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Preparing Indigenous School Psychologists: Stories From an Indigenous Specialization Project in School Psychology

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Abstract

Educational disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth across Canada, as is true across the United States, pose challenges to education systems to examine and alter professional practices in ways that support closing these gaps. Calls for more Indigenous school psychologists who might bring skills and perspectives to bear are long-standing, yet few graduate preparation programs have responded. Whether Indigenous students begin and do not complete programs, or never apply, it is incumbent on programs to examine the systemic underpinnings of the problem and respond with culturally responsive recruitment and retention strategies. In this article, one school psychology program shares programmatic contexts, recruitment processes, and retention strategies that have supported the preparation and graduation of dozens of Indigenous school psychologists from multiple Indigenous nations.

Keywords

Indigenous school psychology, school psychology preparation, training, decolonizing

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Indigenous people worldwide have rich traditions in complex knowledge systems, place-based learning, holistic thought, and spirituality integrated throughout life. Highly effective methods of land management, knowledge of medicines, architecture, and cosmology are but a few manifestations of the assets of traditional knowledge and peoples. Yet, as Mi'kmaw scholar Battiste (2021) points out, most Canadians, as most North Americans, know almost nothing about Indigenous people, the first people of the land, the caretakers. She sees this as a result of cultural imperialism and the destructive Eurocentrism found in the hidden curriculum of schools. That Eurocentrism tends to assume cognitive inferiority of Indigenous peoples, promote deficit thinking, and conceive of equity as bringing othered people "up" to Eurocentric standards (Battiste, 2019). Disciplinary knowledge, including in school psychology, is part of that Eurocentrism; significant percentages of school psychologists have reported being unprepared or underprepared to serve Indigenous communities (Robinson-Zañartu et al., 2011). Thus, as school psychologists, we must now deconstruct those Eurocentric narratives and theories of inadequacy, understand their political, legal, and historical roots, and re-think preparation programs. Decolonizing our narratives and actions must involve the refusal of deficit views of youth or gaps in their achievement, awareness of colonial histories of schooling, acknowledging, infusing Indigenous content and perspectives, and building networks of dialog with communities (Battiste, 2019).

In Canada, as in the United States, schools themselves have historically been sites of egregious practices against Indigenous youth and communities. Premised on assumptions of white supremacy (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2019; Newcomb, 2008), Canada's Residential Schools (Milloy, 1999; National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, n.d.) and the U.S.'s Boarding and Missions Schools (Adams, 2020) engaged aggressively in systematic attempts at cultural genocide. Their legacies are interwoven with epistemological and pedagogical assumptions and practices that still permeate policy and practice in schools and school psychology.

Although Euro-Western and Indigenous thought, values, voice, and knowledge bases are starkly disparate, most school psychology training programs assume, likely without awareness, that best practices centered in Euro-Western thought are best for all youth and communities. Widely used assessment tools are not normed on youth from Indigenous communities, nor are they reflective of Indigenous thought, or created in consultation with communities (Canadian Psychological Association, 2018). Still, they continue to be used with conviction and result in deficit-based labels being placed on Indigenous youth. Interventions validated on other populations have led to non-engagement and ineffectiveness with Indigenous youth. The need for school psychology preparation that is culturally responsive to Indigenous peoples is critical.

Responding to the Need to Decolonize School Psychology Preparation

In response to these issues, San Diego State University has augmented its school psychology program with an interdisciplinary Indigenous specialization project for over

two decades, and has recruited, retained, and graduated school psychologists and school counselors from diverse tribal communities and language groups, for example, Diné, Hopi, Lakota, Cree, Pawnee, Luiseño, Pueblo, Absentee Shawnee, Mountain Cahuilla. In this article, we discuss the school psychology program's contexts that have undergirded the work, the development of the specialization over time, and recruitment and retention strategies that support the work, including Indigenous mentorship. Personal stories and anecdotes from one current graduate student and one practitioner who is a graduate of the specialization, both co-authors, are interspersed to illustrate several of the project components.

