A Dakota Cultural Intervention's Influence on Native Students' Sense of Belonging: A CBPR Case Study

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This community-based participatory research case study demonstrates how Dakota Wicoȟaŋ utilized Indigenous and feminist epistemologies to create, implement, and evaluate a cultural intervention, the Mni Sota Makoce: Dakota Homelands Curriculum, to increase Native 6th- and 10th-grade social studies students' peoplehood sense of belonging (Tachine et al., 2017). Findings demonstrate Native students liked the curriculum and reported an increase in support and a decrease in invalidation of their sense of belonging. While the curriculum provided a source of racial-ethnic socialization, some European American students criticized the curriculum, which likely negatively impacted 6th-grade students psychological sense of school membership (Goodenow, 1993). Results indicate Indigenous culture, epistemologies, and pedagogies should be infused throughout all curricula, teachers need to be prepared to effectively deal with racist and discriminatory behavior, and Indian education is important to Native students' belonging. Implications and recommendations for funders, schools, researchers, teacher education programs, and Native communities are discussed.

Keywords: *action research, case studies, community-based participatory research, cultural intervention, curriculum, Dakota, focus group interviews, Indian education, Indigenous education, Indigenous peoples, learning environments, mixed methods, multicultural education, qualitative research, racial-ethnic socialization, sense of belonging, teacher education/ development*

When those who have the power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you . . . there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing.

—Adrienne Rich, as cited in Maher & Tetreault, 1994, p. 1

Belonging and relationality are important to Native[1] students culturally and academically. Unfortunately, the Eurocentric focus and homogenous cultural pedagogies predominantly employed in most schools invalidate Native students' sense of belonging. This community-based participatory research (CBPR; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003) case study explains, demonstrates, and analyzes how an Indigenous community created, implemented, and evaluated a cultural intervention designed to increase Native students' sense of belonging by incorporating language, sacred history, ceremonial cycle, and land (Tachine et al., 2017) into a public school's curriculum.

Relationality is a central feature of Indigenous worldview (Wilson, 2008). In fact, the very fabric of Dakota culture is based on relationality (Deloria, 1998; Friesen et al., 2014), a concept that can be summed up as *mitakuye owasiŋ (all my relatives)*. When a person understands mitakuye owasiŋ, they realize their significance within the *tiwahe* (family), *tioṡpaye* (extended family), *oyate* (nation or community), and with *Ina Maka* (mother earth). Dakota sense of belonging is a relational and reciprocal concept through which each individual feels valued and is of value through an interdependent kinship system.

A sense of belonging occurs when students perceive social support and feel connected, cared about, valued, respected, and important to the group or others (Strayhorn, 2012). Research has found a student's sense of belonging positively influences their ability to function in learning environments (Osterman, 2000) and to have motivation and dedication to school, including engagement in school and classroom activities, and academic achievement (St-Amand et al., 2017). Research also indicates that a decreased sense of belonging at school relates to negative outcomes such as

increased school absenteeism (Sánchez et al., 2005), drug abuse (Napoli et al., 2003), and conduct problems (Loukas et al., 2006). Despite belonging's significant role in K–12 (kindergarten to high school) education, there have been no concentrated efforts to increase students' sense of belonging through targeted strategies (Allen et al., 2018).

Although sense of belonging is important for all students, research suggests that a lack of sense of belonging impacts students who experience marginalization (e.g., students of color, females, LGBT, immigrants) more than students who experience privilege (e.g., Strayhorn, 2012; Walton & Cohen, 2007). The fragile and unstable sense of belonging associated with marginalized identities is likely due to living in a society that fails to consistently acknowledge and reinforce the inherent worth and importance of individuals who hold these identities. Researchers have found that Native students have stronger levels of sense of belonging when they are in supportive school environments where they feel welcomed, are exposed to culturally responsive classrooms in which racist attitudes and behaviors are limited (Stokes, 1997), and have relationships with peers who show respect for their Indigenous culture (Oxendine, 2015).

