviews took slight turns based upon my interests as well as the interests of the students. I made every attempt to maintain a co-

collaborative atmosphere with the youth leading the conceptualizations of the guiding concepts to be utilized. To a degree, the Cherokee young people had the agency and support to guide what is seen as important in this study. I had originally designed the study to be highly participatory and time intensive, with the intent to honor a deeply co-collaborative process throughout the entire project. Overall, there were limited opportunities that emerged during the study that allowed this original design therefore it had to be modified. During the project and afterwards, I reflected upon my disappointment and uneasiness in the amount of control I had from start to finish, namely due to time and situational constraints. Unfortunately, the ability to meet as a group for the time needed to deeply discuss all of the photos and the overarching themes was not an option. The young people then had to rely on my synopsis of the individual and group interviews. There is always some amount of spoken or unspoken influence that a researcher/co-collaborator/facilitator has on the participants on the overall project. I do not see this as totally negative especially if such influence is done mindfully and intentionally. As scholars we must always strive to be reflective, reflexive and as transparent as possible on the degree of influence we have as an adult facilitator, especially when working with youth.

Youth as Knowledge Holders

In a broad sense, historically, Cherokee knowledge came from the elders and the youth were meant to listen and emulate their elders. However, the feelings and perspectives of youth were still very much valued. The perception of youth as knowledge holders or having feelings and perspectives worthy of being considered knowledge seemed to be a contentious aspect of this study in a cultural sense. The main issue (as it

was told to me by a Cherokee Nation IRB committee member) was that the study focused on youth narratives and therefore, appeared to be disregarding the perspective of the elders. In my recent conversation with a 75-year-old elder I was told that “kids today are exposed to knowledge in different way” than kids were when he was a boy. I believe this ties directly to the earlier discussion surrounding intergenerational knowledge transfer and how the more recent community and educational structures are set up in direct conflict with the way that knowledge was handled and disseminated in the past.

CHAPTER SIX: CHEROKEE-LED FRAMEWORK

My intent in the following analysis is to honor what I consider to be salient aspects of the research such as holism, interdependence, respect, and honoring relationships. All of the noted themes regarding *TG̃θ̃σ̃η̃η̃Ł̃ə̃đ̃* rely and rest upon one another and cannot be truly separated and categorized. I envision the chapters of this dissertation as leaning against one another. I draw this visualization from Cajete’s (2016) presentation at Northeastern State University about the kernels on an ear of corn and relate it to the importance of corn for the Cherokee people. This “leaning” means dependence, one chapter depending upon another in a holistic way much like Cherokee cultural continuance- where all aspects must be present to support one another as a whole or there is disconnection, or as one participant stated a [cultural] “implosion”. This concept of continuance reminds me of the “looped square”. According to Teuton (2012), the looped square is “the symbol of the Journey of Four Directions, [it] indicates one cannot ever truly separate beginnings and endings. The journey never ends; it only changes through interconnected cycles of experience” (p. 21).

At the beginning of the project I attempted to utilize terms and descriptors to describe the holistic nature of the research questions. As an example, when I utilized the term “healthy community” I immediately explained that this meant vibrant and healthy in a very holistic way encompassing many aspects (i.e. physical health, environmental, cultural, emotional and spiritual health), not just physical health (e.g. clean living, diet and exercise). Over time, I felt that the group better understood and related to the term *well-being* rather than *healthy*. As noted in the review of literature, this concept resonates

deeply with the Indigenous concept of community sustainability.

The two spheres most discussed were the family and community. There was no mention, directly or indirectly, about any external entity, including tribal governance or programs (i.e. Cherokee Nation), the public school system, American government, etc.) providing services, support, or anything related to sustaining community or

TG'ƏS'NLƏD. It felt more like the assumption was self-reliance meant individuals, families and communities taking responsibility and remaining autonomous from any external entity. One comment seemed to reflect that autonomy was positive as it allowed for resilience in the face of broader, systematic shocks (referring to a having a “good life even if there was a market crash”). The local focus is important, yet (especially in settler nations) it must be supported through a strong and sovereign tribal government that asserts its self-determination through policies and practices based upon cultural values.

During the course of study, our group did not create another name for the project and subsequent exhibit/event other than the one I originally gave to it as a working title and the broad identifier of “Cherokee-centered” or “Cherokee-led”. Therefore, I will continue to utilize the *Through the Lens of Cherokee Youth* title and “Cherokee-led” as a way to describe the intended approach to Indigenous-led community development. My hope is that additional youth and/or community-based projects can further develop a more culturally relevant expression (e.g. Kaupapa Māori Model, a Maori-centric positioning). As noted by Mantunga (2013), the local Indigenous community’s “history, reality and experience” should guide the naming of any Indigenous Planning (IP) related projects (p. 6).

Cherokee-led Framework: Qualities and generative themes

Lawrence Panther, drawing upon the photograph and narrative about Kali's family quilt (Appendix C: pg. 4, Kali), described the concept of *community* in a beautiful way, saying,

Sewing the threads that keeps a quilt together. It's like a community. That's how community should be, it should be represented like a quilt. When the threads start wearing out we need to replace them it's like when something goes wrong in community we need to go and fix it and work with it. It's one community, and it's like saying one quilt.

The section below attempts to traverse the youth's conceptualizations of what exactly is meant by the terms *sustainable communities*, and *Cherokee world view and life ways*. I see this section as providing a basis for better understanding the further analysis that emerged from the data. Along with the foundational aspects noted in the section titled *Cherokee-led Framework: Foundational Aspects*, when engaging in Cherokee-led community development, it's imperative to begin with the conceptualizations of salient terms and concepts (i.e. life ways, community, sustainability, etc.) as a guiding framework. Using the salient narratives, the following generative themes emerged as natural, necessary, and positive attributes of sustainable communities in a Cherokee-context. Therefore, these aspects could serve as salient starting points for Cherokee-led community development:

- Conceptualizations of and relationship between sustainable communities, life ways and worldview
- Relationships of Dependency
- Family and Community "Togetherness"

as community well-being. The aspects that were perceived as needed for a cohesive and sustainable community were also aspects of *TG̃θθ̃ŋŋ̃l̃õɔ̃J* the youth felt should be perpetuated for future generations. During the Community Event, Dr. Candessa Tehee noted that “the entire collection of pictures all seems to be rooted in that notion of *sustainability*; of what comes next, of what has come before.”

Themes

The themes that were brought up over and over again regarding sustainable communities were those that highlighted the importance of: family togetherness, taking care of one another (especially the elders), unity, love, the importance of self-reliance, and the responsibility of both the learner and the teacher to pass on knowledge and practices to young people on traditions, language and culture.

Qualities

According to the youth, sustainable communities are made up of the following qualities (terms and phrases used to describe a “sustainable community” over the course of the project):

- self-reliance
- passing down the language
- elders should be treated respectfully and taken care of
- helpfulness, everyone supporting one another in good times and bad
- *togetherness*; “everybody together”/community gatherings
- people getting together and passing on knowledge/education of culture/teaching of our language or traditions

- getting together as a family/family gatherings (especially to celebrate; gather, cook and share food)
- “good relationships are valued” (shaking hands, mutual respect)
- trust
- equality and inclusiveness
- unity, “everybody being one”
- love
- being generous and giving
- a feeling of aliveness
- a feeling of being “at home” (safe)
- “a place where one may give and receive”
- connected/connectivity
- religion/faith
- balance
- peacefulness
- loyalty

Salient Narratives

Below are salient (community mapping and photovoice) individual and group narratives focused on the research question “what is a sustainable community?”:

My map just describes what I see in my community. What I see in my community is I see the heart which represents the love of the community, their religion---the faith that the community has in God---the strength of the community, the peacefulness that’s in the community, the aliveness in the community; the loyalty of the community and the courage of the people in the community. I’m also seeing bravery and beauty in the community and the balance. There’s also death. It’s not all bad, it’s just that they honor our ancestors, the ones that have passed

on. We honor them in their beliefs and the traditions they have passed on to us. The education of our culture which might achieve the teaching of our language or traditions; and the equality of the community--- whether you are family or not, they will still help you out as much as they can.

The qualities are like the family gatherings, the togetherness, the helpfulness that is in the community---the helping hands and everything---and the support.

(Appendix C: pg. 27, Shameka)

This photograph represents a lot. When you meet a person, you shake their hand. That's the first thing my dad does when he meets someone, he shakes their hand. My grandpa does it, and you see it all over the place. Everybody shakes each other's hands. Good relationships should be valued in communities. Shaking hands not only means the start of a friendship, but also the continuance of one. This photo represents mutual respect for another person. Shaking hands is supposed to convey trust, respect, balance and equality. All of the things of which should be found in a community.

To me community should be like home. It is your home because it's where you live, but you should feel safe there. And willing to help another. Giving back should be greatly looked upon. It happens so rarely anymore, but the younger ones should at least do it for their elders. It should be a place where one may give and receive. Everyone should work together that way it wouldn't make things too hard on one person. Everyone who lives in a community should know one

another. People should help one another, nowadays if someone has a problem and they can't fix it, no one will stop by and see if they're ok. A community that works together to get things done. A community that contributes to another. In a community thing should be set up to help those who are unfortunate.

Positive relationships with one another must be prioritized. Common attitudes working towards the same goals in making a community safe or a place a home. Passing values, practices, and our attitudes towards one another to the next person and generation. Trust, respect and balance are all things that come with time, but only if you're working for it as one. Community does not mean one, but instead a great number of people. It involves everyone interacting with one another and getting along to live together, in balance. My understanding a sustainable community is one in which people are equal and respect one another. If you want a good a community, you would have to have good relationships, everybody knows each other and doesn't have a problem with each other, but anymore you don't see that. I'm not going to lie to you, I don't really see that a lot.

(Appendix C: pg. 19 and 21, Shania)

This photograph shows the beauty in a community, because this photograph I think has a lot of beauty in it and all the connectivity. How community is connected with each other that is important. And in this photograph I believe it represents connectivity by all the blossoms and the air, and the breeze, and the

sun, it's like you're out there living it in the beauty. And that's how basically this community is.

(Appendix C: pg. 22, December)

I feel it's very equal and it shows that to me it represents a community as a whole. We always come together around whatever the problem is, whatever the solution needs to be, we just come together and we try to help each and everybody. And I feel like that's what this represents. We'll always be there for each other.

(Appendix C: pg. 23, December)

It is through *TGΘS̄NL̄αD̄J* that the aboveforementioned “sustainable” qualities are acted out in families and communitites.

Of note, the term *balance* was mentioned multiple times during the project. I argue that balance is used as a term to indicate overall well-being. According to an elder that has since passed on, Hastings Shade, “balance and interconnection were fundamental to Cherokee cosmology” (Teuton quoting Hastings Shade, 2012, p. 21). As an example, historically wealth accumulation and greed have been considered as being “out of balance”. This ideal is in direct contrast to the prevailing ideology in the dominant neoliberal consumer culture where consumption and accumulating wealth is viewed as the foundation of our economic progress.

In the following section, the salient (community mapping and photovoice) individual and group narratives are outlined focused on the research question “How would your ancestors recognize you as Cherokee?”: In conversations with dissertation

co-chair and mentor, Dr. Jeff Corntassel, regarding strategies to approach the topic of Cherokee identity he suggested asking the question “How would my ancestors recognize me as Cherokee?”. Dr. Corntassel had introduced this question in his work *Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonization and sustainable self-determination* (2012a, p. 88). I felt it was a good suggestion therefore it was utilized during the community mapping method activity. This particular question was the most powerful question asked during the project. It was thought provoking and stirred up many emotions in the students and myself. Although I cannot speak for the young people on the exact emotions they felt during the discussion, I personally felt shame, guilt, regret and embarrassment at the realization and especially speaking the words “I don’t think my ancestors would recognize me (as a Cherokee)”. There was one Advisory Committee member that did not feel question was appropriate, especially for young people that may not be well equipped to deal with the strong emotions that resulted from such a question. It was felt that the question would invariably trigger some degree of shame as no Cherokee in modern times can answer that question feeling fully confident that their lives are totally honoring our ancestors and traditions. Colonization has made it virtually impossible to do so, therefore the question was seen as starting from a place of self-depreciation. Others on the Advisory Committee didn’t view it in the same way, feeling that the question was not only appropriate but also sorely needed to be asked. Regardless of the external debate surrounding this particular question it yielded personal reflection and rich group discussion.

The following table takes the narratives related to this particular question during the group circle for the community mapping method activity. The left column contains

direct quotes, the column on the right notes my assertions as to the common themes I believed to be reflected in the quotes.

Table 3: Participant narratives

Quote	Theme
I still try to carry on the traditions as best as I can from what I was taught. My grandparents they didn't teach us, they talked in the home to each other and to their friends and family members, but they just didn't teach us. We grew up around it, it wasn't they didn't want us to hear it or anything, they just never, like, taught us. They taught us words and phrases and little things, but they never sat us down and taught us the language.	Traditions Language Teaching by Grandparent(s)
I am not even really sure that they would, except for the fact that I can maybe count to ten in Cherokee, that's it! The traditions: We cook the same I guess, we cook from our land still, so that's a tradition.	Language Cooking/Gathering/Living off land
I don't think they would recognize me as Cherokee just because I don't speak it. We don't have any ceremonies...	Language Ceremonies
My ancestors would recognize me as Cherokee because me and my family are very spiritual. We use protective medicine and stuff like that. My mom and her sisters all speak Cherokee and they are all teaching the kids Cherokee. My grandma teaches Cherokee and the whole family is learning the language---all the kids and everything.	Spirituality Language Teaching by Grandparent(s)
I don't know if my ancestors would recognize me; I mean, I don't go out and pick wild onions or anything. My family does but I am not really a part of that, but I have learned to cook some things, like <i>kanuchi</i> and fry bread, and I know a few things. My grandma teaches me some things.	Cook/Gathering/Living off land Teaching by Grandparent(s)

Relationship between qualities found in sustainable communities and ᏅᏓᏅᏓᏅᏓᏅᏓ

In the following section, the salient (community mapping and photovoice) individual and group narratives are outlined focused on the research question “What is a Cherokee worldview?” and “What are Cherokee life ways?”: As noted prior, qualities of a sustainable community directly mirrored what they perceived as being Cherokee ᏅᏓᏅᏓᏅᏓᏅᏓ, namely:

- Helping, supporting, loving and staying connected to others

- Family and community togetherness (visiting, getting together for meals, holidays and occasions)
- Self-reliance (self-sufficiency, land-based e.g. hunting, growing and gathering food)
- Traditions (cooking, gathering food)

I think the Cherokee life would be about the same as everything else I have been talking about---relying on each other, helping others and self-reliance; not having to have anybody else. Even if something happens, let's say the market crashed, we wouldn't be in trouble, we can rely on ourselves, we can work the land. Hunting is a big thing in our family that has been carried on. It is really dying out now, but I think that is something---the main things that Cherokees really relied on is hunting and growing their own food, and gathering food. That is something for sure needs to keep going on because if everything just crashes, you can just hunt and grow your own food. That's all self-reliance, you don't need anybody; you can make a good living and have a good life just on your own.

(Appendix C: p. 2, Kelen)

I think [my community map] reflects the Cherokee world view because Cherokees are all about this. They are all about this and more, like Cherokees pretty much revolves around love---it is based on love. Our Cherokee life ways are pretty much helping each other out. There is always a friend or family in need, and there is always someone in the family, or in the friends, that are there to help and support. A lot of the family would get together and we will go fishing or go hunting, or onion picking and mushrooms---anything like that. We do whatever we can to stay connected, to

stay focused on the love of our community.

(Appendix C: pg. 27, Shameka)

I'd say that's fry bread and beans, man! That's just the traditions we carried on throughout the years---the traditions that have survived anyways. The cooking and the family gatherings---I think that is what is the most important, is the family in Cherokee life ways and traditions; because we are always there for family, no matter what. Family is family, you do for family what you've got to do for family, you know.

(Appendix C: pg. 30, December)

The families still do carry on traditions.... And that's what we do. Someone needs something to eat we gather up our leftovers we take it to them. My dad has a cousin that's currently living in our old house because he's got a disability and he can't work. And he was living with his sister but they had to move to Montana. And so he was left here with nothing, he was homeless for a little while and we had no clue. And then the bus driver from church told dad, and dad went and got him, pick up all his stuff, brought him to our old house, set him up, and dad is now his caretaker. Lending out a hand to those in need and bringing them in, showing what your community's about...

(Individual interview transcript, Cody)

The overlap of the noted qualities found in a sustainable community and the perceived *TG'θσ'ηηLσδJ* that need to be perpetuated provide a strong basis for these elements being incorporated into a Cherokee-led vision of community and cultural sustainability/continuance.

Relationships of dependency

In a culture of neoliberalism, depending upon someone else connotes personal weakness. This is not the case in a Cherokee worldview where there is an understanding we are all dependent upon one another in ways that sustain individual relationships and overall community well-being. The historic and deeply embedded social system based upon kinship and cooperative working groups (e.g. *gadugi*) relates to the importance of *relationships of dependency* (Ife 2013 calls it relational reality). I found that the level of helpfulness and support in a community was paramount to determining if it was indeed “sustainable” or not, whereby the well-being of others acted as a direct measure of community well-being.

During the community mapping group interview, Kelen said, “I think the Cherokee worldview would be just the well-being of others, and that’s pretty much how our family is”. The level of helpfulness and support directly supports well-being on an individual, family, and ultimately community level. Such concern for the well-being of others appeared to be a measure for family and community well-being, therefore how helpful one is to others is of utmost importance. The overwhelming sentiment throughout the entire project was that supporting and helping one another, to ensure individual and family well-being, was a defining aspect of whether a community was sustainable or not. A community that takes care of one another ensures individual well-being. If community members are supported and taken care of, the community as a whole is sustainable.

Cherokee elder Hastings Shade, as quoted by Teuton (2012), explained the Cherokee word “*sgadug* is a country, state, or community. *Sgadug* is when they- *sgadudv*

duhdatlesuh- that's when the whole, as a community, come together" (p. 3). According to Advisory Committee member Ryan/Wahde Mackey, the English translation of "coming together" has a deeper meaning in the Cherokee language where people are "linked together", like tightly holding to one another in a chain (Personal communication, October 11, 2016). It is a traditional practice of Cherokee community to come together to help one another and especially those in need. In Shade's words, "Our teachings have always been, if you see somebody that needs something, help 'em" (Teuton, 2012, p. 3). Hospitality, in the historical Cherokee context, has been defined as "the comprehensive, pervasive transfer of food and material goods [and labor as exemplified in the practice of *gadugi*- see below] among neighbors who understood hospitality as a process of giving and receiving that benefited all who participated" (Stremlau, 2011, p. 92). The sharing of resources with one another included land, homes, money, food, labor and time. Stremlau (2011) uses the term "collective independence" to describe the nature of Cherokee relationships where values and behaviors fostered hospitality towards one another (p. 91-93). Giving and reciprocity "was an ongoing process that fostered civic unity among Cherokee families" (Stremlau, 2011, p. 93). As noted by Nelson (2014), "the concern for others shows itself in principled practices like charitable giving, ready hospitality, and community labor...that requires compassion, inclusiveness, and widespread participation" (p. 55). In recent conversations with Cherokee Nation immersion program language specialists, I was told the word "*ditsadanilustad gesesdi*" which loosely translates to *defer to* (or respect and serve) one another/everyone like you would an honored guest that came to your home—a relationship of *deference* (personal communication November 2015).