Programmatic Context: Commitment to Equity and Diversity in School Psychology

San Diego State University's school psychology faculty committed to contributing to the cultural and linguistic diversification of school psychology and of their graduate students three decades ago. Key strategies for systemic change toward equity in professional psychology preparation programs were researched and outlined (Cook-Morales & Robinson-Zañartu, 1995). Over the course of a decade, those efforts resulted in federal funding for most graduate students, equity and diversity becoming the focus of their research and publications, an average enrollment of 75% students of color, and diversification of faculty. Nine integrated strategies comprised the change effort:

- culturally compatible and culture-focused studies and processes
- continuous supervised field experiences
- mediating the culture of graduate school
- seeking a critical mass of same-ethnic students
- proximity to family
- equitable admissions
- unobligated financial support
- sense of community, belonging, and ownership
- role models and mentors.

The current nationally approved school psychology program sequences its courses by themes that reflect attention to diversity and equity. In year one, themes include ecosystemic approaches (emphasizing systemic, relational, and interactional), multicultural communication, and data-based decision-making for intervention. In year two, themes of individual and small group consultation, intervention, and evaluation within an MTSS framework categorize the coursework. In year three, advanced individual and systems-level interventions is the theme; and in year four (Internship), the theme is the integration of multicultural school psychology into comprehensive professional practice. Each year, federally funded specialization projects have augmented the program, providing a place to institute culture-specific studies and processes, support a critical mass of same-ethnic students with unobligated financial support,

provide role models and mentors, and build a sense of community. We refer to our graduate student participants as project scholars. One co-author (Bryanna) shares her experience of the multicultural program emphases and Indigenous Specialization Project:

A deciding factor in my applying to and accepting admission into this school psychology program was the emphasis on multicultural competency and inclusion. Many aspects of the program today are consistent with that original philosophy. Throughout my time in the program, I (Bryanna) have asked questions specific to my Native background and how I could think about approaching and best serving Native American and Indigenous children and youth specific to standardized testing. When I have voiced these questions in the general program, they have often been met with culturally responsive answers, although sometimes they were met with silence or encouragement to inquire on my own about my questions.

As a project scholar in the Indigenous specialization, I experienced a space that was open to my flaws and weaknesses, just as much as it was open to my strengths and potential. The project created a small community that listened and heard my story without judgment. Being surrounded by those who believed I could accomplish anything despite past hardships allowed me to advocate with my heart first. Here, I explored my own perspectives on education, reflected on my life experiences, and recognized ways that I had let a colonized perspective take control of my practice in the past so that I could work toward reclaiming my culture and education. Although there were still times when I felt moments of being unheard, I was able to address those instances in a one-on-one setting and move forward. I believe this reflects the values inherent in both the school psychology program and the specialization project.

Developing an Indigenous Specialization Over Time

The Indigenous Specialization Projects began some 20 years ago with a small cohort of three Indigenous scholars, with the intention to create a sense of community and to address issues relevant to Native and Indigenous youth. A weekly specialty seminar, conference attendance, and financial support for students comprised the first project, with the Euro-American faculty director serving as a mentor. It became clear that the faculty director needed to expand her knowledge and experience to better support the deep work needed. More time in the community, reading extensively, listening deeply to local and national leaders, parents, elders, and researchers supported her learning curve, and over time meaningful change occurred.

A significant turning point came in the third and fourth funded projects, with expanded Indigenous community collaborations and mentorship. Two key Indigenous people served as our initial project collaborators, as well as being mentors to the Indigenous graduate students. One was a Cayuga First Nations counseling psychologist and elder, and the second was a Diné education activist and scholar. In collaboration with the Euro-American faculty director which grew to be strong and enduring, they helped to frame the work of the project with an Indigenous lens, develop an approach to understanding and healing from intergenerational trauma, and establish

culturally affirmative values and guiding principles. They brought in relevant literature and provided lived experience, stories, and healing with which our Indigenous scholars connected. We added site-based practica with schools serving Indigenous youth. For over a decade, these two Indigenous mentors taught our weekly seminars, providing critical modeling. For over a decade, we honed and refined our work together to support Indigenous scholars in school psychology and our collaborator allies. When each of our original mentors left this earth, local tribal community members stepped in and provided mentorship, in forms ranging from increased understanding of local history and current issues to welcoming us to their homelands for our meetings and celebrations. This was feasible, we believe, because we had built trusting community relationships. Each of these local mentors has been committed to decolonizing Indigenous education and to traditional ways of knowing and healing.

Recruitment and Retention of Indigenous School Psychology Students

Over time, our recruitment and retention efforts have evolved as well. Initially, local word of mouth and the faculty director's outreach constituted recruitment. Retention was supported by the director's strong commitment to the students, involvement with their lives and communities, as well as connections with the professional community. We share a few lessons.

Recruitment and retention of Indigenous graduate students begin with respecting who they are as members of sovereign nations, what histories they bring to the profession, what motivations will carry them through graduate school and into professional practice, and what support systems will help sustain them. Beginning with recruiting and admissions processes that value these factors, the project now supports retention with opportunities for community-building and healing, depth in Indigenous contexts, mentored work with Indigenous youth, consultation with the teachers of Indigenous youth, and Indigenous mentors.

Recruitment and Admissions

Project recruitment and admissions processes value relationships, commitments to community and youth, awareness of colonization and historical trauma, and propensity to collaboration in addition to academic and professional readiness. Outreach to potential project scholars occurs through personal contacts, state and national presentations and networks, local relationships and mentors, a website, and graduates. We reach out individually to those inquiring about the project. Two co-authors share their experiences:

As a graduate assistant, I (Bryanna) did outreach out with programs related to education, psychology, or Native and Indigenous-specific organizations, making connections with those who expressed interest in school psychology and in working with Native and Indigenous children and families. I had personally felt a sense of safety

when Native scholars spoke with me about this program, so continuing to try to create that feeling when sharing my experience with those interested was important.

For me (Nora), having taught in a community that had survived complex trauma, I had seen that bringing my own Indigenous knowledge into the relationships made significant differences with youth, but I was seeking more understanding about the causes of the behaviors, the mental health issues, and interventions. When I spoke with a project graduate who was also Indigenous about this program and project, I felt assured that school psychology and this specialization could support my next steps with the youth and with my own journey. That personal connection was important.

The admissions process for the school psychology program, developed and refined over several years (Cook-Morales & Robinson-Zañartu, 1995; Cook-Morales et al., 2011), uses a portfolio approach where candidates demonstrate academic, professional, personal, and cross-cultural readiness. Entries may include work samples, videos, and discussions of community involvement. Admissions interviews involve small group processes designed to simulate graduate school experiences, from problem-solving to collaborative work and discussion of critical topics in the field. Once admitted, those interested apply to the Indigenous Specialization. The relationships and connections that bring graduate students into the program are powerful:

During my undergraduate studies, I (Bryanna) had often pondered abnormal, clinical, sports, or child psychology, but I always felt drawn to the dynamic characteristics of school psychology without knowing there was a specific field that encompassed those characteristics. Simultaneously, shimá yázhi (my mom's sister/my aunt) put me in contact with a graduate of this program, who then connected me with a current Indigenous specialization project scholar. The connection that was most important to me was that both scholars I was put in contact with were Diné women who had positive experiences within this program. My traditional views and beliefs made it clear that this path was prayed for me, and it was during this time that I thought about how my grounding in tradition kept me on this path. I thought of all the positive energy that came from key moments in time and how they had come together to shape my future. When I entered the program, it was clear that people whom I just met cared for me and my family. Faculty had checked in on me, my cohort members always offered a hand, and the project created a healing space for me. It felt like an extension of who had looked out for me before.

Retention of Indigenous Students in School Psychology

Multiple processes and activities help support retention and program completion for our Indigenous program scholars: community building and healing, work with Indigenous youth, consultation with teachers of Indigenous youth, and the support of Indigenous mentors.

Community Building and Healing Support Retention. Our retention efforts for Indigenous scholars attend to centering voice, immersing in the work of Indigenous authors and local mentors, and learning culturally responsive and culturally adapted practices.

Storytelling has multiple functions within the community, from learning to support and healing.