Supporting one another doesn't negate the ability to be self-sufficient, as noted by a participant, "*communities need self-reliance but at time of need they need people to come together and help them*". According to the participants, working together, unity and inclusivity would be key aspects to a Cherokee-led community development framework. As a participant during the second group interview stated, "*each family, they have their own ways of life and ways of doing things, but when it comes to time of need everybody is together doing the same thing.*" (This participant quit the study prior to turning in photos but gave me permission to utilize their narratives from the transcripts.)

A Cherokee-centered framework would acknowledge that all things are relational and interdependent; therefore, everything is connected and cannot really be separated. Interdependence means that "we are all dependent on each other" (Nelson, 2014, p. 55) as seen in the traditional Cherokee kinship system, in the value of *gadugi*, this concept relates to the importance of *relationships of dependency* that incorporates aspects of individual and community identity. Supporting community-based practices based upon such relationships of dependency does not infer that individuals have no agency or control in or over their own lives. The overall focus is on the collective *we*, however individual sovereignty is honored through the Cherokee concept of leadership and respecting everyone's distinct but equal "path" [referring to the White Path]. The Cherokee concept of *individual sovereignty*, which is respect for each person's right to his or her own distinct path, honors individual choices. All paths are different but are equal and the others trust that the person knows what is best for them in their life. This aspect fosters respectful and collaborative relationships by respecting people's differences. Community harmony is of utmost importance as "it represents a static state

of balance achieved through restraint and respect for other lives and forms of life" (Nelson, 2014, p. 59). Approaches that utilize cooperation and consensus, in purposeful rejection of the competitive and coercive approach, would be most appropriate. The value placed on consensus led to the specific strategies of inquiry chosen for this study.

Although such relationships of dependency and ties to family and kinship were targeted for destruction (see Literature Review, section titled *Cherokee Specific Context: The attempted destruction of the "root of the problem": kinship and "relationships of dependency"*) the youth clearly exhibited a desire for continuance for such ties as seen in both the desired qualities of a sustainable community as well as in the stories of loss and disconnection.

Family and Community "Togetherness"

Unity seemed to be measured by how often and consistently family, and to a lesser degree, community come together (i.e. to gather/cook together and eat together, or for celebrations of holidays or birthdays), or to just be with or visit with one another (another term used was camaraderie). During the opening of the Community Event, Lawrence Panther, referring to Cody's photographs of family making dinner together, identified "unity" as a theme that resonated with him. Lawrence said, "*dinner is a tradition, it was like that when I was a young boy. Having dinner together, little sister makes fry bread, and they are learning how to cook...that's unity*". This idea of unity is directly tied to "togetherness", passing on knowledge, honoring elders, and ultimately family and cultural resilience. Lawrence went on to say, "*culture begins at home, unity at home is lifelong memory stuff, you remember stuff, what you done when you was making fry bread*". The sentiment that "culture begins at home", in the family and by extension

the community, strongly correlates with the previously cited literature regarding Cherokee/Indigenous views on family, community and sustainability. Familiarity was another aspect touched upon, with the underlying idea that people in community need to know one another and what's going on in people's lives in order to help them if they need it. Shania stated, "everyone in a community should know one another...check on each other to make sure they are ok [in order to help] those that are unfortunate".

The theme of *togetherness* was noted imperative for a sustainable community, yet there were many instances where such togetherness had been lost over time.

Togetherness not only refers to the strength in unity and coming together to accomplish something, but it also refers to physically gathering together to visit with one another. An important aspect of "togetherness" is that people get together and pass on knowledge.

Getting together/visiting/gathering all mean to be in community with others.

We still have cookouts, but mainly just for the elder's birthdays. So mainly it's just the only time we actually have a gathering like that it's whenever the elders have a birthday. We throw a big party for the elders and everyone in the family comes down to join in the celebration. We would have a lot of chairs sitting around and a bonfire going on later that night. And it's an all-day event. We sit out there all day and just talk and talk. I'm hoping this tradition keeps going. We're actually losing a lot of our elders, especially here lately a lot of them are getting sick. I hope that me and my cousins will be able to do that for our parents too as they get older, because that's one of the traditions that we've always had. And I don't want that to die down or be forgotten.

(Appendix C: p. 8, Shameka)

Lawrence Panther, during the Community Event, referring to Shameka's photo of the home (Appendix C: p. 7), stating,

Our homes, maybe to anybody else it may look like it might be run down or something like that. Houses like that they have a lot of memories, to me, when a house starts to fall through like that [like in the photo], it's lost its spirit. Where at one time, when the family lived there where there was love, or sadness probably, but a lot of happy things happened there...when they all moved out, you know, the house loses its spirit, it begins to fall apart.

The feeling of disconnection from and loss of 'togetherness' was palpable throughout the entire project, therefore it will be explored more in a later section as a foundational aspect for Cherokee-led community development.

Passing on cultural knowledge and practices

Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer (defined as perpetuating the ties, traditions and teachings between the generations) was a dominant theme that was interwoven into the entire project. Passing on cultural knowledge and practices as intergenerational ties and teaching for cultural continuance (referred to as "*carrying things on*"), as a representation of peoplehood (as seen in Kali's narrative regarding arts and crafts as a representation that "*we are still here*") and as togetherness (she states, "*beading represents community...because people getting together and passing knowledge on*").

Kali spoke of the intentional care that's needed to pass knowledge and traditions on from one generation to the next; continuance requires intentional care.

This is a photo of my grandma and my mom. I asked them what they felt was a great representation of heritage and they chose this quilt because my great grandma started making this quilt and when she passed away my grandma finished. This quilt is something that connects my great grandma, my grandma, my mom and me. We don't just use her quilts to cover up when we are cold, we treat them like art. We need to keep the tradition going, treating something like it is worth something instead of just letting it go. Keeping it together instead of letting it get torn up, they are taking care of it.

(Appendix C: p. 4, Kali)

There was a strong desire to “keep traditions going” (food/cooking, language, baskets, weaving, beading, hunting, fishing and gathering):

I just think we should keep going the traditions going as much as we can, from our work to the food to the language---just everything as much as we can. Young people can go and seek the education of the Cherokees and see how they worked and how they cooked, how they made things and how they lived. We can go and look and whenever we get the knowledge we can share it with others.

(Appendix C: p. 5, Kali)

Community seemed to be regarded as a site of togetherness as well as passing on knowledge:

We have our little community where I grew up. It's where grandma lived. That little community down there that's where my dad and his cousins grew up

together, all his cousins running around this place, they grew up like brothers. That's just really stuff that I would like to keep continuing going. This is the families and the homes. It takes all the surrounding families around this community to make sure the community stays together and sustainable...just continuing teaching the kids and the grandkids these things to carry it on.

(Appendix C: p. 17, Cody)

There was a clear sentiment regarding the responsibility to knowledge, both as a teacher and as a learner. I asked the question, “*Whose responsibility is it to pass on knowledge? Is it just the elders that have a responsibility to pass on knowledge to the younger people?*” The responses were,

It is ours [as young people] as well. If you have knowledge to pass it on to your friends and your cousins. As long as we just have the will to learn it. Some of the youth don't really care anymore. If you have the will to learn about it then that's good. (Cody)

Just speak up instead of staying quiet about it. If you want to learn just speak up and say you want to learn, if you want to teach, say you want to teach...because nobody's going to do it for you. They're not going to say: “oh, hey by the way this is the heritage”. No, you have to speak up.... You can't go unheard and just think that you're going to find those things out. You have to have the will to learn it.

(December)

(Appendix C: p. 33)

We all have a responsibility to pass knowledge on as indicated by:

- Kali’s narrative about her parent’s making a deliberate choice to teach her
- Shameka’s grandma making her learn to cook
- Cody’s fry bread photo, mom teaching little sister to cook and his dad teaches him the things he needs to know
- Certain aspects of *TG̃Θ̃ÑL̃D̃J* are passed through participation in a “strong community” (as noted by Cody, “*it’s how you are raised*”), those that aren’t raised that way won’t recognize or understand the value embedded in those ways.

According to the participants, we all have a responsibility to knowledge, *both* as a teacher and as a learner. In order to pass knowledge on we must have the will to learn and perpetuate the knowledge, to speak up and to take action.

Parents and grandparents were consistently spoken of as teachers (or the expectation of them to be teachers even if they weren’t or were gone) in almost every conversation. They appear to play a key and irreplaceable role (December –“my mom was the most influential”, etc.) and their loss is deeply felt. The loss of grandparents and the knowledge they carry, was spoken of by multiple participants. When elders/grandparents pass on there is an immediate and long-term impact on the extended family. The absence of such a wealth of knowledge is harsh as it also signals the loss of knowledge and the dwindling number of knowledge keepers and fluent (or “full”) speakers. Grandparents were spoken of as holding the extended family together, their passing creating family discord and disconnection. As shown by the two narratives by Shameka and Justine below,

I was looking into the water at my reflection and as I was looking I could see my mom in me, and I could see my grandma in her. That showed me that I was the

third generation, and how far our traditions have been lost. Because when my grandma was around every tradition was being still done. Now that it's just my mom, and my aunts, only some of the traditions are here, and now it's me and I'm still trying to learn the traditions. I want to learn how they did this and did that and everything. I want to be to the point to where my grandma was. In order to do that it's going to be hard considering the fact that my grandma is gone now, and I can't really exactly ask her questions about this and that. I don't want any more traditions to be lost. Whenever I have a kid in the future I want them to know everything that my grandma knew. And I also want to know everything my grandma knew. I want to know everything my great grandma knew. And so I sat there, and I was just looking at my reflection for a minute, reflecting back on how we don't celebrate our traditions anymore because somehow my grandma passing away has everything changing and I don't like it. Sometimes I just wish that we could go back to the days when my grandma was still here. When we would always sit outside and talked with the whole family and everybody came to visit every day. It was never boring or lonesome when my grandma was around. On the holidays we used to have huge gatherings at my granny's house, but we don't have them anymore. At least not with the whole family.

(Appendix C: p. 12-13, Shameka)

My grandpa is my whole world. He's full blood Cherokee. He'll teach me sometimes, but he'll start crying. I know most of the time what he's talking about. He gets sad because he doesn't feel like he has the time to teach me before he

passes on. In this photo, we are sitting in our Talking Chairs where we sit and talk all the time. Sometimes we have really funny moments...I don't want to go to school because I worry about him all throughout the day. I want to stay and take care of him. I'm just not ready for him to pass on.

(Appendix C: p. 3, Justine)

As noted below, there was a sense of urgency where the youth felt *TG̃θθ̃ηη̃ωω̃* were “dying down” and our fluent language speakers are “going away”.

Other things like cooking, I just think the culture should be carried on forever instead of kind of dying down. I think it is dying down because people just don't want to learn how to weave a basket because it takes too long or how to bead, or how to cook. I am sure if people would ask they could find somebody that will teach them.

(Appendix C: p. 6, Kali)

Those that have the interest need to definitely learn it because our fluent speakers are slowly going away.

(Appendix C: p. 17, Cody)

Over time, there has been profound impacts on cultural and language continuance resulting from the dynamic changes in the prevalent modes of teaching and learning. The Cherokee language and learning “culture at home”, as expressed by Lawrence Panther, has suffered greatly. Shameka and Cody both spoke about how the language was “around” in their immediate family but not intentionally taught to them (or utilized

outside of the immediate or extended family or certain limited environments such as one particular church or one particular community center's activities). As an Advisory Committee mentioned (*May 2016 personal communication*), the language and *TG'ƏS'ŋŋ'ŁəDŋ* used to be so prevalent (unconscious) that they were passed on naturally without much strategic planning, but we are now in a position where young people are in very different educational environments where *being Cherokee* must be more of a conscious choice.

My grandma, luckily she teaches me some things and my mom. My grandma is the one who taught me how to make kanuchi (Sŋ'ħ ganvtsi) and my mom taught me how to make fry bread. They just taught me because they thought they needed to, but some parents may not feel they need to, they just kind of forget about it.

(Appendix C: p. 6, Kali)

The methods of instruction and thusly the methods of comprehension have changed where learners have come to expect direct linear instruction and the ability/responsibility to ask direct questions. Another aspect highlighted Shameka's (and others) narratives was the loss of spending a large amount of time around extended family and a community that consistently speaks Cherokee.

My grandma passed away about 6 years ago now. She'd always say: "I know you want to learn" Cherokee. She would always just talk in Cherokee, but not to tell us what it means, she'd expect us to tell her what it means. And that's what my great aunt does too. She always talks to me in Cherokee, and if I don't know then she just laughs at me and is like 'just forget it'. My mom tries to teach as much as

she can, but sometimes my mom's like, "I don't know how to teach it". I don't know what she means by that. She tries the only way she knows how, I guess.

(Appendix C: p. 8, Shameka)

Education used to happen naturally in daily life in families and in communities.

My grandparents they didn't teach us, they talked in the home to each other and to their friends and family members, but they just didn't teach us. We grew up around it, it wasn't they didn't want us to hear it or anything, they just never like taught us. They taught us words and phrases and stuff and little things, but they never sat us down and taught us the language.

(Individual interview transcript, Cody)

I always heard the language, I picked up some stuff here and there. They didn't intentionally not try to teach us, but they didn't sit us down and try to have conversations with us.

(Appendix C: p. 17, Cody)

Advisory Committee member Chris Holmes said he remembers his mom making him sit and listen to groups of older people talking when he was a child, that is how he learned (learn by watching and listening then emulating). In the Cherokee way, knowledge is gained over time by listening and watching older members of the family and community, not by asking direct and specific questions. Elders are seen as the knowledge keepers. Knowledge is shared with someone as they are ready to best receive it. Some Cherokee people view asking specific and direct questions on how to do something as culturally inappropriate as it violates this principal of learning and gaining

knowledge. Often “Cherokees are apprehensive about documenting and putting knowledge in a book because there is no guarantee of its respectful treatment” as it can be used for financial gain, to cause harm through misuse, and there has been a history people overharvesting certain plants, etc. (Carroll, 2015, p. 5). Traditional knowledge is contextual and requires trust (Carroll 2015).

The young people viewed themselves as learners with their parents and grandparents as the expected teachers. There were moments where I felt they internalized shame or guilt at not being given the knowledge or perhaps the realization that they didn't seek it or try harder to obtain it. I also felt those same feelings but, for me, they stemmed from not questioning why I didn't have more access to the Cherokee language when I was younger. In speaking with an Advisory Committee member (personal communication June 2016) I was told that access to knowledge is a tricky process. Those wanting to learn must have tenacity to be taught and to continue trying again and again to access and learn the knowledge. There is also an unspoken way to approach knowledge holders. As noted by an Advisory Committee member, “it's really a discouraging thing to see, people who are really sincere and earnest talking to folks and they don't know how to talk to them, and the older folks, it almost seems like, when a person doesn't know how to communicate that way, they are immediately considered unworthy, so they [the learner] has to go through a lot of suffering [to obtain the knowledge]. Being kind, being giving, being open to learn is important, but also tenacity. The people that seem to be learning now... [are people willing to be tenacious and to suffer to obtain knowledge] not the elders own grandkids, because their own grandkids have been given pride and the expectation that they shouldn't ask that they should already know. Their family expects

them (the young people) to have least picked up on the process that it takes to acquire the knowledge. Since they have grandparents that are medicine people or leaders in the church or at the grounds, they already have pride in their identity so they don't go through this process of suffering that other people are willing to go through". He's seen many Cherokee people realize that it is time to learn, but it is already after their grandparents are already gone (personal communication, June 10, 2016).

The relationship between elders and children cannot be overstated. The parenting process and the role (and responsibility) of children have changed since colonization has enforced different "appropriate rules" onto the Cherokee people. Children were seen as sacred but they also had the expected responsibility to learn from elders by listening and emulating, and their perspectives were seen as valuable.

As noted by Mander (1991), "the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is one of the most critical elements in the maintenance of Indian culture. The sharing of knowledge between the elders and the young is what makes survival possible" (p. 213). The importance of parents and grandparents was apparent in the narratives. The sickness and loss of family members, especially grandparents, was deeply felt. In many cases, the loss of one grandparent, many times a grandmother, impacted the individuals as well as the family relationships for years to come, in many cases causing traumatic and fractured family dynamics that never seem to heal. The interwoven nature between the trauma of impending loss of knowledge as well as of her grandfather, is beautifully reflected by Justine (age 15) in her photograph and narrative (Appendix C: p. 3).

The young people had a great reverence and respect for their elders, however there was a deep sadness surrounding the current state of elder care. Two participants had missed large amounts of school due to caring for sick or elderly family members. I believe the quotes below illustrate the need for a refocus on caring for our elders within families and communities.

We should take care of the elders like as people, instead of putting them in nursing homes. Instead, I think we should take care of them as family.

(Appendix C: p. 5, Kali)

Relationships with the elders [are important to sustainable communities]; the elders are the ones that know more than anyone.

(Appendix C: p. 2, Kelen)

We throw a big party for the elders and everyone in the family comes down to join in the celebration. We would have a lot of chairs sitting around and a bonfire going on later that night. And it's an all-day event. We sit out there all day and just talk and talk. I'm hoping this tradition keeps going. We're actually losing a lot of our elders, especially here lately a lot of them are getting sick. I hope that me and my cousins will be able to do that for our parents too as they get older, because that's one of the traditions that we've always had. And I don't want that to die down or be forgotten.

(Appendix C: p. 8, Shameka)

Elders should be treated respectably and taken care of.

(Appendix C: p. 21, Shania)

As noted by Lawrence Panther during the Community Event, responding to the Reflection photo by Shamkea (Appendix C: p. 7),

When a person looks into a mirror or in water or something like that. You may say, hey that's me' but the reality is 'who are you really when you look in the mirror?' Your part of your brothers, sisters, mom, dad, grandpa, and all the

elders the generation before, that you. It's all combined from generations before.

Self-reliance through hunting, gardening, gathering practices

Self-reliance or self-sufficiency was a key theme. Such self-reliance rests upon tribal sovereignty and representative governance to honor practices and policies to allow for such practices. Tribal sovereignty allows for the protection of hunting, fishing and gathering rights. Ideally, tribally-led natural resource management practices would also have a strong focus on protecting land, air and water so such practices can continue into the future. The importance of hunting, fishing, gardening, and gathering edibles rests on a healthy and thriving ecosystem.

The value of nature appeared to be both in relationship with humans for our use in hunting, gathering, etc. (self-reliance) but there was also sentiment towards the inherent value of nature. These particular photos/narratives spoke to a connection to nature and its inherent worth- beyond just its use for human consumption or pleasure. One example in Shameka's photo,

This photo is of Natural Dam in Arkansas. I sat down and I was watching the water and as I heard the waterfall I could somewhat hear my grandma, like how she used to always sit and talk to me. I just close my eyes and I tilted my head back and I just heard her speaking to me. Just how we used to sit outside on the porch all night to talk and she'd be telling me about the family and old memories when she grew up. And I thought it was pretty amazing because I haven't heard my grandma's voice since she passed away about 6 years ago now. That was the first time I've ever felt that connected with her. And that was one of the first

things I heard whenever I sat on that rock is that night she held my hand when she was in the hospital right before she got too sick to speak. I felt like a little brush over my hand, like she was there with me holding my hand and she said I love you. And that's why I love this picture so much it's because my grandma's sitting right next to me and her spirit is telling me that she loves me.