Project scholars tell their stories within our community and over time, come to understand their own histories in depth, and to understand the truth behind them with the aim to work toward decolonizing. Four aspects characterize this work: truth-seeking, truth-telling, deep listening, and the strengthening of identity and resilience. Seeking and confronting truths is integral to understanding ourselves in depth (Atkinson, 2017; Duran, 2006). For Indigenous peoples, not only has the truth been the source of profound wounds, but the whole truth has not been told—often not in our communities, but most often not in schools, where school personnel have remained satisfied to live with and pass on blatant untruths or glossed-over versions of colonization. In the Indigenous specialization, project scholars access multiple sources of information for this purpose: personal stories, knowledge from elders, film, trusted literature, ceremony, dreams, and immersion in their home communities. Over time and through retelling, those stories reflect personal truths and personal resilience. Deep storytelling (Cajete, 2015; Smith, 2012) involves telling one's story in depth, reflecting learned truths, grieving injustices, and emerging from trauma over time. Through that truth-telling, new understandings emerge, as does empowerment—often through embracing traditional knowledge and the inherent resilience within one's culture. Stories are told within community (Duran, 2006; Sharing Culture: Healing Historical Trauma, n.d.) where truths are acknowledged. Deep listening, the third component, involves reciprocal relationships. The act of deep listening itself has healing properties. Being listened to with reflection on one's assets and strengths also contradicts the isolation of shame, uncertainty, or lack of belonging often associated with trauma. Finally, when identity is deepened from an asset base, resilience is strengthened. This renewed identity becomes a protective factor. It also acts as a critical model for the work with youth.

Work With Indigenous Youth Supports Retention. Most Indigenous graduate students in school psychology come to the profession to understand the situations of their communities more deeply, and to give back. They seek ways to support Indigenous youth that are culturally responsive and effective. Intentional asset-based and trauma-informed work with Indigenous youth which centers values and traditions, recognizes cultural assets, and promotes critical thinking is central to the project and critical to the retention and support of Indigenous students. Partnerships with local Indigenous communities and the schools that serve their youth provide practicum sites where project scholars facilitate intervention groups to support youth identity and resilience. This work is designed to ground youth with strong protective factors such as self-efficacy, a sense of purpose, problem-solving skills, and meaningful relationships. It is informed by Brokenleg's (2015) First People's principles of learning and his and colleagues' *Circle of Courage* model (Brendtro et al., 2019), developed to provide an Indigenous perspective on resilience and to support youth in emerging from the effects of intergenerational trauma. Consistent with this model, scholars facilitate a sense of belonging, and support youth in developing mastery, autonomy, and generosity. They integrate culturally grounded thinking skill development to support mastery, and

culturally adapt intervention lessons so that prior knowledge bolsters learning through cultural familiarity. This requires consciousness not only of local culture but of cross-cultural or cross-tribal issues.

As an example, one co-author, (Nora), used storytelling and the multifaceted meanings embedded in traditional baskets to engage youth in appreciating the depth and complexity of their own cultures, along with developing belonging, mastery of thought, and generosity. Because modeling is a traditional way of teaching in Indigenous cultures, she first brought in her own traditional basket and selected one of the many stories it carries—that of the Sacred Journey. "The basket is viewed as a map of our life," she shared with them. Pointing to locations, directions, colors, and figures within the basket, she told the story, and her students became engaged.

After modeling the embedded stories, symbolism, and meanings for life, she brought in a basket from the students' own Kumeyaay community to center the learning on their own traditions. This grounding in cultural knowledge activates prior knowledge and supports the development of critical thinking. This lesson was a unique cross-cultural challenge for Nora as the facilitator, as the symbolism for protection in the local culture embedded in the basket, the rattlesnake, is seen as a bad omen that could bring ill health in her own Diné culture. To bridge this, she thought about the children's birthright to their cultural knowledge, and putting herself in their shoes, then acted with intentionality from a position of empathy and compassion. As she passed around the traditional basket, she shared their story of how the rattlesnake got his powers to protect the Kumeyaay people. She asked students to look carefully and think about their own traditional basket, hypothesizing, visualizing, making inferences, and finding meaning, and to do this collaboratively with a partner, building on the collectivist worldview. "What do you think the rattlesnake basket is trying to tell us?" "What do the figures, color, shapes, and directions tell us?" Students responded with pride, sharing such ideas such as, "As we journey, the snake protects us," or "we grow up into adults like the big snake and care for the young ones."