(Appendix C: p.11, Shameka)

TG̃ØØ̃ŃŃŁŁØ̃J: *Holistic, interconnected, interdependent and embodied activities*

The qualities outlined as being important for sustainable communities are all connected in ways that cannot be separated. Everything rests upon the other and relies on certain things to be viable in practice (e.g. self-reliance relies on environmental sustainability and biodiversity, tribal sovereignty and good environmental governance, the perpetuation of knowledge and continued use of such practices, etc.). Self-reliance is predicated upon the ability to hunt, fish, garden and otherwise sustain your and your family's basic needs. This can only be done if the environment (land, water, air, land regulations) are healthy and allow such practices. Upon noting the prevalence of self-reliance as a theme, predominately brought up by the males in the group, I inquired about what is needed in order to be self-sufficient. (Although not in the scope of this particular study, food sovereignty and a deep knowledge of water/land systems is seen as a key self-determination strategy by many Indigenous scholars).

The practice of gathering food as a family, specifically wild onions (as they were in season during our project) and mushrooms (usually gathered in the fall), was a repeated theme. Everybody together working towards the same goal, sharing with one

another, the young women being taught how to cook the food by their mothers and grandmothers, and having a family gathering and meal encompasses a practice that weaves in many of the *TG̃θ̃σ̃η̃λ̃ω̃Δ̃* the young people found to be most precious.

Elements often included:

- Teaching and learning through passing on Cherokee-centered knowledge
 - Example: Passing on knowledge through the generations, including hunting, gardening, gathering and cooking; making quilts, beading, weaving, basketry
- Everybody working together (unity) and sharing with those unable to participate (support, love) (e.g. elders)
- Spending time together as a family (togetherness)
- Distinct acts of continuance and representation
 - Example: language, crafts such as beading, weaving and baskets

Embodied community practices: gadugi and gathering wild onions

Embodied community practices utilize the qualities found in sustainable communities along with Cherokee worldview and *TG̃θ̃σ̃η̃λ̃ω̃Δ̃*. Drawing upon ancestral knowledge and teachings passed down through the generations, they act out the teachings and by their nature add to the sustainability of both strong communities but also perpetuating *TG̃θ̃σ̃η̃λ̃ω̃Δ̃*. In this way they are seen as holistic, interconnected and interdependent.

During the project Cody said, “my dad tells me stories from his youth about how *ga-du-gi* was an important thing”. I said, “it *was* important? It isn’t important anymore?” to which he replied “it still is”. As noted above, community well-being relies on people

supporting one another through embodied practices. ᄄᄄ (*gadugi*, *ga-du-gi*, or *gadu:gi*) is an example of an *embodied community practice* that honors our ᄄᄄᄄᄄᄄᄄᄄ and worldview.

Gadugi has been described as community coming together to achieve one goal, where everybody's helping (Teuton, 2012, p. 84; Noel Grayson, 2016 Cherokee Nation Community Conference). ᄄᄄ *gadugi* is described in English as “people coming together as one and working to help one another” on the Cherokee Nation document that outlines ᄄᄄᄄ ᄄᄄᄄᄄᄄᄄ *sgadugi dikanowadvsdi* (“Community Values”). According to Swafford (2009) the concept of *gadugi*, as reflected in her dissertation work with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, “represents a concept of mutual aid and translates to mean ‘working together for the good of the community’, and ‘everyone's heart is in the same place’” (p. iii). Utilizing Cherokee concepts of ᄄᄄᄄᄄ (*duyuk'ta*) and ᄄᄄ (*gadugi*), Qwo-Li Driskill (2016), a scholar who focuses on Cherokee Studies, weaves a Cherokee-centered methodology based on “traditions that reflect concerns of critical, decolonial analysis” (p. 15). Driskill (2016) states, “these concepts demand a balancing of power relationships through collaborative, cooperative scholarship that builds reciprocal relationships” (p. 15). Driskill (2016) provides an in-depth background on *gadugi* stating that,

ᄄᄄ (*gadugi*) is a concept and practice that serves the continuation and survival of Cherokee communities. Raymond D. Fogelson and Paul Kutsche's 1959 essay “Cherokee Economic Cooperatives: The Gadugi” describes the ᄄᄄ as “a group of men who join together to form a company, with rules and officers, for continued economic

and social reciprocity”...[the practice] is entwined with concepts of community, continuance, and sustenance. It is labor that emerges out of community needs and is carried out to sustain survival. Robert K. Thomas’s 1953 thesis, *The Origin and Development of the Redbird Smith Movement*, points out that in the 1890s, “Although the families lived in individual homesteads, much of the work was done communally. The Cherokee of this time were a very compact and united people. Most of the large efforts in their economy were accomplished by community work”...SSY (gadugi)...has a critical relationship with performance as a means of survival and cultural continuance and locates performance within cooperative communities. SSY (gadugi) provides an understanding for a methodology that is collaborative, reciprocal, and surfaces out of community needs. (p. 17)

Although the ideal of *gadugi* is still valued, the actual practice of working together in collaborative community has diminished over time.

As noted by the narrative by Shania below, gathering wild onions with family touches on many themes noted in this study. Although not mentioned directly, the practice of gathering and cooking has been an embodied community practice for an unknown number of generations of Cherokees.

My mom and my sister and me were out picking wild onions the other day. It means a lot because this is something that we do all the time when it comes out. That's one time that we all get to get together and do something as a family, there isn't electronics, we're not on the phone or anything and it's just us in the woods.
[Family Togetherness].

We'd take it back and my mom would clean it, and my mom would cook it. We usually give some to our grandpa. My mom's teaching me to cook. I'm not very good it right now, but I'm getting there. [Teaching and Learning/Passing on knowledge]

Picking reminds me of my grandpa, he can't get out and pick anymore. He loves wild onion, but he just got to where he can't do it anymore. We do it, and we give it to him. You're getting with your elders, you're doing something for them, something that they might not be able to do anymore and you get to do it for them. You're giving instead of just taking. This photo represents a way of living along with that an opportunity to do something with your friends and family. It reminds me of how I can give back, and how I can do something and be active with those around me. These things are tied together by the act of giving. Being generous to those around you is a good start to having an active community. Not only giving back to our elders, but also to each other. Understanding one another and the desire to help are great ways to keep our ways of life going. [Giving, Supporting, Respecting Elders, Interconnection, Continuing TGCΘΓΠΡΛΩΪ]

(Appendix C: p.20, Shania)

Also of note, the photographs allowed for the interconnections to be shown in a seamless way without having to separate them into “themes” or categories. An example I the photo by Cody showing his family meal:

I think just these simple pictures of food brings all of that together in one. We have a garden, we normally grow potatoes for frying. But gathering all the food

*and then teaching the young ones how to cook it and coming together as a family.
This is just one of our family dinners.*

(Appendix C: p. 16, Cody)

*Beading represents community in some ways because people getting together and
passing knowledge on.*

(Appendix C: p. 18, Shania)

Some in the group referred to not having guidance or not having the opportunity to be taught, saying things such as ‘*my parents didn't teach me*’ or ‘*my grandparents had already passed by the time I was growing up*’. They didn't have the privilege of having a strong community or being exposed to the language. I had shared my story about how my family wasn't able or allowed to be exposed to Cherokee ᏆᏍᏅᏁᏆᏂᏁᏍᏅ including language. Within the group, including myself, there was a sense that in many ways continuity had been taken away or not offered by the older generations, thereby leaving the younger generations in a situation to carry on traditions, values and a language that have, in many ways, been kept from them either directly or indirectly.

The Role of Language: We Lose The Language, We Lose The Fire

“There is a legend...that as long as we speak to the fire in Cherokee it will not go out, and as long as the terrapins sing around the fire we will have fire for our use. When the language is gone, the fire will be gone. And so will the Cherokees. That is why the terrapin shells are used for the shackles the women wear while they are stomping dancing; this is how the terrapin sings” (Hastings Shade, quoted in Teuton, 2012, p. 53).

As previously mentioned, the young people didn't bring up the Cherokee language in our first discussion and seemed hesitant or unsure on how to answer my

question of how to best incorporate Cherokee into the project. When language wasn't discussed I purposefully mentioned it, when it still wasn't brought up I strategically asked about the importance of language. I initially assumed that because it wasn't brought up by the youth that it wasn't on their mind or that it wasn't as important as the other things they were bringing up. However when I specifically asked, "Is continuing the language important?" every participant firmly voiced that perpetuating the language is crucial as it is embedded in our identity as Cherokee people. The loss of language is directly tied to the assumed loss of the Cherokee as a distinct people and culture.

Continuing the language is very important, because if we don't try to teach it to the little ones and we don't try to teach it then it is going to die, and the language will be forgotten.

(Appendix C: p. 32)

I think we still need to keep passing down the language...

(Appendix C: p. 2, Kelen)

There are fewer and fewer people using the language. I don't like that because the language has been here for years and now all of a sudden it is starting to become a forgotten language, and I don't like that. It's too much of a prize to be forgotten. Then again it is also a hard language to learn and that's why most of the people who want to learn it think it's too hard to learn it. And that's why I think that they should start out teaching the little kids when they're still babies how to speak it. Because right then their mind is full of potential of learning and it's easier for them to learn, as you grow up you got all these other stuff that's in your head and

you just don't really want to bother with it. But I want to learn the language. I'm like the rest of them, it's harder and sometimes I give up. I really do want to learn it because I can somewhat understand. I don't know exactly what they're saying but I can understand.

(Appendix C: p. 10, Shameka)

*Language is important to our culture, it's what our culture is. It's based around language. Without our language it doesn't make us any different from any other people if we are all speaking in English. Our language is the basis of our culture. We are Cherokee. That's what we are, and **our language holds us together**. Those that have the interest need to definitely learn it because our fluent speakers are slowly going away.*

(my emphasis, Appendix C: p. 17, Cody)

My family on my grandmother's side is almost all full-blood Cherokees. My great grandmother, she would get mad at my grandmother for not teaching my grandmother's children, such as my mom and my aunts, Cherokee. She would get very mad at that. She wanted them to learn it and pass on because they knew it was a dying language and a dying culture. That never happened and I never got to meet my great grandmother, and I barely was around my grandparents before they went on.

(Appendix C: p. 30)

In Lawrence Panther's reflections on the Exhibit, he expressed the extreme importance of

continuing our language. ᄒᄃᄆᄃᄆ (ulisedv) is the Cherokee word that translated into English means “important”. According to Lawrence,

It’s important to keep our language alive. Our language has survived for a very long time and it still will, because its ulisedv. It’s important to us. A lot of people want to speak Cherokee, and its good but the people have to come to the reality of it, that it’s a lifelong process and that its ulisedv (“important”, can also be translated as “heavy”) why you want to keep it alive. Language is a part of us.

According to Battiste (2008), “language is the most significant factor in the restoration, regeneration, and survival of Indigenous Knowledge...Where Indigenous languages, heritages, and communities are respected, supported, and connected to Elders and holistic learning, educational successes among Indigenous students can be found” (p. 88).

When grandparents (and parents) speak Cherokee but the children and/or grandchildren do not understand it creates a painful disconnect across the generations. In regard to Justine’s photo (Appendix C: p. 3), during the Community Event Dr. Tehee states,

she’s talking about the importance of preserving language. She said that sometimes he cries because he can’t teach me everything that he wants to teach me. That was very very poignant for me to read. I grew up in a whole family of first language Cherokee speakers (aunts, uncles, grandparents). My generation is the first generation to not know and understand Cherokee. Whenever I was growing up I felt that very very keenly. I could understand a lot of Cherokee but I couldn’t speak the way I wanted to speak, especially to my grandparents. There

would be times when I would be talking to my grandfather especially, because my grandmother kind of the communication conduit where people would speak English to her and she would speak Cherokee to him, and I knew that my dudu was really funny because I could hear him be funny in Cherokee but I felt that to have a real conversation with him I need to talk to him in Cherokee.

During the project I asked Cody, “*how can we help those that are older that never had the opportunity to learn and the younger ones coming up; how can we let help them learn the language if our elders who are the fluent speakers are passing away so fast*”? He responded by telling a story of a time that he felt sad and disconnected from his sick grandmother when no one in the family could understand her in order to help her. He said,

I was told a story one time...my granny, she was in the hospital and she was really sick and she just starts speaking Cherokee. And none of us could understand her because she was on that medicine, that morphine had her all messed up. And she was speaking Cherokee, and no one understood what she was saying. And that moment right there made me feel bad because I couldn't help, it made me have the urge to want to learn more. We had to go find my grandpa...and get him and bring him up there so we could figure out what was going on, what she needed. (Individual interview, Cody)

Cherokee youth must have access to their language as both a right and a responsibility. As seen in the narratives of this study, language is a key factor in self-identification as being recognized as Cherokee by our ancestors.

Although loss and disconnection were communicated, there was a resounding note of hopefulness, resilience and sparks of awareness and reconnection.

I like this picture too because I see it as growth, because you start down the river but as you go it gets smoother. There are a lot of rocks at the beginning but it just gets smoother and smoother as it goes. That's how life is, life is always going to be hard but in the end it will all get better.

(Appendix C: p. 13, Shameka)

I wish I would have gotten something better in the circle, like a clear blue sky or some clouds, or something like that to show that there's always beauty and happiness on the horizon of our struggles and the community.

(Appendix C: p. 23, December)

CHAPTER SEVEN: ACTION

Potential impact/action due to the study

The typical purpose of participatory action research (PAR) is to take action or at least to discuss what some strategies of action might be. During the final group circle the final question for the group was “*What did you experience when you were thinking about sustainable communities and values, and practices, and relationships, and responsibilities we all have?*” All of the narratives were related to direct daily individual, family and community action and activities. The youth remained very grounded in “everyday action” internally controlled by individuals, families and communities; not grand or externally-controlled action. Therefore, I privilege their perspective by putting it first in this section, followed by broader topics regarding systematic changes, such as the public education system.

The photovoice process differed in this case as it purposefully left the “action/impact” portion fairly ambiguous, as I did not want to provide the assumption that only external institutions had to be the focus. In more traditional photovoice process, the final step of “action” is meant to educate and ultimately influence policy makers or decision makers at a community, state or national level. Also of note, unlike broader sustainability discourse, topics such as recycling, climate change, or globalization did not come up in any of the discussions. Wilson (2008) notes that a Western paradigm considers “environmental” topics such as recycling and globalization whereas an Indigenous paradigm considers relationship to healing the land. Looking at the dominant paradigm of the “pillars” of sustainability, the one that was the least directly acknowledged discussed was economic sustainability. There was indirect discussion

about economic impacts felt in community including hardship, poverty, helping others out in hard times, and the separation of families because “now everyone has their own job”. Historically, *gadugi* was a communal economic practice.

The final group interview illustrates some level of increased awareness and future intent to engage in community and cultural activities by taking responsibility and action. The experience that resulted from the project was more focused on daily interactions and consistent supportive relationships. Below are the group narratives regarding their experiences and perspectives on the project and any future action:

Kind of about to listen to everybody else's the stories about their community mapping, helped to show what my community has and what it lacks. Show the ups and downs of everybody around. Well, I can get started, I can get them [the community] all on it, bring it up to the Board in our community building like: "here's something that would be awesome". When [the Community Building] was first built we had people come down and teach the kids in the community basket weaving and stuff. Just stuff like that has died off a little bit. I haven't really noticed it until we started talking about all these things. I really noticed that. We don't really do those things anymore. We used to have bow shoots. I'll start bringing that back up to our Board and show them that we need to start bringing that back together. Because if we go on without it our community may fall apart and wouldn't be as together. [responsibility/action]

I'm going to ask more questions to my grandma and my mom about the heritage. I'll really try to bring those back. I haven't really thought to learn things like

cooking and stuff, it just kind of came naturally. But if I ask more I can just learn a lot more. [responsibility/action]

From doing this I just realized that you don't see a lot of the things that are being pointed out in this discussion. You don't see a lot of that nowadays. It really needs to be brought back; we need to keep doing that. Instead of just letting it go and everybody does their own thing. [We need to] keep community. Community means people together, not just one by themselves. [Call to action to strengthen and perpetuate communal attitude and responsibility; in opposition to the now more dominant purely individualistic attitude and responsibility; Recognition that there is a need for a strong community]

Doing this I realized how strong our heritage, our culture is. That's what I've learned. How many times we've had to rebuild and retry, and how many times we have succeeded in doing that. [Resilience]

Doing this I've experienced different ways to connect to my elders and remember how they did this and how they did that. That way I can somehow learn to keep the tradition going. [connect and honor those that have passed on]

I agree that I should ask more to learn everything. [take action/responsibility to learn]

I personally don't know Cherokee, but I wish I could have learned it because I find it a fascinating language that should be carried on. After we were talking about it the other day I started thinking I wanted to learn Cherokee and I asked my grandma about it, because my mom knows a few words but my grandma

knows a little bit more; so I was going to ask them to try to learn the language.

[take action/responsibility to learn]

(Appendix C: p, 34, Group interview transcript)

Needed Action: Addressing areas that need to be strengthened (i.e. community-based change)

I did not explicitly ask the youth about the specific community aspects they feel need to be strengthened or changed in order for the community to meet their conceptualization of *sustainable communities*. The intent was to open up space for the conversation to be youth-driven and to veer away from beginning the project by focusing on negative aspects or jumping right into a “change-based” way of thinking. For the most part, suggestions were made for the aspects that are currently being practiced that need to be perpetuated, however there were some direct and indirect undertones of concern for areas that need to be strengthened.

- The treatment of elders
- Positive and respectful relationships between individuals
- Reviving connection and responsibility to honoring land and water based practices
- Concerted and intentional “everyday” effort to teach, learn and embody Cherokee *TG̃θθ̃ʌʌʌ* (language, values, practices, relationships) in families and in communities (and potentially all educational environments, including public schools)

One potential strategy for community engagement could be “welcoming” as community based practice. For a Cherokee, being “in community” is not only geographical or physical, but more importantly it is spiritual, emotional, coming from your “center”, to really *be together* and *defer to* others. I asked Cody the question, *how*

can we keep encouraging young people and keep teaching and learning and encouraging as strong communities? His response shows the openness to teach, to be an example to others, and to share with and support others. He replied,

I don't know. It's just kind of how you were raised and how you were brought up. I mean if somebody was brought up to not recognize those things and weren't taught those things it's kind of hard to teach these things because something simply as a gathering. Maybe invite them to your family gathering and show them what it's about to probably help them open their eyes to it.

(Portions from Individual interview and Appendix C: p. 17)

Communities that gather together to share and learn together can be an example of a strong practice for other individuals and communities to learn from. Welcoming others into community to learn and be included shows unity and would aid in continuance. The English the word is *welcome*, but the Cherokee concept of *welcoming* holds a deeper meaning. When others are brought in they are folded in with everyone with a feeling of oneness, togetherness and inclusion.

Reconnecting to our responsibility to the land, water and non-human relationships is essential to healing and resurgence. How did the young people view land and our current connection to it? As noted by Kali,

I think we should take care of the land, because the land was very important to the Cherokees. The land is where we would go for spiritual things and the land took care of us so we need to take care of it. I don't think we take care of the land

as much as we use to. We would care for the land as a community and now it's just certain people or certain families that are keeping the tradition going.