This type of activity helps the younger students establish a sense of belonging and identity as they understand and internalize that their culture matters. They feel heard and valued. For the graduate student project scholars who facilitate these interventions, it supports hope and optimism for what is possible. It contradicts the identity silencing they and the youth have experienced in schools.

Consultation With Teachers of Indigenous Youth Supports Retention. Consultation and cross-cultural consultation (Ingraham, 2014; Miranda, 2015) are key tools in the repertoire of school psychologists learned within our school psychology program. The compelling need for this is illustrated by a recent Council on Exceptional Children study that found that only 51% of special education teachers in the U.S. reported feeling competent with culturally relevant strategies or strength-based approaches; and when students differed from teachers in socioeconomic status, only 43% of teachers felt confident in how to engage with the parents; when they differed in culture, it dropped to 37% (Fowler et al., 2019). In the Indigenous specialization project,

students apply consultation and cross-cultural consultation regularly with the teachers of the youth.

*As a Diné graduate student, I (Bryanna) know I must actively engage in cross-cultural consultation and collaboration. Across the United States over half of the students in public schools are racially or ethnically diverse (*NCES, 2021*); however, their teachers are 89% White. In locations where most students are Native American or Alaska Native, only 29% of teachers are American Indian/Alaska Native (*NCES, 2020*). Through multiple courses, I had immersed myself in consultation models that directly supported the consultee and indirectly benefited our clients (Sandoval, 2014).*

A key factor in consultation was creating a reciprocal learning and working relationship (Rosenfield, 2012). We collaborated with teachers from third to sixth grades with needs ranging from support with academics to social-emotional learning, trauma-informed care, and behavior. In my first year, prior to taking consultation courses, I used skills from my counseling courses, for example, active listening, nonverbal encouragement, paraphrasing, summarizing, and clarifying questions (Pare, 2013). In the second and third years, I engaged in structured consultation. For example, my project partner and I consulted with a fifth-grade teacher who was concerned about a child's academic task completion. Through consultee-centered consultation, a new understanding of the problem situation emerged (Sandoval, 2014). Using contracting, problem identification, and analysis, we redefined the child's behavior as being afraid of having their work compared to their peers, resulting in their writing random answers on class assignments. Through paraphrasing, using clarifying questions, perception checking, and hypothesizing, new perspectives emerged, allowing space to generate an intervention with the teacher that was specific and responsive to the child's needs (Sandoval, 2014).

Teachers in these consultations have reported feeling heard, having a place to share concerns, and learning. One commented that consulting with Indigenous scholars provided her with powerful insights she would never have otherwise considered. Another commented on the clear carry-over of student engagement into his classroom.

Indigenous and Ally Mentors Support Retention. Effective mentoring enhances retention, providing multiple functions, from role modeling to psychosocial benefits (Blake-Beard et al., 2011). Same-ethnicity mentors are often perceived as more effective, as well as contributing to more lasting relationships, a stronger sense of belonging, and improved self-efficacy (Champion et al., 2021; Weinberger, 2017). For Indigenous students, same-ethnicity mentors can parallel natural systems in which elders provide guidance to families (Weinberger, 2017). They promote a sense of belonging and can often better reflect Indigenous epistemologies; for example, they tend to provide listening for understanding versus diagnostic listening, a focus on the journey versus a focus on outcomes, a focus on inner wisdom versus a focus on expert, and a focus on reflection versus a focus on action (Weinberger, 2017).

Multiple levels of mentoring characterize the project. Indigenous mentors have taught our seminars, served as guest speakers, and facilitated institutes. The scholars themselves become same-ethnicity mentors to the youth they serve on site, although they

carry different tribal affiliations, and are aware that they are guests on this land. Outcomes measures from multiple studies suggest that cross-ethnicity mentors can be effective as well (Blake-Beard et al., 2011; Champion et al., 2021). Thus, non-Indigenous mentors also support the work. The Euro-American project director serves as a liaison between the project and the program, helps bridge the divide between Indigenous and western approaches, initiates and supports joint presentations and publications with the scholars, as well as facilitating introductions within the profession. The Euro-American site supervisor provides modeling not only of professional activities and attitudes, but critically, she models strong school-family-community connections.

Because local Indigenous context is so important in school psychologists' work with youth and communities, local mentors facilitate understanding the community's demographics, degree of assimilation, local history, and relationships with schools. They help integrate the values and processes that should inform interventions. For example, two tribal members recently joined the project scholars in their weekly seminar to provide consultation on cultural adaptations being made with evidence- and research-based interventions. This reciprocal exchange allowed project scholars to incorporate values and processes that would deepen consistency with the local culture, supporting greater engagement of the youth, and allowing our community members to be more aware of our processes.

Competencies for School Psychologists' Work With Indigenous Youth and Communities

Work with Indigenous youth and communities requires specific knowledge beyond what is taught in most school psychology programs. To provide depth of content in Indigenous issues, our specialization project uses seven sub-areas, culturally adapted from categories identified by an APA task force study on school psychology competencies for cross-cultural competence (Rogers et al., 1999). As a learning community, we engage with resources related to each of these topics, described below, to guide discussions, readings, and self-reflection.

Legal Mandates and Ethical Concerns

Ethics in practice and research with Indigenous population includes, for instance, sovereignty, the Indian Child Welfare Act, Impact Aid, Title VI Indian Education funding, and the Society for Indian Psychologists' response to APA Ethics. In Canada, this might include the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; ratification of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; Section 35 of the Constitution Act.

Educational and Cultural Histories

Learning about Indigenous historical realities and education histories and their implications is critical, along with local cultural/tribal-specific history and implications,

tribal education systems (BIE, Tribal Schools, Tribal Colleges), and the relationships of traditional knowledge to learning. In Canada, this might include the history of the Residential Schools; the impacts of the discovery of the unmarked graves; and culturally affirmative action such as the *Miyo Pimatisowin* Act of Cowessess First Nation.

Culturally Responsive Assessment With Indigenous Youth

The use of ecosystems, authentic, and dynamic assessments, as well as Response to Intervention models, become central in Indigenous school psychologists' repertoires, augmenting tools they gain in the program. Beyond that, understanding bias and validity issues in assessment for Indigenous youth is essential, along with using school-wide data analysis and considering language and acculturation levels in assessment.

Academic, Therapeutic, and Consultative Interventions

Project scholars are asked to understand the influence of historical and intergenerational trauma and colonization on behavior and learning; differentiate Indigenous or tribal-specific and mainstream cultural behaviors; gain familiarity with Indigenous-based resilience work; understand and use mediated learning; develop skill with cross-cultural consultation; articulate Indigenous issues in counseling; and learn and apply cultural adaptation of the research and evidence-based interventions which they are steeped in within the school psychology program.

Research With Indigenous Populations

The history of research with Indigenous populations worldwide is entangled with colonization, and as Maori scholar Smith (2012) writes, the word *research* "is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary" (p. 1). Project scholars must understand that history, and develop an understanding of Indigenous research methodologies, ethics in research with Indigenous communities, and of tribal research protocols.

Indigenous Parent and Community Engagement

Parent and community engagement is profoundly important in school success. Project scholars need to understand and be informed by Indigenous parent and community perspectives on schools; unique factors in Indigenous parent and community engagement; and examples and practices of professional engagement with local Indigenous parents or communities (Bang et al., 2018; National Child Welfare Resource Center for Tribes, n.d.).

Language and Identity

Language carries culture, which is integral to identity. Nigerian writer Ngugi we Thiong'o explains the relationship:

> . . . language is a carrier of a people's culture; culture is a carrier of a people's values; values are the basis of a people's self-definition - the basis of their consciousness. And when you destroy a people's language, you are destroying that very important aspect of their heritage . . . you are in fact destroying that which helps them to define themselves . . . that which embodies their collective memory as a people. It is precisely what imperialism in fact did (Eyoh, 1985, p. 157).

Thus, Project scholars must understand forced language loss and its relationship to culture and identity, and language revitalization movements and their relationship to learning.