(Appendix C: p. 5, Kali)

When asked if we as Cherokee people (or even broader society) are taking care of the land and water the way we should or they need more attention, the young people voiced some interest and a desire for more environmental awareness, as well as care and education founded upon Cherokee worldview. I'm not certain if they had thought deeply about such things prior to our discussion, during our group discussion Cody stated,

It needs to be paid more attention to. It's kind of how you grew up and what you've learned. If you learned living off the land, you're going to learn to respect the land and take care of it. [We should be] watching out for our resources. There's a lot of people taking it for granted.

Cody's narrative implied that in communities where children are taught to respect and honor the land, it results in young adults that have a better understanding of environmental balance. I asked specific questions regarding the kind of environmental education the students were exposed to in their public schools. This stemmed from my own interest in the topic of Indigenous education and land-and-water based pedagogies and I perused the question when the group seemed interested. When asked about class offerings that teach about natural resources the young people noted they had a class called Environmental Science. I inquired further asking if the class operated from a purely scientific perspective or if it incorporated any elements of a Cherokee worldview. A female in the group noted that "a class coming from a Cherokee perspective would

probably have a lot more meaning read into it, than the scientific perspective would.” At least a third of the group expressed an interest in taking such a class if it incorporated more Indigenous/Cherokee aspects into the curriculum. I was influenced to pursue such questions due to my observations as an Instructor in the Cherokee & Indigenous Studies program and multiple conversations with scholars, educators and community members. Additionally, as noted prior, 74% of the students at Stilwell High School are Cherokee. There is a concerted effort on behalf of the administration at Stilwell Public Schools to acquire grant funding to add Cherokee cultural activities and Native American history courses as elective options. However, as a result of on-going settler colonialism, the American public school system operates on a EuroAmerican paradigm that guides every facet of how young people are taught about pedagogy/learning styles, and what knowledge is considered true and important and what knowledge is hidden or minimized. For additional discussion on this point, please refer to the section titled “*How can localized Cherokee-based educational curricula, materials and pedagogy combat the continued legacy of assimilation perpetuated through public schooling and the impacts on youth and communities?*” under *Recommendations for further research* in Chapter Eight.

How we conceive of land and territory holds an integral key to self-determination strategies that are built on local knowledge. As noted by Carroll (2015), "the difference lies in how we conceive of territory- is it a home for humans and their nonhuman relatives that must be responsibility stewarded, or is it solely a space that holds resources to be exploited?" (p. 176). Is the Earth a dead machine that humans have superiority over through technology and science or is the Earth seen as a living being worthy of respect,

responsibility and reciprocity? The end goal of such a fluid and dynamic process of co-exploration is some representation of “conscious and intentional change” as “perhaps the only way that systemic change does occur is through the committed action of small groups of people” (based on the paraphrased ideas of Mead & Habermas) (Reason & Bradbury, 2010, p. xxvi). I would like to utilize a salient passage by Goodyear (2013) in the *Seeds We Planted*,

The hallmarks of sustainable self-determination include focusing on individual, family, and community responsibilities, regenerating local and regional Indigenous economies, and recognizing the interconnection of social, spiritual, environmental, and political aspects of self-determination. The ultimate goal is for Indigenous people to have the freedom to practice indigenous livelihoods, maintain food security, and apply natural laws on indigenous homelands in a sustainable manner. Critical to this process is the long-term sustainability of indigenous livelihoods, which includes the transmission of these cultural practices to future generations. This orientation to long-term future survival through connection to ancestral practices and narratives is, after all, a primary goal of Indigenous education. (p. 31)

Drawing upon the work of Cajete (2015), does the current educational environment “instill culture in the youth and thereby ensure the cultural survival for future generations”? I use the term “educational environment” as being a more holistic way to view both family and community-led education as well as the mandatory public educational system (in this particular case Stilwell Public Schools). There’s differing levels of access youth have to knowledge and education in a family and community-sense depending upon many factors however a consistent site for all youth in the area is Stilwell High School (the closest high schools to Stilwell are Cave Springs, Sequoyah

and Tahlequah but the largest majority of youth in and around the Stilwell area attend Stilwell). Stilwell High School currently has a grant to teach a Native American History class. They also teach a Cherokee Language Class. It is due to the reasons noted above, along with my own perspective, experience and research, I echo and continue the call for relevant, meaningful and localized Indigenous Education as a salient aspect of community and cultural sustainability.

Community change is a broad topic and should be conceptualized further within Indigenous-led development. One example of a community change model that has been utilized in many native communities is the Community Readiness Model (CRM). CRM, based in the fields of psychological readiness for treatment and community development, has been utilized in various fields including health prevention and community development. CRM is designed to assess a community's capacity to take action on social issues and to build locally developed and implemented programs. CRM outlines a process surrounding a specific (usually health or social) issue whereby the community defines the issue, defines the target community, determines the community's level of readiness to address the issue using key respondent interviews, and to develop stage-appropriate strategies. The key factors in a community's ability to make meaningful change are based on "dimensions of readiness" including: community efforts, community knowledge of the efforts, leadership, community climate, community knowledge about the issue, and resources related to the issue. The "stages of readiness" come into play when assessing to what extent the community knows about the issue.

Conscientization, decolonization, consensus-building, and leadership

During the final group interview I asked, “how do we help encourage other people to strengthen the ties between one another, to make stronger communities? What actions can we take?” When the group was silent, December spoke up and said “Show more care for others [as a way to inspire others to do the same]”. This suggested model of individual autonomy and embodied leadership suggested by December lends itself well to the Cherokee ways of *individual sovereignty* and consensus over coercion. According to Wahrhaftig (1975) “because Cherokees value interpersonal relationships and go to extremes to maintain them in a harmonious way, Cherokees have developed a high respect for individual autonomy”. Carroll notes that Cherokees practice “thoughtful deliberation” as community life is “based on interpersonal relationships” (2015, p. 162-163). As reflected in the first level of individual leadership, action begins with a realization (awareness) or a dream (event) that prompts a desire for action deemed as needed or necessary. My hope was this study would provide an opportunity to engage in phases one through three (rediscovery and recovery, mourning, and dreaming) based on raising of critical consciousness through dialogue and consensus building (discussion circle and photovoice methods). It will be through the agency of the young people to critically reflect on current embodied practices as well as barriers to those practices, experiential engagement with place, and examining sources of connection and disconnection that critical consciousness (i.e. conscientization) will be enacted through praxis. Although the timeline of this study did not allow for Storytelling to be a part of the process, Storytelling applies lessons of traditional stories to people’s lives. This opens up the ability for people to define the meaning of the story for themselves and how it relates to their life (what they care about as that is what will manifest action- “what does

this mean in my life?”). In order for anyone to engage in theories of change (Tuck 2009) they must be aware of the complex forces operating locally and globally that have impacted their communities. The process of decolonization and community healing begins with the phase of raising critical consciousness, which will include an analysis of historic and current sustainability practices and envisioning alternatives that are community-based and situated in their experiences and their visions of a “good life” (LaDuke, 1994). Decolonizing individual’s minds is seen as key to action, with imagining, dreaming or envisioning alternate realities as one of the most important steps (Laenui 2000). Alfred (2005), speaking of Indigenous pathways to freedom and action, encourages warriors not be complacent and to keep fighting for cultural resurgence. Alfred (2005) tempers this advice with words of warning stating, “there is a great danger in attempting to negotiate structural changes to our relationships before our minds and hearts are cleansed of the stains of colonialism” (p. 180). According to Alfred and Corntassel (2005),

When lies become accepted and normal, the imperative of the warrior is to awaken and enliven the truth and to get people to invest belief and energy into that truth.... Fanon pointed out that the most important strength of Indigenous resistance, unity, is also constantly under attack as colonial powers erase community histories and senses of place to replace them with doctrines of individualism and predatory capitalism. (p. 603)

Decolonization begins with awareness then a movement towards action. Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), multiple epistemologies, wisdom and emotions all have a

valuable and needed place at the table when discussing decolonization with any age group (Brown 2014). Being cognizant of the complexities of such a process and unintentional impacts is important when working with youth. According to Brown (2014), it is essential to recognize that emotions and values are essential to the decolonization process. The Cherokee concept of leadership (“being a good example”) could be a helpful framework for decolonizing practice (Corntassel 2012, processes as outlined by Laenui 2000), as outlined below:

- Individual level: Begins with a realization (awareness) or a dream (event) that prompts a desire for action deemed as needed or necessary (Phases One- rediscovery and recovery, Two- mourning, and Three-dreaming)
- Individual level: Embodiment of the needed action/value in everyday life, find ways to express vision to others in community, guiding values- humility and responsibility (Phase Four- commitment and Phase Five- Individual Action)
- Community level: Through dialogue, social and kinship communities decide if these practices/values/actions are beneficial for them and the community as a whole (Through dialogue and consensus- Phases One through Phase Five leading to Community Action)

Cherokee-led Framework: Foundational Aspects

By bringing together the field of sustainable community development in conversation with decolonizing focus of post-colonial/American Indian/Indigenous studies, this study pulls from a transdisciplinary perspective. However, the focus is on strengthening and sustaining communities to be strong, vibrant and healthy centers of

connection and support for individuals and families. Since beginning the dissertation process I took on a new role as an Instructor in the Cherokee and Indigenous Studies Department at Northeastern State University, located in Tahlequah, OK. I teach and create courses related to Cherokee cultural heritage, self-determination, indigenous education and sustainable communities. I found it impossible and not preferable to separate this Analysis into sub-fields as they are currently sliced and segregated in academia. Considering that Cherokee communities and kinship relationships were intentionally destroyed in favor of a “superior” way to live, I felt it necessary to examine the qualities, values and relationships embedded in the concept of a sustainable community from a Cherokee perspective and to theorize notions of ways to combat the colonizing of community by perpetuating the core tenants in which our well-being rests as individuals, communities and a tribal nation. The study is locally grounded and the seven participants stayed focused on the realm of “everyday actions” (Corntassel, forthcoming). Dr. Tehee, reflecting upon the work of the youth during the Community Event, states that Cherokees have to actively make the choice to be Cherokee every day; saying,

In terms of trying to figure out what we as individuals do, to try and practice community resilience[and] cultural resilience, we have to actively make that choice every day. I’m full blood Cherokee...but what really makes me Cherokee is the choices I make every day...The choices you make every day is whether or not you have a living culture, or whether or not you have a card, that says you’re a part of something that was once living.

Drawing upon this notion of everyday action to sustain a living culture, I attempt to create a holistic narrative that interweaves various levels of analysis from local to global by threading in history, social and cultural contexts, etc. The intent is to paint a vision of interconnection and interdependence between everyday action and broader representation and self-determination.

Alfred (Kahnawake Mohawk) & Corntassel (2005) assert there is promise in “theories rooted in Indigenous cultural and spiritual principles, such as the ‘Fourth World’ and ‘Peoplehood’ schools of thought. Yet, it is ultimately our lived collective and individual experiences as Indigenous peoples that yield the clearest and most useful insights for establishing culturally sound strategies to resist colonialism and regenerate our communities” (p. 600-601). According to the participants, communities are an important site for continuance and sustainability. Family relationships were a site of teaching and learning and continuance, as were community relationships. Community is a place of communal teaching and learning with an increased impact when people come together as a collective, as noted by Cody, “a community brings people together as one instead of just a bunch of individuals. Because when we come together big things happen!”. More insights regarding the importance and functions of community are detailed throughout the following sections.

I begin by drawing upon work by Matunga (2013) on Indigenous Planning to set a general foundation regarding Indigenous-led community development and set the framework for the following themes. For a real move toward sustainability and self-determination of Indigenous peoples to take place there needs to be a change at all levels of the dominant Western culture, including deeply held worldviews (Hall 2008). When

utilizing a decolonizing lens, the sustainability of communities would be held to the goals of decolonizing entrenched systems that continue to suppress indigeneity through normative discourses and rediscovering, regaining, and reimagining aspects integral to Indigenous well-being and sustainability. Matunga (2013) illustrates that Indigenous peoples have always been active participants in their own community planning for an unknown number of generations prior to European contact and the formation of the United States. Matunga (2013), argues that the colonial-settler state(s) should recognize this aforementioned fact, therefore must defend their EuroAmerican hegemonic practices (planning/knowledge system and processes) as legitimate in Indigenous contexts rather than the responsibility being placed upon Indigenous Peoples to prove themselves and their knowledge and processes as valid within their own communities (p. 40).

According to Cajete (2015), the Freirian approach to critical pedagogy (conscientization, resistance, and praxis) holds promise for Indigenous scholars. However, the approach must encompass “the natural world in its theoretical approaches...[in order to] creat[e] a more comprehensive modal of critical studies from an Indigenous perspective” (p. 71). Following the work of Graham Smith and Linda T. Smith on a Kaupapa Māori Model (Maori-centric positioning; See <http://www.rangahau.co.nz/kaupapa-maori-articles/189/>), and taking into account the following critique (Cajete 2015), I argue that the elements of critical pedagogy conscientization (Freire, 1970) could also be of use to framing a Cherokee-centric positioning. The Kaupapa Māori Model utilizes a critical theory approach utilizing Freire’s change-based critical education model. It also is aligned with constructivist approaches (and “decolonizing methodologies”) as it is done in a way that is unique to

Māori ways of knowing, being and collective history (Cajete 2015, Eketone 2006).

According to Cajete (2015), the Kaupapa Māori Model applies, creates and engages in the following:

- Applies *conscientization* (critical thought that brings the reality of Indigenous people's state of oppression into full awareness) to analyze and deconstruct the ongoing hegemonies and practices that affect Māori.
- Creates Māori-led *resistance* (oppositional actions) based on shared Māori experiences and understanding [in order to] ...generate collective politics, policies, programs, and actions that interrupt oppressive practices and revitalize Māori-led change.
- Engages Māori-led *praxis* (reflective action) to effect their own transformation....by reflecting on their own outward and inward patterns, [in order to] formulate theory and practice rooted in the realities of Māori experience. (italics added, p. 74)

Smith, in an interview by Kovach (2009), contends that a focus on conscientization, rather focusing the discussion solely on colonization, puts Indigenous peoples and our priorities and concerns at the core (p. 91). The framework above is useful to conceptualize the ways that decolonization and healing provide the recovery and self-determination necessary to build individual and community well-being.

As I have noted previously, research can aid in the development of Cherokee-led community practice. As noted by Manulani (2013),

I believe we need to begin with the idea of need, or how best to be of service to our community. What are the needs we must address within ourselves, our family, our community, and within our distinct and evolving cultures?...Research for us is not simply

about asking "burning questions" we wish to resolve, but rather, we are answering a call to be of use. (p. 55)

In order to fully embody the generative themes and potential for community action in proceeding pages, the following are foundational aspects that must be considered:

- Representation “on our own terms” through self-determination.
- Recognizing and healing the traumatic loss and disconnection of past, as well as ongoing, impacts on our *TG̃θθ̃ṀṀṀṀṀṀ*, relationships, communities, and environment.
- (Re)membering who we are, our stories, knowledge, language and *TG̃θθ̃ṀṀṀṀṀṀ*, Cherokee conceptions of individual and community well-being.
- Fully embracing and reconnecting to the importance of family and community to individual and collective health, well-being and sustainability.

Drawing upon the quote above regarding “answering a call to be of use to develop a deeper experience of our own epistemology” I now turn to *representation*, which is the undercurrent for the need for a Cherokee-led sustainability “*on and in our own terms*”. The first foundational aspect of Indigenous/Cherokee-led community development is representation. Such representation requires continued advocacy for and enactment of self-determination and the need for diversity in knowledge systems (combating hegemony) across the local to global spectrum. As noted by (Goodyear 2013), “the power to define what counts as knowledge and to determine what our people should be able to know and do is a fundamental aspect of peoplehood, freedom, collective well-being, and autonomy”. Representation also speaks to Indigenous peoples speaking for themselves and having space to explore, develop and embody their own conceptualization of

indigeneity. Another salient aspect of representation is combatting the ignorance and misinformation of history by asserting Cherokee knowledges, truths, and versions of history into account alongside the dominant historical narrative perpetuated in mainstream American society.

When describing Cherokee life ways, Cody noted our long history of strong community togetherness. He noted, “*Cherokees were communities, like we were talking about [sustainable], they were together. We didn’t roam, we didn’t travel, we stayed in one place and we had our families and our community.*” (Appendix C: p. 28, Cody)

Historically, the Cherokee had a large hunting area but mainly lived in permanent and settled villages consisting of consistent social, political, and spiritual relationships based on the clan system, ceremony and seasonal cycles, among other factors. The Cherokee people lived in settled and sustainable communities prior to being “civilized”. During an individual interview, one participant felt the dominant historical representation of Cherokee people, and Native Americans in general was “distorted” (i.e. negative and biased). (Anonymity being kept in this interaction therefore the quotes below do not note the participant’s name). According to the participant, our responsibility (as Cherokee) is to represent ourselves well in modern times to combat such stereotypes. I asked about thoughts on the relationships and responsibilities we have as Cherokee, to which the response was,

I guess really our responsibility is don’t be what people today would think of an Indian--- a savage, or just somebody who is not civilized, just kind of wild, just disrespectful. I’m not saying our history is bad or anything, but just don’t be what

the typical person would think of an Indian. They think bad about them, think that they were savage people, but that's not what they were, they had the same ideas of sustainable community as anybody else and not wondering how they were going to make it, they just did it in a different way. Most people [EuroAmericans] didn't agree with it [Cherokee life ways] because it wasn't the way that they did it.

(My emphasis)

I inquired further, asking if it would be “better for Cherokee people to try to fit more into that European/American idea of what civilization is” (i.e. assimilate). To this the reply was,

No, not fit in. People thought of them worse than what they really are. They thought they were just wild and out to kill. That's not how they were; I mean, yes, they killed because they were trying to get run off---I mean, you are going to defend your own hometown. Everybody thought of them differently than what they actually were. Now, it's not such a big deal, show them what you really are---back then the only reason they thought about that is because they fought and killed, they didn't have all the stuff that the people who came over did [EuroAmerican settlers]. They just thought they were just wild people and they [the Cherokee] weren't. Now that there is no fighting going on, the people can see and realize who they really were.

I wanted to better understand how the young person's reflections manifested locally in the educational system as it mirrors decolonization discourse, especially directed at institutions of education. I asked if schools, even the broader public, get taught the real

history of Cherokee people or Native American people in United States in general or if it is distorted. The participant responded,

I think it is pretty distorted... I feel mostly everyone in the history classes try to make out that the Indians were bad people, and I don't think that is who they were. I mean, yes, they fought because you [EuroAmerican settlers/American government?] were trying to run them off. I mean, anybody is going to fight if you are trying to make them leave, they don't teach how they really were.

“Representation on our own terms” is the underlying framework for what guides this work as well as the work of many community-based, participatory and decolonizing projects. A key aspect embedded in such work is the ability to challenge dominant epistemologies, histories and binaries ABOUT Cherokee people. This study offered the ability for young Cherokees to “talk back” to the adults that so often speak *of* them and *for* them. Being that development is often referenced as an extension of colonization, “representation on our own terms” is an area of much needed focus within the community development, and broader development, discourse.

This section discusses the loss and disconnection indicated (directly and non-directly) by the participants. Drawing upon this study, as well as salient literature previously presented on disconnection and internalized and lateral violence (see Review of Literature), I argue that working towards sustaining communities and *TGʻθʻŋŋʻʻoʻʻʻ* requires awareness of deep loss and the process of healing. Awareness and healing are both needed to strengthen communities that have endured collective trauma and assimilative forces over many generations. (For more information, Archibald (2006)

outlines a comprehensive framework including decolonization, recovery from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and healing from historic trauma, p. 28.)

The importance of healing in order to face today's challenges is certain, it is intense and it is urgent. The difficult process of awareness and healing must take place, especially for our youth, as they are on the receiving end of the loss of our knowledge keepers, our languages, global environmental destruction, and the continued break down of the relationships, values and responsibilities that guided the Cherokee people sustainably for millennia. In order to combat internal oppression, Cajete (2015), drawing upon the work of Diane Hill (Bear Clan – Mohawk Nation of the Haudenosaunee-Six Nations People), states that communities must “first understand the source of [their] collective ‘ethnostress’ (p. 59). According to Hill, *ethnostress* is the disruption of beliefs that go with being a Native person leading to internal oppression (Cajete, 2015, p. 59). I concur with Cajete (2015), that there is a deep need to “unravel” internalized oppression, to “re-instill time-tested Indigenous values through the reassertion a *pedagogy of Indigenous community*” (my emphasis, p. 59).

Many people told me that the photo by Shameka of her old home really touched them. One person said you could “feel the sadness”, another thought the photo showed the “neglect had caused the home’s spirit to die”. During the Community Event, Dr. Tehee said,

Two pictures really stuck with me and both of them I think are trying to express an expectation of grief in a way. Shameka’s childhood home (Appendix C: p. 7) and Justine’s, of her hand clasped with her grandfather’s hand (Appendix C: p.

3). *In Shameka's [photo] she talks about how once a vibrant home full of people and children and laughter and a Cherokee family, and now it can't hold any of those things because the home hasn't been cared for. ...Within our community...that narrative is one that's common. It's one I share as well, my great grandparent's home which is on their allotment on Black Gum Mountain stands in that same mode of disrepair.*

I believe what struck people that viewed the photo was how clearly the photo and the narrative spoke to the loss of connection to her family being close to one another (“relationships of dependency”). Once people stopped caring for the structure of the house, it fell apart. (A fitting and painful metaphor of the disconnection felt in families and communities today.)

This photo represents family because this is the house I grew up in. It was our great grandma Onn and my grandma Lela and then there were all four of her daughters that lived there. So it was a big family that lived here. It's rundown now, everybody stopped taking care of it. It's kind of heart breaking because that's the house I grew up in, and now that I look at it, it's just like there's nothing left, just scraps and pieces. Back then, we were closer [when we all lived together] than we are now, now that everybody has moved out and has their own thing going on. We're still close but not as close. Family is a big thing to me. And now that we all are separated and living in different places we're kind of losing our spark as a family because we don't see each other every day like we used to.

(Appendix C: p. 7, Shameka)

The deep pain of disease, drugs, death, poverty, bullying, and suicide were all brought up directly during the course of the project. These conversations took place one-on-one and were not brought up in the group discussions, save the discussion regarding the intense hardships of poverty. It was intentional on my part to keep these particular aspects confidential to respect the trust the youth placed in me to protect their pain.

Additionally, a key aspect interwoven into the photos and narratives was the importance of remembering our history as well as our strength/resilience (as noted by December's photo she titled *The Past Still Stands* of the original Female Seminary (Appendix C: p. 25). According to Haig-Brown (2005) the term (re)member "is an effort to capture the idea that such knowledge[s] must be put back together out of fragments held by individuals and communities who have had their traditional ways attacked as wrong for generations" (p. 90). Through (re)remembering our past will have a much deeper understanding of exactly how the disconnection and loss associated with colonization and assimilation has impacted our people, as well as how to better heal these wounds. It is through this representation and re(membering) Cherokee communities and young people especially need a better understanding of the individual and community impacts of colonization and assimilation as well as a stronger focus on healing from these continued, yet normative, forces. By remembering who we are, our stories, knowledge, language and *TG'ƏS'NRLƏJ* and Cherokee conceptions of individual and community well-being, I argue that the following would be foundational to such remembrance: The multi-faceted importance and functions of community (Cajete 2015) and our interdependence through *relationships of dependency*. We must remember that everything is interconnected and rests upon everything working together. Also, our language, knowledge and stories still

have power. Empowerment is about shifting power. Local empowerment should begin with local knowledge systems. Therefore, one strategy is to work to shift the focus (and power) from the ‘center’ (colonizer) to community-based local knowledge systems and practices, including languages. We want to shift the narrative to more of a local version (histories, epistemology, etc.) away from “center” of viewing everything from the view of the colonizer. Shifting to a version of history and *TG̃θ̃σ̃η̃ρ̃λ̃α̃δ̃ι* relevant and situated in local communities opens up possibilities of claiming space/place; renaming (physical and people) and reinventing (memory and history).

It is imperative that young people are taught in homes and community spaces. Although it is more difficult now than it was in the past to have a young person’s attention for long periods of time but again, everyday acts of teaching must be embraced. As noted by the following narratives, parents (as well as grandparents) are seen as knowledge holders and the ones to emulate by younger people, therefore they hold a deep responsibility in continuing *TG̃θ̃σ̃η̃ρ̃λ̃α̃δ̃ι*.

My mom and dad teach me to work, they teach me those things around the house, learning not to be about yourself, look out for the others in your family. My dad takes care of our family and he also takes care of others in the community. I guess that's how he's trying to raise me and teach me to be a man that will not only stand up for me, but for others, to make sure everybody else is ok too.

(Appendix C: p.17, Cody)

This is my mom. She's beading and she beads medallions and earrings, and necklaces. I've been learning a bit from her and she's been teaching me, and I

liked that I'm learning something from an older person, an elder. She was teaching me the night I took this photograph, and I was learning.

(Appendix C: p.18, Shania)

The section below speaks to the importance of reconnecting the importance of family to individual and collective healing, health, well-being and sustainability. The core unit of many Indigenous communities is the family and kinship (Hall 1991). There has been deep psychological and collective community impact of division and separation of extended families living in close proximity to one another, due to various forces (including allotment, EuroAmerican individualistic, market economy requiring all members of the family contribute financially, public schooling, etc.). The fabric of everyday family and home life has changed drastically; grandparents used to be the main parental figures in the home for children and elders were cared for by the younger generations. Women and children were honored and protected by built in and normative sociocultural kinship mechanisms. The clan system and hospitality ethic ensured that everyone had a home, food, and care. As previously explored through the work of Strelau (2011), Cherokee conceptions of family and community relationships were intentionally destroyed through individual and community disconnection from Indigenous life ways and relationships to/with human and non-human beings. A reconnection to the importance of family as the core unit and community as core support system is key. I echo the earlier statements noted previously in the Review of Literature, family resilience contributes to healing and health.

CHAPTER EIGHT: STUDY EVALUATION, LIMITATIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Study Evaluation

Precisely how the process honored reciprocity, trustworthiness, and respect was outlined in detail throughout the proceeding chapters. Quotes from the Community Event as well as community members and Advisory Board Members have been utilized throughout to provide broader perspectives on the project, the process and the resulting data. Circling back to the tenants embodied in insurgent research (Gaudry 2011), the “research processes and final products are ultimately responsible to Indigenous communities, meaning that Indigenous communities are the final judges of the validity and effectiveness”. Thus, additional quotes from the community gleaned throughout various points of the process will again be utilized to speak to study evaluation.

During the Community Event, Ramona Ketcher (Cherokee Nation), Stilwell High School Principal said,

I was excited when I was approached by the project [by Tiffanie]. We were all onboard from the get-go. It was such a blessed opportunity for my kids. They go home every day to their elders, they go home to a way of life, that they don't even really realize what a blessed opportunity it is for them. There's things from the arts, the crafts, that they learn from their elders, a way of cooking. Quilting for some is a project that you hang on the wall. For us [Cherokee], it's a need, you utilize those things. So I was excited for my kids because they are growing up in an age where we all have these [referring cell phones] and they are on them all the time. The most important thing that I'm most excited about for her project, for

my kids, opening up communication between them and their elders, getting to hear their stories. I remember my grandmother telling me stories of riding in a wagon. I cherish those stories. Watching my mom sit and making quilts, I cherish those moments. Her project opened up for them, not only an opportunity to learn about their culture and to discuss ways of sustaining that culture, but also helping them to realize the responsibility they now have to carry on that to carry on those things we do as a people. It's great for our kids. It's awesome for community. It's good for our people.

Dr. Tehee (Cherokee Nation), Advisor Board Member, and Cherokee Heritage Center Executive Director, stated,

I'm really really happy to be hosting this event here at the CNHC... Giving students, like these from Stilwell High School, a forum for expression, a forum for expressing their identity is just, the value of it, is immeasurable. The impact this is going have on these students' lives and on their own community is immeasurable. Giving students a voice and letting them know that their emotions their feelings are just as valid as everyone else, just as valid as adults is extremely important.

When I showed the draft version of the project booklet to two young Cherokee men working with Cherokee Nation Language Master/Apprentice Program the first reaction was that the narratives of youth sounded like the words of elders (in their depth of meaning and insight) and that the project itself was “healing” work. I responded that some people feel research (where interviews are recorded and will be potentially made public knowledge) may not be culturally appropriate or sensitive (due to the delicate and emotional nature of conversations that require an environment of trust and confidentiality

for people to open up and feel safe). It was felt that such distinctions could not be made between the two as they holistically go together and cannot be separated from each other. The process of mourning losses of family, family togetherness, culture and language is begun [through such a process], and the participants [now] have the opportunity to interact with this knowledge in the context of ceremony and spirituality [however they chose to do so going forward, outside of the project]. Such heightening awareness (i.e. conscientization) cannot be stopped once the process has begun.

Limitations

This study consisted of seven people, therefore the analysis was done utilizing data from a small group. There was narrow recruiting due to it only being offered as an option for two classes (Cherokee Language class and Native American History) to participate at one high school (Stilwell High School). The unpredictable schedule and tight timing resulted in certain choices being made out of necessity versus preference or original intent.

This study was intended to be place-based and location specific, therefore generalization was not expected, however the elements could be taken as a foundation for broader theorization and practice. My research, reflections and theorizing is based upon my positionality and the positionality of the participants. In no way does this work seek to represent or speak for Cherokee people more generally. As noted by the Cherokee Nation's website, "Cultural information may vary from clan to clan, location to location, family to family, and from differing opinions and experiences".

(<http://www.cherokee.org/AboutTheNation/History/Facts/TheOriginofGadugi.aspx>, accessed May 25, 2016)

Recommendations for further research

In future projects I intended to further incorporate Cherokee philosophy, language and cultural protocols into the framework. As a salient example for increasing the use of Cherokee syllabary in future work, Advisory Committee member Wahde/Ryan Mackey explained the various ways to communicate the concept of “Cherokee People” in syllabary, for example:

They Cherokees: DᎠᏍᏏᏚᏚ

Cherokee Indians: ᏍᏚᏚ ᎠᎠᏍᏏᏚᏚ

To include myself as "we Cherokees": ᎠᎠᎠᎠᏍᏏᏚᏚ

My language speaking or writing skills are not at the level where I could consistently and accurately use the language in a way that would honor the intent, but it should be a consideration for future work. Also of great importance is the aspect of gender roles. Cherokee gender roles must be more fully incorporated in future work or framework meant to be Cherokee-centered. There were aspects I noted during the project that spoke to defined gender roles, yet additional research is needed to fully explore this salient topic area. Additionally, various strands of potential research are suggested below:

Honoring Storytelling

The role of storytelling in the research process and publication should be discussed and honored (Wilson & Pence 2006). Hastings Shade, highly respected elder that has since passed on, believed that young Cherokee people experience “cultural

confusion” and the process of storytelling provides “critical models for making sense of one’s cultural belonging”, as stories provide guidance to “negotiate the influences of Western culture while remaining Cherokee” (Teuton, 2012, p. 9). The method of utilizing oral histories or storytelling as a continual interpretive process teaches values specific to the Cherokee people (Teuton, 2012). As noted by Teuton (2012), “Cherokee oral tradition provides the lessons and critical framework through which the *middle way* [between these different ways of knowing and being] may be achieved” (my emphasis) (p. 9). Many scholars have written about the area between two seemingly distinct and opposing categories through concepts of a middle way, third space, or integration between the Western and pan-Indigenous worldview.

Keetoowah (Cherokee) teachings

Of immense relevance to this study are Keetoowah (Cherokee) teachings. These teachings provide a map for social norms that guide cohesive and strong communal values and behaviors. In 2009, Cherokee elder Benny Smith told some of these teachings to Wahde Mackey (Cherokee Nation) who created a public document titled ᎠᎩᎩᎩ ᎠᎩᎩᎩ ᎠᎩᎩᎩ *sgadugi dikanowadvsdi* (“Community Values”) (see Appendix). Although there are many more Keetoowah teachings than are listed in the document, these are the ones selected by Benny Smith to be made publicly available. Usually one would learn all of these things orally, over time, your family and community in a less direct (more experiential) way.

Over the course of the project I realized that the youth reflected many of the same ideals found in this document. These teachings align very closely with the participant

narratives and generative themes, with *relationships of dependency* being a foundational aspect. The generative theme of “Well-being of Others as a Measure of Community Well-being” is seen clearly in the teaching as they were in the participants’ narratives; as are the qualities of helpfulness/support, love, inclusivity and togetherness, as outlined below using the Community Values document:

Helpfulness and support (mentioned eight times and includes direct reference to communal practices (i.e. *gadugi*):

ጋሮሮዎቻችን ጠቅሞቻችን *ditsadasdelisgi itsehesdi*

You all live, helping one another.

ከሥልጣን ስህ ሁሉም ጋራ ገንብ *nigaya'iso gadugi nitsvnesdi*

In the mind and heart always work together.

ሁሉም ጋራ ጠንቅቀን *detsadadohiyusesdi*

You all have a strong conviction for and believe in one another.

ሁሉም ጋራ ጠቅሞቻችን *detsadaligenvdisgesdi*

You all take responsibility for one another’s wellbeing.

ሁሉም ጋራ ጠቅሞቻችን *detsadagatiyesdi*

Watch over and wait for one another.

ጋራ ጋራ ጠቅሞቻችን ጠቅሞቻችን *ditsadagusdanidohi itsehesdi*

Live and support each other in all that you do.

የሁሉም ጋራ ጠቅሞቻችን ስህ ሁሉም ጋራ ጠቅሞቻችን

yetsilequalosgesdi digalvwisdadi gananvgoquo

You all gang up on work whenever and wherever it arises.

ᏏᏁᏁ ᏐᏁᏁᏁ *ditsaligohi itsahesdi*

Live united, work as a team with one another.

The English word “love” (love from me to you-singular) translates to *gvgeyui* (guh gay you ee). The Cherokee concept of love cannot be fully captured in the English word love as it has a much deeper meaning and daily, even lifelong responsibilities attached to it.

This idea of loving one another or “clinging to one another” is noted in the Cherokee Nation “Community Values” document five times.

Love:

ᏐᏁᏁᏁᏁᏁ *detsadageyusesdi*

Be stingy with one another’s existence, like a mother with child.

ᏐᏁᏁᏁᏁᏁ *detsadalvquodesdi*

Like one another without conditions, admire one another.

ᏐᏁᏁᏁᏁᏁ *detsatliyvsedi*

Struggle to hold on to one another or cling to one another.

ᏐᏁᏁᏁᏁᏁ *ulisgedi detsadayelvsedi*

Treat each other’s existence as being sacred or important.

ᏐᏁᏁᏁᏁᏁ *detsadadohiyusesdi*

You all have a strong conviction for and believe in one another.

Inclusivity:

ᏐᏁᏁᏁᏁᏁ *nani ’v yvwi detsatloyadisgesv*
Include everyone, all human kind; however many

Togetherness/Gathering:

ᓇᓇᓇᓇᓇᓇᓇᓇ *datsadawatvhidohesdi*
Visit one another with love, locate and find one another.

Increased intergenerational knowledge transmission & dialogue

More research is needed to better understanding the barriers to passing knowledge and language on to future generations. In conversations with community members I was told of the concern surrounding the struggle experienced by Cherokee elders that is making knowledge transfer more difficult:

- For some, there is a tension between the more modernly practiced Christian religion and Cherokee traditions passed down by our ancestors. Many elders hold complex and dynamic knowledge based upon one or even both of these belief systems which can cause difficulty in reconciling such ways of knowing, being and the knowledge necessary/relevant/appropriate to pass on to future generations.
- Elders were raised in a predominately oral culture and they are being encouraged to write down sensitive and sacred knowledge, which creates a fear of the misuse of knowledge.
- Family and community dynamics are different for the elders of today versus their childhood when they had the privilege of spending extended amounts of time with their elders and extended kinship networks by gaining experiential knowledge over time. Geographically diverse nuclear family homes and more individualistic and time-consuming pursuits of modern youth/adults impact this ability.
- Many of the culturally relevant items used in ceremony or for spiritual purposes are hard to find or unavailable in northeastern Oklahoma.
- Many elders are fluent language speakers; however, the younger generations are not therefore there is a disconnect felt between the generations as many times they cannot communicate in a way that allows for TEK to be fully communicated.

Cherokee youth are in an interesting and difficult position when attempting to perpetuate ᏍᏏᏉᏍᏏᏉᏍᏏ, especially language. According to the director of the Cherokee Nation Master Apprentice program at the 2016 Community Leaders Conference (held at Northeastern State University, June 3-4, 2016):

- Cherokee is a difficult language; it's a category 4/5 along with Mandarin Chinese.
- We (fellow Cherokees) are putting responsibilities on youth when the adults/parents aren't speaking the language.
- There isn't an accurate and updated count of fluent speakers (survey done by Cherokee Nation years ago wasn't accurate but even if it was we have lost an estimated 6,000 since that time leaving 4,000) some estimates are as low as 2,000.
- We are losing an average of 20-30 fluent speaker a month, and they aren't being replaced with language learners.
- [Cherokee language acquisition is] not happening naturally anymore. Kids sometimes still speak it until they go into public schools and they lose it.
- Learning English as the dominant language in a child's life creates issues when they, as adults, try to learn Cherokee. In their language program, sometimes English is used [by the fluent Cherokee instructors] because English has so engrained [in the learners] because "if you're an English speaker you have an English mind."

The intersection between federal, state and tribal governance structures and policy and the everyday practice of resurgence through cultural land-based practices; including decolonization in "areas of impact" such as development, natural resource management and education (indigenous education, community-based education (Cajete).

There are a growing number of examples cited in academic literature and being realized in community, however often Indigenous peoples face swift resistance from local

individuals and broader structures (e.g. conservation and regulatory agencies) in the small ways they attempt to embody land-based cultural practices.