Cultural Adaptation of Research- and Evidence-Based Interventions

Evidence-based practices and interventions are taught within the program and considered best practice within school psychology; however, most of these interventions are not validated on Indigenous populations. When they are used with Indigenous youth, non-engagement and non-attendance often occur. Chu and Leino (2017) developed a data-driven framework for culturally adapted evidence-based interventions for mental health, finding that successful cultural adaptations involved changes to address engagement or participation in treatment and changes in the delivery of those treatments, rather than in the core components, thus maintaining fidelity. The project's work is consistent with those areas of adaptation, which include changes to the semantics or materials, the structure of the sessions, the orientation of the relationship between psychologist and student, and the incorporation of cultural examples and values. Cultural adaptation for consistency with local Indigenous populations allows for preserving the core principles and fidelity of the intervention while enhancing engagement, meaning, and buy-in.

As an example, one of our school psychology intervention teams selected Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS), an evidence-based intervention, for use with cultural adaptations with one of our groups of students who had experienced complex trauma. Because they had spent time learning from local tribal elders and community members, the project scholars were able to incorporate local imagery, semantics, culturally specific content to replace Western content, and to incorporate some of the local language into their lessons. Student engagement was strong, and meaningful participation occurred throughout the sessions.

Multiple Levels of Collaboration

Multiple levels of collaboration support the work and enhance the experiences of our Indigenous school psychology graduate students. Collaboration with parents and

community supports authenticity; collaboration with other professionals such as school counselors broadens the impact on the school and breadth of knowledge; collaboration with teachers using cross-cultural consultation methods (mentioned above) supports the longevity of impact. Each of these is fostered using research-based components of effective collaboration.

One of the powerful outcomes of the collaborations is graduates continuing to stay connected with one another and the project. Several graduates work together on a national Indigenous committee, writing, presenting, and working on policy. As another example, one graduate recently emailed, "I hope this message finds you well. After all these years, the hard work and heart work we engaged in during my time with the Native Scholars and Collaborators Project continues to ground and guide me. You taught me that I could bring my indigenous ontology into westernized academic spaces, and I have done just that since 2010" (Becerra, personal communication, April 12, 2022). He writes to discuss collaborating with our current scholars to support his ongoing work in indigenizing the academy.

Summary and Conclusion

Despite the rich traditions, broad funds of knowledge, and deep values of Indigenous peoples throughout Canada and the United States, most of the general population knows very little about the true histories or current situations of the first inhabitants of the lands they occupy. Within education, deficit models and methods have been the norm, from the tragic era of the residential and boarding schools to the theories and assumptions of inadequacy that would drive decades of schooling. The contexts that have spawned egregious injustices to Indigenous populations and fostered under service and disservice to the youth in schools still influence school policy and practice, including preparation programs in school psychology.

San Diego State University's school psychology program has housed an Indigenous Specialization, their Native Scholars Projects, for over two decades, committed to centering Indigenous voice, working to decolonize practice, and making a difference in serving Indigenous youth and communities. These projects have been supported by the school psychology program faculty members' strong commitments to equity and social justice, which have led to admissions processes and curricular changes that helped yield and support a highly diverse graduate student population. Within that context, the Native Scholars Projects evolved over some two decades to retain and graduate dozens of Indigenous school psychologists, counselors, and ally collaborators. Key factors that have supported that retention are described, from outreach to community building, a focus on community and healing, asset-based work with Indigenous youth, their teachers and communities, and support from Indigenous mentors. The seven areas of professional competence with specific foci on issues of Indigenous youth and communities discussed are consistent with national standards, from law and ethics to culturally responsive interventions.

Intentional work toward transforming school psychology preparation to welcome and support Indigenous candidates recognizes and builds on Indigenous assets, community

building, culturally adapted and culturally responsive practice, cross-cultural consultation, and community connections. The programmatic transformation process of this university's Indigenous specialization project illustrates how school psychology programs might create a context and develop a set of processes based on their own local needs and resources that foster a sense of community that supports the preparation of Indigenous school psychologists. In turn, Indigenous school psychology students and graduates can continue to help those school psychology programs evolve toward decolonized policies and practices, as they give back to their own communities.

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