Specifically, in a Cherokee Nation context, Carroll's 2015 book provides a much needed foundation to continue exploring the fact that "Cherokee relationships to land and nonhumans were central to traditional understandings of their place in the world...thus in looking at the extent which state-building reconfigured the way Cherokees made sense of the world, we must ask, how did this process alter people's relationships with land and nonhumans, as well as each other" (Carroll 2015). In speaking of cultural revitalization and survival through "*honoring the spirit of the land*" (Cherokee elder quoted in Carroll p. 144) Carroll argues that "the reclamation of land and resources go hand in hand with the transformation of governance institutions" (Carroll, 2015, p. 142). The transformation of tribal governance institutions, such as the Cherokee Nation, would require that Cherokee values and knowledge be intimately embedded in policy and the workings of the government on the most basic level. How would working from such a position impact current Cherokee Nation development strategies (tourism, business development, etc.)? Could such a concept manifest in practice being guided in the current governance system founded upon a predominately EuroAmerican governance and development paradigm? As a salient example, the 2015 book by Carroll tells the story how Cherokees in Oklahoma have developed material, spiritual, and political relationships with new lands after removal. Using a political ecology lens he examines the Cherokee Nation's negotiations between a *resource* versus a *relationship*-based approach. Carroll argues the resource-based approach is the "dominant paradigm" where humans have control over environmental "resources" (water, animals, trees, land); the use

of such resources is governed by humans using certain protocols and laws. (Example: natural resource management is the process of allocating and administering the resources to achieve the most economic goals) (p. 8). According to an Advisory Committee member, the Cherokee language is based upon a hierarchy-like system of obligations for inanimate and animate objects where the self is the core obligation extending outward to family/clan, community, broader humanity, then to plants, animals, and inanimate objects (Personal communication, October 11, 2016). Carroll (2015) argues that a relationship-based approach is a more holistic and interconnected realization that humans have a responsibility to maintain certain relationships with nonhuman beings in a way that acknowledges the separate agency of those beings in a manner that encourages non-coercive ideals of governance. Such governance would mirror the pre-contact leadership of Cherokee leaders whereby they persuaded versus commanded or coerced, and the more holistic worldview related to interconnection, kinship and responsibility that once guided everyday life for the Cherokee people. Carroll (2015) found in his research the relationship-based approach has been notably absent in CN policy until more recently. Because most of the environmental work done by the CN since the early 1990s has entailed the development of bureaucratic departments based on U.S. federal models, CN policy has tended to assume the dominant resource-based approach to environmental governance. Reasons stem from: continued bureaucratic oversight of the BIA, which encourages resource management activities that generate profit (e.g., monocrop forestry and cattle leases on tribal lands for grazing), the relationship-based approach is seen as impractical in comparison to more pressing human needs (e.g. housing), and the relationship-based approach doesn't fit well within the way the current system is

organized (p. 8-9). Although many feel that TEK can play a role in supporting scientific knowledge in repairing and protecting the environment Carroll (2015) argues tribal nations can and should lead in a political way by leading by example, by honoring cultural practices in a globalized economy to illustrate there can be a balance.

How can localized Cherokee-based educational curricula, materials and pedagogy combat the continued legacy of assimilation perpetuated through public schooling and the impacts on youth and communities?

Stemming from the final group interview where at least a third of the group expressed an interest in taking such classes that incorporated more of a Cherokee world view and content (see p. 105) as well as an individual interview that noted the lack of self-representation and discriminatory practices in history books and broader discourse (see p. 105), I feel that additional research and practice should be devoted to developing Cherokee-based educational curricula, materials and pedagogy for implementation across many educational settings.

For many Indigenous young people, modern public schooling “continues to reflect the deeply wounding processes of colonization, [as Indigenous] ...forms of knowing and educating have never been given credence in the objectified world of modern ‘scientifically’ administered education” (Cajete, 2015, p. 8). There has been quite a bit of research devoted to broadly defining Indigenous education as well as the impacts on Indigenous languages and cultures through compulsory English-only practices in public schools and beyond. Battiste (2008) does an excellent job of outlining the issues that result.

Compulsory English language instruction and a prohibition on speaking Indigenous languages are part of an assimilationist strategy that resulted in great linguistic losses worldwide. Indigenous peoples who have lost their language due to government assimilationist policies face a great challenge. There is evidence that language loss is not purely linguistic but also involves the socialization of language and knowledge, ways of knowing, and nonverbal and verbal communication – the core tools of indigenous knowledge and capacity within indigenous cultures.

Currently, the colonial and neocolonial models continue to offer publicly funded schools and their students a fragmented, negative, and distorted picture of indigenous peoples in history textbooks, and curricula. These models characterize IK as primitive, backward, or superstitious causing Indigenous people to be viewed as deficient and requiring remedies that renew the assimilation cycles of European knowledge and languages and that destroy Indigenous peoples' self-esteem and self-confidence.

Despite this realization, few schools and universities have made IK a priority in educating Indigenous students, much less teaching all students about diverse knowledge systems; instead focuses on fragmented cultural practices that make visible Aboriginal peoples' artistry powwows and archival and museum work, which perpetuates notions of Indigenous peoples as historical and local, not contemporary and global with a knowledge system that has value for all. (p. 86)

As Goodyear (2013) found in her work with Hawaiian youth, there was a noticeable “impact that a century-long disconnection from legacies of literacy, teaching, and educational excellence had...[on] ‘ōpio ‘ōiwi (Native youth) who had succeeded through to the twelfth grade...Though they had powerful stories to tell and profound insights to

make, they generally did not see themselves as writers or intellectuals, as eloquent and articulate with important things to say. Schooling had largely blinded them to their own brilliance. It failed to cultivate in them a strong sense of their own voices and the connections of those voices to a deeper, collective ancestral well.’ (p. xiv). Goodyear (2013) suggest the concept of *land-centered literacies* as “critically engaged observational, interpretive, and expressive practices that put land and natural environment at the center” (p. xv- xvi). Goodyear extends the term *sovereign pedagogies* in order “to signal that the continuing socioeconomic and educational inequalities Kānaka Maoli face within the settler school system and broader society can never be fully remedied without addressing the continued suppression of Hawaiian political sovereignty. In other words, education that celebrates Indigenous cultures without challenging dominant political and economic relations will not create futures in which the conditions of dispossession are alleviated” (p. xv- xvi).

In the United States, modern public schooling differs greatly from Indigenous education. As noted by Cajete (2015), Indigenous education is,

a process of coming to know, honor, and apply essential principles of ecological relationship in its broadest terms. This way of educating honors the continual enchantment of human relationships to each other and the natural world. Its education is for life, community, and ensoulment. (p. 5)

CONCLUSION

Drawing upon the continued calls for decolonizing theory and practice, whereby Indigenous peoples assert the meaning of sustainability “on and in their own terms”

through sustainable self-determination (Corntassel, 2008, p. 108-109), this study provided literature on resurgence, decolonization, settler colonialism and colonizing ideologies, sustainability, and development to illustrate the need for Cherokee-led community development based upon the regeneration of ᏌᏍᏏᏁᏍᏏᏁᏍᏏ.

Indigenous/Cherokee-led community development is inextricable tied to the resurgence of land-and-water based practices and knowledge systems as well as ᏌᏍᏏᏁᏍᏏᏁᏍᏏ perpetuated by and in Cherokee families/communities in order to have “sustainable communities” that are founded upon a Cherokee conception of individual and collective well-being. As previously noted, the qualities outlined as being important for sustainable communities are all connected in ways that cannot be separated. Everything rests upon the other and relies on certain things to be viable in practice (e.g. self-reliance relies on environmental sustainability and biodiversity, tribal sovereignty and good environmental governance, the perpetuation of knowledge and continued use of such practices, etc.). The ability to assert agency in families and communities (i.e. self-reliance, representation) rests upon representative tribal governance. Ideally, tribal sovereignty is meant to uphold policies that allow for such practices (e.g. hunting, fishing and gathering rights).

The data collected during the *Sustainable Communities: Through the Lens of Cherokee Youth* project, which is corroborated by Cherokee elders and scholars, speaks to the importance of:

- Expanding awareness of loss/disconnection and the process of healing.
- Reasserting Cherokee-led community development practice using the well-being of others as a measurement of “success”.

- Perpetuating family and community as sites of healing and resurgence through togetherness (visiting and gathering together).
- Renewing focus/teaching of interconnected and sustainable self-reliance including land-and water-based practices through community-based Cherokee education.
- Fostering intergenerational knowledge transfer for cultural continuance.
- Building and maintaining positive and supportive relationships.
- Embracing *relationships of dependency*.
- Perpetuating holistic, interconnected and embodied community practices.

As seen from the narratives, family relationships were a site of teaching and learning and continuance, as were community relationships, to a lesser degree.

Indigenous cultural practices are found deeply embedded in community and in embodied practices. The seven young Cherokees involved in this study are already participating in the maintenance of *TG̃θ̃σ̃η̃λ̃ω̃δ̃* in their families and communities; perhaps this project opened up space for additional critical reflection. For me, this study has provided an opportunity for self-reflection and a deepening desire to continue learning from Indigenous scholars and communities. The journey also solidified my stance on the need for a reclaiming and reasserting of Cherokee knowledge, language and *TG̃θ̃σ̃η̃λ̃ω̃δ̃* as well as Cherokee conceptions of individual and community well-being.

Although the intent of a Cherokee-led community strategy is meant to be very location and context specific, I envision a broader more long-term strategy as one that would engage and include a multitude of diversity ranging from Cherokee scholars to community members in the tribal jurisdictional area and in the “At Large” communities (communities outside of the Cherokee Nation tribal jurisdiction area), as well as the two other sovereign Cherokee tribal nations. I argue that drawing upon multiple spheres of

knowledges would not only provide inclusivity but could potentially have a unifying aspect as well, as more resources to encourage dialogue and awareness of the need to access and pass on knowledge (including language) in order to perpetuate

TGʷƏSʷŋŋləədʌ.

Cherokee youth must establish for themselves (through critical reflection, experiential processes and dialogue) the dimensions of their particular worldview and accompanying sustainability paradigm from which to conceptualize and operationalize visions of the future and relevant individual or collection action. In order for anyone to engage in theories of change (Tuck 2009) they must be aware of the complex forces operating locally and globally that have impacted their communities. The process of decolonization begins with the phase of raising critical consciousness, which will include an analysis of historic and current sustainability practices and envisioning alternatives that are community-based and situated in their experiences and their visions of a “good life” (LaDuke, 1994). From my perspective, effectively moving towards sustainability requires individuals and broader society to realize and recognize (and take action on) normalized globalized hegemonic practice of economic rationality and EuroAmerican epistemic supremacy. This economic rationality worldview is based on EuroAmerican epistemic supremacy, possessive individualism, consumerism as normative and disconnection/devaluation of the natural world. If the goal is more inclusive decolonizing discourse then we must all be open to lay bare our contesting visions of *sustainable communities* by fully participating in authentic discussions and actions for decolonization to address complex hegemonic systems that marginalize (and in many cases are now interwoven into) Indigenous social and cultural knowledge systems and

how such systems interplay with long term oppression, genocide and the perpetuation of development as an extension of colonization.

Wado & Dodadagohvi

Disclaimer [in compliance with Cherokee Nation IRB Publication Guidelines]: The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Cherokee Nation.

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APPENDIX A

CHEROKEE POPULATION IN CHEROKEE NATION TJA

CHEROKEE POPULATION IN CHEROKEE NATION TJA

The figure below represents the Native American population in the Cherokee Nation tribal jurisdictional area (TJA) based on U.S. Census data (2000).

As noted in the figure below, the area surrounding Stilwell has a large Native American concentration and population. Being that the source is the U.S. Census, the categorization utilized is “Native American”, however it is safe to say that the vast majority in this area are Cherokee.

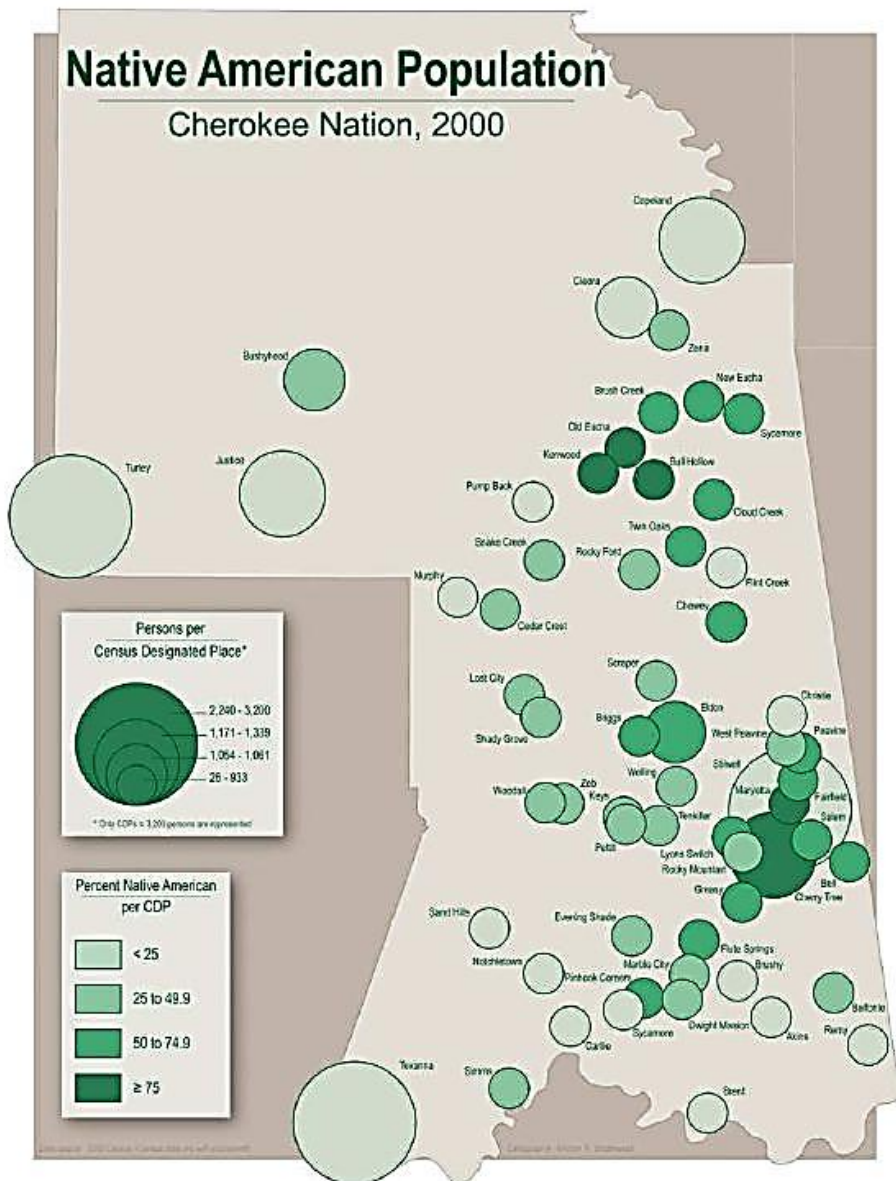


Figure used with permission from Dr. Justin Nolan, Department of Anthropology- University of Arkansas.

APPENDIX B

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chris Holmes, Sequoyah High School, Teaching staff

Wyman Kirk, Northeastern State University, Cherokee & Indigenous Studies, Adjunct Faculty

Stacy Leeds, JD, University of Arkansas, School of Law, Dean and professor

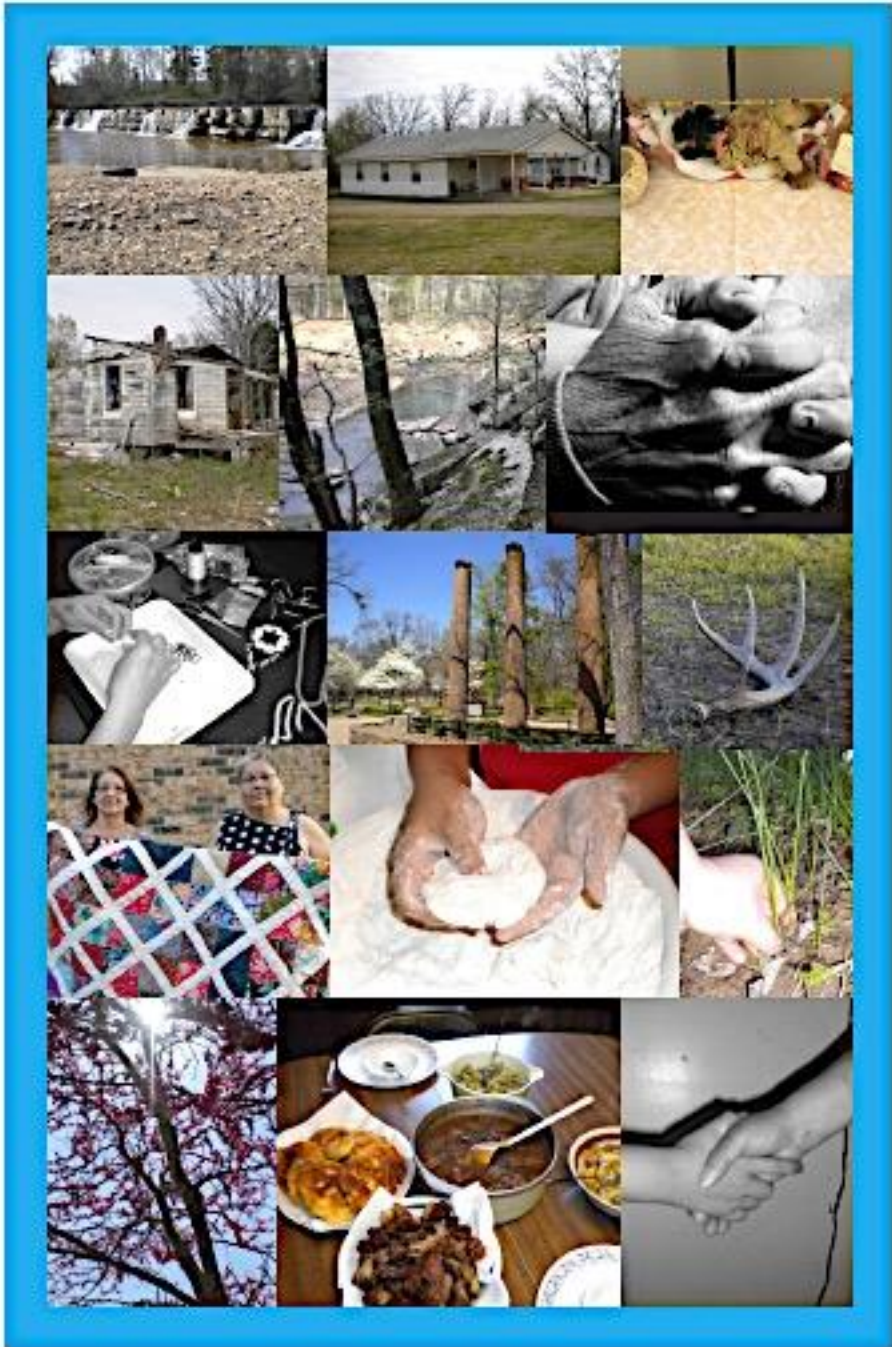
Ryan (“Wahde”) Mackey, Cherokee Nation, Cultural Outreach & Language Immersion Program

Candessa Tehee, PhD, Northeastern State University, Cherokee & Indigenous Studies, Faculty; (During a portion of this study Dr. Tehee was the Cherokee Heritage Center Executive Director)

APPENDIX C

PROJECT BOOKLET

[See attached files for original booklet]



SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES:
Through the Lens of Cherokee Youth

About This Booklet

This booklet contains the photovoice photograph and narratives that will be exhibited May 10-14 at the Cherokee Heritage Center, the Community Mapping activity as well as the initial insights of Tiffanie Hardbarger (Ord) in response to the dialogue during the project.

FEATURES

- 1 About the project
 - About the Exhibit
 - About the Community Event
- 2-25** Photovoice photographs and narratives
- 26-31** Community Mapping Activity
- 32-34** Initial Themes & Insights
- 35** Acknowledgments

About the Project

Using photography, seven Cherokee young people ranging in age from 15 to 18 from Stilwell High School share their voices and visions of a sustainable community and the *Iyunadvnelidasdi* (ᏒᏁᏍᏁᏏᏁᏍᏁ) (life ways) they believe we need to sustain as Tsalagi.

Many far-reaching changes have taken place over the generations that have altered our values, practices and relationships. These multi-faceted disruptions have severely impacted individual and community well-being and overall cultural continuance.

Stemming from the doctoral work of Cherokee Nation citizen Tiffanie Hardbarger (Ord), the project explored the perspectives of Cherokee young people on the topic of sustainable communities through various strategies of inquiry including community mapping, photography (photovoice), individual interviews and group interviews.

About the Exhibit

May 10-14, 2016 | Cherokee Heritage Center Main Gallery

The Sustainable Communities: Through the Lens of Cherokee Youth Exhibit & Event is the result of this project. The photographs and narratives exhibited have been selected by the young people as their response to the following photovoice guiding questions:

From your perspective as a Cherokee young person, take photographs that represent:

- » *your understanding of what a sustainable community is*
- » *the values, practices, and relationships we need to perpetuate to sustain our life ways for generations to come*

About the Community Event

May 13, 2016 | Cherokee Heritage Center Atrium

The young people will share their experiences and perspectives with the community during a Community Event on May 13. This is an important part of the project as it provides the opportunity to have open discussion with elders and others from the community on the Exhibit. The hope is that this project will inspire future discussions and actions that will benefit the Cherokee people and communities.

Kelen Pritchett, 18, Stilwell High School



This is a photograph of some deer antler sheds I found out on my land. It represents self-reliance, that we can hunt for our own food and gather our own food. We grow our own wheat and corn and stuff like that down there, we grow our gardens. That's what it represents, being self-reliant.

I think we still need to keep passing down the language, relationships with the elders; the elders are the ones that know more than anyone.

Justine Littlehead, Stilwell High School



My grandpa is my whole world. He's full blood Cherokee. He'll teach me sometimes, but he'll start crying. I know most of the time what he's talking about. He gets sad because he doesn't feel like he has the time to teach me before he passes on. In this photo, we are sitting in our Talking Chairs where we sit and talk all the time. Sometimes we have really funny moments... I don't want to go to school because I worry about him all throughout the day. I want to stay and take care of him. I'm just not ready for him to pass on.

Kali Sawney



This is a photo of my grandma and my mom. I asked them what they felt was a great representation of heritage and they chose this quilt because my great grandma started making this quilt and when she passed away my grandma finished. This quilt is something that connects my great grandma, my grandma, my mom and me. We don't just use her quilts to cover up when we are cold, we treat them like art. We need to keep the tradition going, treating something like it is worth something instead of just letting it go. Keeping it together instead of letting it get torn up, they are taking care of it.

Kali Sawney

We should take care of the elders like as people, instead of putting them in nursing homes. Instead, I think we should take care of them as family.

I think we should take care of the land, because the land was very important to the Cherokees. The land is where we would go for spiritual things and the land took care of us so we need to take care of it. I don't think we take care of the land as much as we use to. We would care for the land as a community and now it's just certain people or certain families that are keeping the tradition going.

I personally don't know Cherokee, but I wish I could have learned it because I find it a fascinating language that should be carried on. After we were talking about it the other day I started thinking I wanted to learn Cherokee and I asked my grandma about it, because my mom knows a few words but my grandma knows a little bit more; so I was going to ask them to try to learn the language.

I just think we should keep going the traditions going as much as we can, from our work to the food to the language—just everything as much as we can. Young people can go and seek the education of the Cherokees and see how they worked and how they cooked, how they made things and how they lived. We can go and look and whenever we get the knowledge we can share it with others.

Kali Sawney



This is set up in our house. It represents family; me, my mom and my grandma, the generations together. I made the basket and the bracelet. The doll is what my grandma gave me for my birthday a few years ago. The basket, beading and doll represent culture. It's in my living room so whenever I come in I see this it makes me feel comfortable and it is just "home".

As Cherokee people, we should continue traditions, like basket weaving, beading, or cooking. I think that is a big thing, it's something fun to do and I see it as art, but you can use it. I want people to think of the Cherokee Indians whenever they see art like beading and basket weaving. I want them to know that we are still here and that we have made our mark.

Other things like cooking, I just think the culture should be carried on forever instead of kind of dying down. I think it is dying down because people just don't want to learn how to weave a basket because it takes too long or how to bead, or how to cook. I am sure if people would ask they could find somebody that will teach them. My grandma, luckily she teaches me some things and my mom. My grandma is the one who taught me how to make kanuchi (SO-ḥ gaḥvtsi) and my mom taught me how to make fry bread. They just taught me because they thought they needed to, but some parents may not feel they need to, they just kind of forget about it.

Shameka Cochran



Home Is Wherever Family Is

This photo represents family because this is the house I grew up in. It was our great grandma Onn and my grandma Lela and then there were all four of her daughters that lived there. So it was a big family that lived here. It's rundown now, everybody stopped taking care of it. It's kind of heart breaking because that's the house I grew up in, and now that I look at it, it's just like there's nothing left, just scraps and pieces. Back then, we were closer [when we all lived together] than we are now, now that everybody has moved out and has their own thing going on. We're still close but not as close. Family is a big thing to me. And now that we all are separated and living in different places we're kind of losing our spark as a family because we don't see each other every day like we used to.

Shameka Cochran

We still have cookouts, but mainly just for the elder's birthdays. So mainly it's just the only time we actually have a gathering like that it's whenever the elders have a birthday. We throw a big party for the elders and everyone in the family comes down to join in the celebration. We would have a lot of chairs sitting around and a bonfire going on later that night. And it's an all-day event. We sit out there all day and just talk and talk. I'm hoping this tradition keeps going. We're actually losing a lot of our elders, especially here lately a lot of them are getting sick. I hope that me and my cousins will be able to do that for our parents too as they get older, because that's one of the traditions that we've always had. And I don't want that to die down or be forgotten.

My grandma used to always gripe at me and my cousins in Cherokee, and she'd say, "You little girls, you all get in here and watch us cook, so you all know how to do it when you all grow up". My mom still teaches me how to cook to this day.

My grandma passed away about 6 years ago now. She'd always say: "I know you want to learn" Cherokee. She would always just talk in Cherokee, but not to tell us what it means, she'd expect us to tell her what it means. And that's what my great aunt does too. She always talks to me in Cherokee, and if I don't know then she just laughs at me and is like 'just forget it'. My mom tries to teach as much as she can, but sometimes my mom's like, "I don't know how to teach it". I don't know what she means by that. She tries the only way she knows how, I guess. When my granny passed away we did lose a lot of traditions. On the holidays we used to have huge gatherings at my granny's house, but we don't have them anymore. At least not with the whole family.

Shameka Cochran



Love Of God And Family

This is Oak Ridge Baptist Church. It is the church that I grew up in, and it's just walking distance from my grandma's house. Every Sunday morning my grandma would wake up all the kids and my aunts would be in the kitchen cooking breakfast before church, we'd all be getting ready, it would be chaotic in the house. Then finally, we'd all head down to the church. If there's any breakfast left over we would take some down to the church. This whole church is basically our family. We're all family so we're all connected a special kind of way. It's like everybody knew everybody. I used to go up there with my mom and sing in Cherokee, my mom, my aunts and everybody. Everything that's spoken in this church is Cherokee. They sing in Cherokee, they pray in Cherokee, everything

Shameka Cochran

Even if we were just talking before or after the church service, it's all in Cherokee.

There are fewer and fewer people using the language. I don't like that because the language has been here for years and now all of a sudden it is starting to become a forgotten language, and I don't like that. It's too much of a prize to be forgotten. Then again it is also a hard language to learn and that's why most of the people who want to learn it think it's too hard to learn it. And that's why I think that they should start out teaching the little kids when they're still babies how to speak it. Because right then their mind is full of potential of learning and it's easier for them to learn, as you grow up you got all these other stuff that's in your head and you just don't really want to bother with it. But I want to learn the language. I'm like the rest of them, it's harder and sometimes I give up. I really do want to learn it because I can somewhat understand. I don't know exactly what they're saying but I can understand.



Spiritual Speaking

This photo is of Natural Dam in Arkansas. I sat down and I was watching the water and as I heard the waterfall I could somewhat hear my grandma, like how she used to always sit and talk to me. I just close my eyes and I tilted my head back and I just heard her speaking to me. Just how we used to sit outside on the porch all night to talk and she'd be telling me about the family and old memories when she grew up. And I thought it was pretty amazing because I haven't heard my grandma's voice since she passed away about 6 years ago now. That was the first time I've ever felt that connected with her. And that was one of the first things I heard whenever I sat on that rock is that night she held my hand when she was in the hospital right before she got too sick to speak. I felt like a little brush over my hand, like she was there with me holding my hand and she said I love you. And that's why I love this picture so much it's because my grandma's sitting right next to me and her spirit is telling me that she loves me.

Shameka Cochran



The Reflection

I was looking into the water at my reflection and as I was looking I could see my mom in me, and I could see my grandma in her. That showed me that I was the third generation, and how far our traditions have been lost. Because when my grandma was around every tradition was being still done. Now that it's just my mom, and my aunts, only some of the traditions are here, and now it's me and I'm still trying to learn the traditions. I want to learn how they did this and did that and everything. I want to be to the point to where my grandma was. In order to do that it's going to be hard considering the fact that my grandma is gone now, and I can't really exactly ask her questions about this and that. When I looked down into this water, that's who I saw.

I don't want any more traditions to be lost. Whenever I have a kid in the future I want them to know everything that my grandma knew. And I also want to know everything my grandma knew. I want to know everything my great grandma knew. And so I sat there, and I was just looking at my reflection for a minute, reflecting back on how we don't celebrate our traditions

Shameka Cochran

anymore because somehow my grandma passing away has everything changing and I don't like it. Sometimes I just wish that we could go back to the days when my grandma was still here. When we would always sit outside and talked with the whole family and everybody came to visit every day. It was never boring or lonesome when my grandma was around. And I like this picture too because I see it as growth, because you start down the river but as you go it gets smoother. There are a lot of rocks at the beginning but it just gets smoother and smoother as it goes. That's how life is, life is always going to be hard but in the end it will all get better.

Shameka Cochran



The Beauty That Nature Brings Out In Me

As I was climbing up these rocks I was just thinking about how back in the day when my cousins and I would go hiking up through the woods. It just brought back memories and that's why I took this picture, because it brought back some precious memories to me. I looked out to the trees, and I see the water, the big rocks... You can hear the water just flowing. It's really beautiful and it's sounded amazing. It was like all my worries and issues went away for a second or two. I got to focus on me, nature and God. It felt really good. It felt like nothing I've ever felt before. I just wanted to lay there and never leave. My first time being out there it connected me with my grandma and my other past on family so much. It's going to have to be something that I do more often just so I can connect with my ancestors, my elders and my grandma.

Cody Chewey



This is my little sister making fry bread helping my mom; rolling dough and flour in her hands, and my mom helps. Mom is trying to teach her to learn to cook.



This photograph is fry bread frying. I have a lot of good a lot of good memories surrounding this. It reminds me of my granny. She passed on I don't remember how many years ago it was but we were grown up at granny's house, we had fried potatoes

and fried bread, it was almost every meal. It was always there. When I think of that, I think my granny. Her rings on her fingers were covered in dough and flour all the time from when she cooked it so much. I remember looking at her big fingers and seeing dough on her rings. Fried bread reminds me of her.

Cody Chewey



That's all of it together: brown beans, onions and eggs, fried bread, hog fry and fried potatoes. This photograph shows all of our plates around the dinner table because that's what we do when dad comes home to eat, me and little sister help get all the food

on the table and help mom, so when dad comes home from work it's all there ready. We eat at a table as a family. But afterwards we all sit in little room and relax, and then me and my little sisters go clean the table, mom does the dishes.



I think just these simple pictures of food brings all of that together in one. We have a garden, we normally grow potatoes for frying.

Gathering all the food and then teaching the young ones how to cook it and coming together as a family. This is just one of our family dinners.

Cody Chewey

My mom and dad teach me to work, they teach me those things around the house, learning not to be about yourself, look out for the others in your family. My dad takes care of our family and he also takes care of others in the community. I guess that's how he's trying to raise me and teach me to be a man that will not only stand up for me, but for others, to make sure everybody else is ok too.

We have our little community where I grew up. It's where grandma lived. That little community down there that's where my dad and his cousins grew up together, all his cousins running around this place, they grew up like brothers. That's just really stuff that I would like to keep continuing going. This is the families and the homes. It takes all the surrounding families around this community to make sure the community stays together and sustainable...just continuing teaching the kids and the grandkids these things to carry it on.

My dad tells me stories from his youth and how *ga-du-gi* (ᄎᄎᄎ) was and still is an important thing. Strong communities are just kind of how you were raised and how you were brought up. If somebody was brought up to not recognize those things and weren't taught those things it's kind of hard to teach these things. If you wanted to help people understand, maybe you could invite them to your family gathering and show them what it's about, that might help them open their eyes to it; the families still do carry on traditions.

I always heard the language, I picked up some stuff here and there. They didn't intentionally not try to teach us, but they didn't sit us down and try to have conversations with us. **Language is important to our culture, it's what our culture is. It's based around language. Without our language it doesn't make us any different from any other people if we are all speaking in English. Our language is the basis of our culture. We are Cherokee. That's what we are, and our language holds us together.**

Those that have the interest need to definitely learn it because our fluent speakers are slowly going away.

"A community brings people together to become one instead of a bunch of individuals. Because when we come together big things happen!"

Shania Brown



This is my mom. She's beading and she beads medallions and earrings, and necklaces. I've been learning a bit from her and she's been teaching me, and I liked that I'm learning something from an older person, an elder. She was teaching me the night I took this photograph, and I was learning.

Beading is important for the Cherokee people culturally. You see beaded medallions and earrings. Women, they are big on that. And they like doing that. I know a lot of people that bead. Beading represents community in some ways because people getting together and passing knowledge on.

Shania Brown



This photograph represents a lot. When you meet a person, you shake their hand. That's the first thing my dad does when he meets someone, he shakes their hand. My grandpa does it, and you see it all over the place. Everybody shakes each other's hands. Good relationships should be valued in communities. Shaking hands not only means the start of a friendship, but also the continuance of one. This photo represents mutual respect for another person. Shaking hands is supposed to convey trust, respect, balance and equality. All of the things of which should be found in a community.

Shania Brown



My mom and my sister and me were out picking wild onions the other day. It means a lot because this is something that we do all the time when it comes out. That's one time that we all get to get together and do something as a family, there isn't electronics, we're not on the phone or anything and it's just us in the woods. We'd take it back and my mom would clean it, and my mom would cook it. We usually give some to our grandpa. My mom's teaching me to cook. I'm not very good it right now, but I'm getting there.

Picking reminds me of my grandpa, he can't get out and pick anymore. He loves wild onion, but he just got to where he can't do it anymore. We do it, and we give it to him. You're getting with your elders, you're doing something for them, something that they might not be able to do anymore and you get to do it for them. You're giving instead of just taking. This photo represents a way of living along with that an opportunity to do something with your friends and family. It reminds me of how I can give back, and how I can do something and be active with those around me. These things are tied together by the act of giving. Being generous to those around you is a good start to having an active community. Not only giving back to our elders, but also to each other. Understanding one another and the desire to help are great ways to keep our ways of life going.

“Strive to live, not just survive”

To me community should be like home. It is your home because it's where you live, but you should feel safe there. And willing to help another. Giving back should be greatly looked upon. It happens so rarely anymore, but the younger ones should at least do it for their elders. Elders should be treated respectably and taken care of. It should be a place where one may give and receive. Everyone should work together that way it wouldn't make things too hard on one person. Everyone who lives in a community should know one another. People should help one another, nowadays if someone has a problem and they can't fix it, no one will stop by and see if they're ok. A community that works together to get things done. A community that contributes to another. In a community thing should be set up to help those who are unfortunate.

Positive relationships with one another must be prioritized. Common attitudes working towards the same goals in making a community safe or a place a home. Passing values, practices, and our attitudes towards one another to the next person and generation.

Trust, respect and balance are all things that come with time, but only if you're working for it as one. Community does not mean one, but instead a great number of people. It involves everyone interacting with one another and getting along to live together, in balance.

My understanding a sustainable community is one in which people are equal and respect one another. If you want a good a community, you would have to have good relationships, everybody knows each other and doesn't have a problem with each other, but anymore you don't see that. I'm not going to lie to you, I don't really see that a lot.

December Rider



The Feeling Of Peace

This photograph shows the beauty in a community, because this photograph I think has a lot of beauty in it and all the connectivity. How community is connected with each other that is important. And in this photograph I believe it represents connectivity by all the blossoms and the air, and the breeze, and the sun, it's like you're out there living it in the beauty. And that's how basically this community is.



Blue Skies

I like this picture because it's visually pleasing. I feel it's very equal and it shows that to me it represents a community as a whole. We always come together around whatever the problem is, whatever the solution needs to be, we just come together and we try to help each and everybody. And I feel like that's what this represents. I wish I would have gotten something better in the circle, like a clear blue sky or some clouds, or something like that to show that there's always beauty and happiness on the horizon of our struggles and the community. We'll always be there for each other.

December Rider



Starting Anew

This photograph represents the struggle all the Cherokees had to go through to get where we are today. Because we struggled a long time and this is all that stands of the education that those women at that time were receiving, and the beauty around, all of it was just amazing. This was a live community back then and that's all that's left its just three pillars, there were people that live there, that had families, that had lives. And that's just historical significance to the Cherokee culture, that's what I believe this is.



The Past Still Stands

We have a responsibility to pass things on. Because if we as young people aren't going to pass this on to the next generation, then who is? It's up to us. My mom was the most influential to me about our whole culture because she was the one that would tell me about my great grandparents and how they lived and traditions that they had, and what they had to do to survive as Cherokee people in that time and age.

“COMMUNITY MAPPING” ACTIVITY

**Everyone drew their version of a “Community Map”
and answered the following questions:**

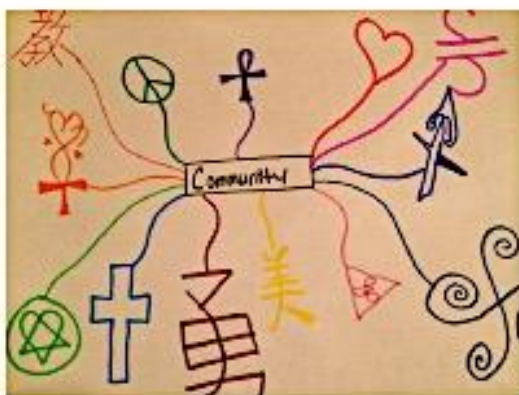
***Does your map
reflect a Cherokee worldview?***

***How would your
ancestors recognize you as a
Cherokee?***

***What are
Cherokee “life ways”?***

*Some participants chose to include their names
on their Maps, others chose to remain anonymous.*

Shameka Cochran



My map just describes what I see in my community. What I see in my community is I see the **heart** which represents the love of the community, their **religion**--the faith that the community has in God--the **strength** of the community, the **peacefulness** that's in the community, the **aliveness** in the community; the **loyalty**

of the community and the **courage** of the people in the community. I'm also seeing **bravery** and **beauty** in the community and the **balance**. There's also death. It's not all bad, it's just that they **honor our ancestors**, the ones that have passed on. **We honor them in their beliefs and the traditions they have passed on to us.** The **education of our culture** which might achieve the **teaching of our language or traditions**; and the **equality** of the community--whether you are family or not, they will still help you out as much as they can.

The qualities are like the **family gatherings**, the **togetherness**, the **helpfulness** that is in the community--the helping hands and everything--and the **support**.

I think it reflects the Cherokee world view because Cherokees are all about this. They are all about this and more, like Cherokees pretty much revolves around love--it is based on **love**.

My ancestors would recognize me as Cherokee because me and my family are very **spiritual**. We use protective medicine and other traditions. My mom and her sisters all **speak Cherokee** and they are all **teaching the kids Cherokee**. My grandma teaches Cherokee to the young ones and the whole family is learning the language--all the kids and everything.

Our Cherokee life ways are pretty much **helping each other out**. There is always a friend or family in need, and there is always someone in the family, or in the friends, that are there to help and support. A lot of the family would get together and we will **go fishing or go hunting, or onion picking and mushrooms**--anything like that. We do whatever we can to **stay connected**, to **stay focused on the love of our community**.

Cody Chewey



My map is the community I grew up in, where I grew up with my cousins and family. We ate there for Fourth of July, we always had a big fireworks shows here. For anything we go down there, me and my dad and all the cousins and stuff. What I

thought of is community--together, everybody.

I'd say the qualities of a good community is **togetherness**---everybody being together and being on board about everything.

How would my ancestors recognize me as Cherokee: Well, I still try to **carry on the traditions as best as I can from what I was taught.** My grandparents they didn't teach us, they talked in the home to each other and to their friends and family members, but they just didn't teach us. We grew up around it, it wasn't they didn't want us to hear it or anything, they just never, like, taught us. They taught us words and phrases and little things, but they never sat us down and taught us the language.

Cherokee Life Ways: Cherokees were communities--- like we were talking about--- they were together, we didn't roam, we didn't travel, we stayed in one place and we had our families and our community. We were just together, and we'd eat together; that was a big thing to me. Like our family, that's what we are about--**family togetherness.** You know, they say, 'It takes a village to raise a baby.' That's how we were. You know, if we needed a baby sitter we took it to grandma, aunt, or whatever. It took the village. There's a saying, 'A family that prays together stays together,' we say that, but we also say, 'A family that eats together stays together.' Big family dinners are big in our family, we do that all the time for every occasion--birthdays, holidays--it's just what we do.

Anonymous



If something bad happens in the family we all come together to help but I was always raised up that **it is not how much you have, it is how much you help.**

It don't matter how good you are, it's how good everybody else is. We all just fend for

ourselves, and don't ask for anything, we like to help other people more. We really don't have as many Cherokee, I'd say, ceremonies or rituals but I think we have pretty much the same ideas--pretty much the entire issue is **unity**, everyone being one. We all help each other and we don't rely on anybody, we try to rely on ourselves more than anything.

I think the Cherokee world view would be just the **well-being of others**, and that's pretty much how our family is. Our main goal is making sure the whole family is good. The main thing in our family is like to get together for meals. Every Sunday we eat together, it is **just being with one another**, camaraderie with each other. That's the big thing in our family.

I don't think they would recognize me as Cherokee just because **I don't speak it. We don't have any ceremonies...**

Qualities would be relying on each other, helping others and self-reliance. Even if something happens, let's say the market crashed, we wouldn't be in trouble, we can rely on ourselves, we can work the land. Hunting is a big thing in our family that has been carried on. The main things that Cherokees really relied on is **hunting and growing their own food, and gathering food.** That is something for sure needs to keep going on because if everything just crashes, you can just hunt and grow your own food. That's all self-reliance, you don't need anybody; you can make a good living and have a good life just on your own.

Anonymous



I envision a sustainable community as a place where people help others where we have faith in each other where there is no gossip or any type of hatred just people helping each other out and doing the right thing.

My map reflects togetherness--two hands holding each

other's hands that says, 'Together we strive.' I think the qualities of a sustainable Cherokee community would be helpfulness, **have faith in one another, and trust.**

It very much reflects the Cherokee world view because that is what we Cherokees are all about is helping each other in time of need; being there for one another. Whether it is a celebration or when something bad happens, we are always there for each other. We are always just connected with each other in a way that's very different. I am not sure how to explain it, but my family on my grandmother's side is almost all full-blood Cherokees. My great grandmother, she would get mad at my grandmother for not teaching my grandmother's children, such as my mom and my aunts, Cherokee. She would get very mad at that. She wanted them to learn it and pass on because they knew it was a dying language and a dying culture. That never happened and I never got to meet my great grandmother, and I barely was around my grandparents before they went on.

How would my ancestors recognize me as Cherokee: **I am not even really sure that they would**, except for the fact that I can maybe count to ten in Cherokee, that's it! The traditions: We cook the same I guess, we **cook from our land** still, so that's a tradition.

Cherokee Life Ways: I'd say that's fry bread and beans, man! That's just the traditions we carried on throughout the years--the traditions that have survived anyways. The **cooking and the family gatherings**--I think that is what is the most important, is the family in Cherokee life ways and traditions; because we are always there for family, no matter what. Family is family, you do for family what you've got to do for family, you know.

Anonymous



On my map I tried to recreate a time-- a few months ago my cousin was dealing with diabetes, and he had to have a lot of surgeries. The **community came together** and helped raise money for his medical expenses. That really represents a sustainable community to me. **Everyone voluntarily coming together for one common goal.** I think it reflects the Cherokee world view because it is **people coming together and just loving one another.**

INITIAL PROJECT THEMES & INSIGHTS

THEMES:

The themes that were brought up over and over again regarding sustainable communities were those that highlighted the importance of: family togetherness, taking care of one another (especially the elders), unity, love, the importance of being able to rely on the air, water and land to provide for our needs (self-reliance), and the responsibility of both the learner and the teacher to pass on knowledge and practices to young people on traditions, language and culture.

INSIGHTS EMERGING FROM THE FINAL GROUP INTERVIEW:

How do we help encourage other people to strengthen the ties between one another, to make stronger communities? What actions can we take?

- » Individual Leadership to Inspire Others

"Show more care for others" as a way to inspire others to do the same.

Is continuing the language important?

- » Language Is Crucial

"Continuing the language is very important, because if we don't try to teach it to the little ones and we don't try to teach it then it is going to die, and the language will be forgotten."

Whose responsibility is it to pass on knowledge? Is it just the elders that have a responsibility to pass on knowledge to the younger people?

- » Have the will to learn and perpetuate the knowledge, take responsibility as both a teacher and a learner by speaking up and taking action

"It is ours [as young people] as well. If you have knowledge to pass it on to your friends and your cousins. As long as we just have the will to learn it. Some of the youth don't really care anymore. If you have the will to learn about it then that's good."

"Just speak up instead of staying quiet about it. If you want to learn just speak up and say you want to learn, if you want to teach, say you want to teach...because nobody's going to do it for you. They're not going to say: "oh, hey by the way this is the heritage..."

"You can't go unheard. And just think that you're going to find those things out. You have to have the will to learn it."

Are we taking care of the land and water the way that we should or does it need more attention?

- » There is a desire for more environmental awareness, care and education founded upon Cherokee worldview

"It needs to be paid more attention to. It's kind of how you grew up and what you've learned. If you learned living off the land, you're going to learn to respect the land and take care of it. [We should be] watching out for our resources. There's a lot of people taking it for granted."

Do you have a class that teaches you about natural resources, about land and water? Does it come from a Cherokee perspective at all or does it come from more of a scientific, more western perspective?

"We have a class called Environmental Science. It comes from a scientific perspective. [A class coming from a Cherokee perspective] would probably have a lot more meaning read into it, than the scientific perspective would."

"It would be an interesting class. I'd like to take a class like that."

What did you experience when you were thinking about sustainable communities and values, and practices, and relationships, and responsibilities we all have?

» More awareness and engagement in community and cultural activities

"Kind of about to listen to everybody else's the stories about their Community Mapping, helped to show what my community has and what it lacks. Show the ups and downs of everybody around. Well, I can get started, I can get them [the community] all on it, bring it up to the Board in our community building like: "here's something that would be awesome". When [the Community Building] was first built we had people come down and teach the kids in the community basket weaving and stuff. Just stuff like that has died off a little bit. I haven't really noticed it until we started talking about all these things. I really noticed that. We don't really do those things anymore. We used to have bow shoots. I'll start bringing that back up to our Board and show them that we need to start bringing that back together. Because if we go on without it our community may fall apart and wouldn't be as together."

"I'm going to ask more questions to my grandma and my mom about the heritage. I'll really try to bring those back. I haven't really thought to learn things like cooking and stuff, it just kind of came naturally. But if I ask more I can just learn a lot more."

"From doing this I just realized that you don't see a lot of the things that are being pointed out in this discussion. You don't see a lot of that nowadays. It really needs to be brought back; we need to keep doing that. Instead of just letting it go and everybody does their own thing. [We need to] keep community. Community means people together, not just one by themselves."

"Doing this I realized how strong our heritage, our culture is. That's what I've learned. How many times we've had to rebuild and retry, and how many times we have succeeded in doing that."

"Doing this I've experienced different ways to connect to my elders and remember how they did this and how they did that. That way I can somehow learn to keep the tradition going."

"I agree that I should ask more to learn everything."

WADO (G&V)

WADO TO EVERYONE THAT SUPPORTED THIS PROJECT INCLUDING:

Northeastern State University

Cherokee Nation Tribal District 7 and District 8

Stilwell High School

Advisory Committee:

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Wyman Kirk, Northeastern State University
Stacy Leeds, JD, University of Arkansas
Wahde Mackey, Cherokee Nation
Candessa Tehee, PhD, Cherokee Heritage Center

Arizona State University Dissertation Committee:

Kathleen Andereck, PhD,
Jeff Corntassel, PhD (University of Victoria),
Elizabeth Sumida Huaman, PhD and Behrang Foroughi, PhD

APPENDIX D

CHEROKEE NATION "COMMUNITY VALUES" DOCUMENT

APPENDIX E
STUDY PERMISSIONS



CWYD D3P
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Office of the Chief

Bill John Baker
Principal Chief
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S. Joe Crissenden
Deputy Principal Chief
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March 4, 2016

Tiffanie D. Ord (Hardbarger)
Doctoral Enrichment Fellow/Graduate Service Assistant
School of Community Resources & Development, Arizona State University
234 N. Bluff Ave. Tahlequah, OK 74464

Dear Ms. Ord (Hardbarger),

The Cherokee Nation Institutional Review Board has completed its review of the proposal titled, "Through the Lens of Cherokee Youth", of which you are the Principal Investigator. We have verified that you have either made appropriate changes to the proposal or provided reasonable clarification where applicable. On behalf of the Cherokee Nation IRB, I am writing to inform you that this proposal is now approved with the following recommendations,

1. *It is CNIRB policy, that any publication, presentation, abstracts, which is linked to an approved protocol, must be reviewed and approved by the CNIRB publication committee prior to its dissemination outside of the Cherokee Nation. A copy of CNIRB publication policy is being enclosed with this letter for your convenience.*
2. *Any unanticipated adverse event that is linked to the research study must be reported to the CNIRB within seven (7) working days of the investigator/research staff first learning of the event. However the severity of event may mandate immediate notification, the timing of reporting must be proportionate to the nature and severity of adverse event and risks to the subjects and others.*

Please note that this CNIRB decision will remain in effect until **November 18, 2016** and must be renewed annually thereafter. In addition following guidance is being provided here for submitting future requests for continuation, protocol modifications or final closure of the study.

Continuation requests and final study closures– Renewals should be submitted as early as possible, but no later than 60days in advance of the approval expiration date, to ensure the continuation review does not occur after the expiration date. If the project is not reviewed and approved by the expiration date, new enrollment to the project must cease. Current study subjects who remain in follow-up or active therapy may continue to do so only, if they are placed at an increased risk.

The following information must be submitted for continuing review:

- Copy/copies of approval letter/s from IRB's with jurisdiction.
- All significant findings/discoveries from the approved research protocol.
- The current consent document or any newly proposed consent document (if applicable)
- Protocol Summary updated with any proposed changes, if applicable
- Subject withdrawal from Study– If any subjects were withdrawn from the study due to adverse reactions, noncompliance or other reasons please attach a summary. If this is a multi-center trial, attach a summary of all reports.
- If a subject withdraws from the study voluntarily for medical or non-medical reasons, provide a description of any known reasons for why each subject withdrew.

- Complaints about the research project must be attached in a summary describing the number and nature of the complaints.

Protocol Modifications- Any changes in a research protocol (such as changes in subject population, recruitment plans, advertising materials, research procedures, study sites, study instruments, or to investigators who are instrumental to the design or execution of the study) must be approved by the CNIRB before implementation of the change.

Study Results—If subjects have experienced any benefits or risks, please provide a summary of the risks/benefits experienced. The Principal Investigator must provide information regarding a change in the protocol's description of the risks and/or potential benefits. If the risk/benefit relationship has been altered in anyway, please attach a summary and describe the changes.

What if continuation was not submitted on time and approval has lapsed?

- If the CNIRB has not reviewed and approved a research study by the end of the approval period specified by the IRB, all research activities must cease, including recruitment and enrollment of subjects, consent, interventions, interactions and data collection, unless the CNIRB concludes it is in the best interests of individual subjects to continue participation in the research interventions or interactions. This will occur even if the investigator has provided the continuing information before the expiration date because, the CNIRB was unable to review due to the time of receipt, non-inclusion of required information or other delays ensue.
- Failure to submit continuing review information on time is considered non-compliance. If the study is FDA regulated, the IRB Chair must follow FDA requirements set forth in 21 CFR 56.108(b) (3) in reaching their decision. The sponsoring agency, private sponsor or other federal agencies must be informed of any lapse in research approval via appropriate means.

The procedure for obtaining approval to continue subject participation after expiration of CNIRB approval is as follows:

- o The PI will submit to the CNIRB Chair a written list of research subjects for whom stopping of the research would cause harm;
- o The CNIRB Chair will review written requests, rationale and plan for continuation from investigator who wish to continue with the study.
- o The CNIRB Chair will further determine the specific procedures that may continue to be performed when ceasing such procedures will harm the subject.
- o The IRB Chair will either orally communicate the decision to the investigator(s) or communicate such decisions via electronic mail. The CNIRB Chair will also provide a written response.

Final Closures- The completion or termination of a research protocol is a change in activity and must be reported to the CNIRB. A final report to the CNIRB allows the closure of all files as well as providing information that may be used by the CNIRB in the evaluation and approval of related studies.(NOTE: Closure of a study means that no further research, follow-up or data analyses will be performed. If any such activity is ongoing, the study may not be closed. A study is not closed simply because no additional subjects will be enrolled). If you have any questions or need assistance do not hesitate to contact me at 918-453-5602.

Sincerely,



Sohail Khan, MBBS, MPH, Director of Health Research
Co-Chair, Cherokee Nation Institutional Review Board
FWA #00000447

Cherokee Nation IRB Modification Approval



Office of the Chief

Bill Tate Baker
Principal Chief
P.O. Box 155600
Oklahoma

S. Joe Cullerton
Deputy Principal Chief
P.O. Box 155600
Oklahoma

March 29, 2016

Tiffanie D. Ord (Hardbarger)
Doctoral Enrichment Fellow/Graduate Service Assistant
School of Community Resources & Development, Arizona State University
234 N. Bluff Ave. Tahlequah, OK 74464

Dear Ms. Ord (Hardbarger),

The Cherokee Nation Institutional Review Board has completed its review of the proposed change of an additional recruitment site in Stilwell. On behalf of the Cherokee Nation IRB, I am writing to inform you that the proposed change is acceptable and you can proceed with subject enrolment at the new location. Please note that this CNIRB decision will remain in effect until **November 18, 2016** and must be renewed annually thereafter.

If you have any questions or need assistance do not hesitate to contact me at 918-453-5602.

Sincerely,

Sohail Khan, MBBS, MPH, Director of Health Research
Co-Chair, Cherokee Nation Institutional Review Board
FWA #00000447

Cherokee Nation Dissertation Approval



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Office of the Chief

Bill John Baker
Principal Chief
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S. Joe Crittenden
Deputy Principal Chief
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February 13, 2017

Tiffanie D. Ord (Hardbarger)
Instructor, Cherokee & Indigenous Studies Department
Northeastern State University, Tahlequah OK

Dear Ms. Ord (Hardbarger),

The Cherokee Nation Institutional Review Board has completed its review of the Doctoral Dissertation entitled "Sustainable Communities: Through the Lens of Cherokee Youth". On behalf of the Cherokee Nation IRB, I am writing to inform you that the Cherokee Nation IRB's Publication review committee has **approved** the dissertation.

If you have any questions or need assistance do not hesitate to contact me at 918-453-5602.

Sincerely,

Sohail Khan, MBBS, MPH, Director of Health Research
Co-Chair, Cherokee Nation Institutional Review Board
FWA #00000447

Arizona State University Modification Approval



APPROVAL: MODIFICATION

Kathleen Andereck
Community Resources and Development, School of
602/496-1056
kandereck@asu.edu

Dear Kathleen Andereck:

On 4/15/2016 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Modification
Title:	Through the Lens of Cherokee Youth
Investigator:	Kathleen Andereck
IRB ID:	STUDY00003496
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responses to Conditional Approval Questions & Updated Assent , Category: Consent Form;• cultural review approval , Category: Other (to reflect anything not captured above);• Proposal with changes made based on CN questions, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc);• Stilwell Assent Form, Category: Consent Form;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated Detailed Process by Week including guiding questions, Category: Recruitment materials/advertisements /verbal scripts/phone scripts; • ASU Protocol_edited March 16.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Stilwell Approval Letter, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc); • CN IRB Approval Letter , Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc); • Modification Approval_Cherokee Nation IRB, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc); • Research Process edited March 16, Category: IRB Protocol;
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The IRB approved the modification.

When consent is appropriate, you must use final, watermarked versions available under the “Documents” tab in ERA-IRB.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Tiffanie Ord

Stilwell Public Schools

Geri Gilstrap, Superintendent

1801 W. Locust
Stilwell, OK 74960
Phone (918) 696-7001
FAX (918) 696-2193



Board of Education

CHAD SMITH, President
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BEVERLY STARR, Treasurer

Office of the Superintendent

March 23, 2016

Attention: Mr. Khan

Stilwell Schools is very pleased to be given the opportunity to work with Tiffanie Ord on such an exciting project! Our administration and students are honored to be asked to be a part of this research. We go to great lengths in our district to learn, teach and preserve the Cherokee culture, heritage and language. Our students feel privileged to be able to take part in this study. Thank you for this experience and please feel free to contact me if any further clarification of approval is needed.

Respectfully,


Geri Gilstrap
Stilwell Public Schools
Superintendent
918-696-7001