Native students often, however, experience a sense of invisibility in educational systems due to the homogenous cultural pedagogies typically employed (e.g., McCarty, 2011), which can negatively impact their sense of belonging. American curricula have primarily been Eurocentric-focused and predicated upon exclusions (Pinar et al., 2008). The intentional absence of diverse narratives emphasizes Euro-American heroism, progression, and power (Sleeter, 2011) and silences nondominant cultural groups (Shear, 2015). Because the monolithic framework leaves little to no room for diverse perspectives or counterstories (King, 2008), it becomes the institutionalized, public, and social narrative—the dominant narrative. This dominant narrative creates a feeling of invisibility for racially and ethnically diverse students (Pinar et al., 2008)—a lack of sense of belonging within education systems and society—and contributes to the dropout/low graduation crisis among Native youth (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010). Concerted efforts to increase Native students' sense of belonging are needed given the importance of a sense of belonging to student academic success.

The absence of indigenous narratives and the focus on Eurocentric dominant narratives are forms of institutional racism. Some U.S. states (e.g., Oklahoma, Montana, Washington, and Wyoming) have passed legislation to address this form of institutionalized racism by adopting K–12 civics, government, and history state-mandated standards regarding Indigenous peoples (Sabzalian et al., 2021; Shear et al., 2015). Further, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2018) put forth a position statement recognizing that "Indigenous Peoples have the right to dignity in education, and to see and experience their cultures, traditions, histories, and ongoing sovereignty movements affirmed in social studies curriculum and classrooms" (p. 168). Although education is central to Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and nation-building (Brayboy et al., 2012), too often curricula lack accurate information, are void of contemporary information, are written from a Western epistemology, and use traditional Eurocentric learning strategies (Anderson, 2012; First Nations Development Institute & Echo Hawk Consulting, 2018; Journell, 2009; Stanton, 2015).

While recent efforts in the United States address invisibility and false narratives in K–12 education (e.g., We Are Still Here Minnesota,[2] Tribal Nations Education Committee,[3] National Congress of American Indians Becoming Visible toolkit, 2019[4]) and prepare American Indian/Alaska Native teachers (e.g., St. Cloud State University's Minnesota Indian Teacher Training Program,[5] University of Oregon Sapsik'ʷałá program,[6] University of Idaho's Indigenous Knowledge for Effective Education Program[7]), there remains a lack of indigenous-developed curricula and effective comprehensive teacher training programs preparing non-Native teachers to deliver such curricula.[8] To address these shortcomings, NCSS recommends that educators and schools partner with local tribal leaders, elders, and communities to frame

> lessons and curricula around localized tribal knowledges . . . [to] counter the pattern of generic lessons on Indigenous Peoples, disrupt the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge in education (M. A. Battiste, 2013), and provide a rich knowledge base that fosters "new perceptions" and "new possibilities" in education. (Brayboy & Maughan, 2009, p. 170)

Considering 91–92% of Native students attend general public schools (TEDNA, 2011; U.S. Department of Education's Office of Indian Education, 2019), it is essential that public schools partner with Indigenous communities on the aforementioned important initiatives. Further, Mackey et al. (2020) argue that while incorporating Indigenous languages and cultures in the education of Indigenous youth and children is occurring in some communities, evidence of these initiatives is largely missing from published scholarship.

To address the previously discussed problems (i.e., no concentrated effort to increase K–12 students' sense of belonging, lack of Indigenous-developed curriculum and teacher training for non-Native teachers to deliver such curriculum, and absent published scholarship), Dakota Wicoȟaŋ developed a cultural intervention[9] (Allen et al., 2011), the *Mni Sota Makoce: Dakota Homelands Curriculum* (*MSM Curriculum*), and an accompanying two-day teachers' training to increase Native students' sense of belonging. Dakota Wicoȟaŋ community members believed a cultural intervention was necessary because they saw how an absent or inaccurate Indigenous narrative contributed to Native students' lack of sense of belonging in school and negative consequences (e.g., suicidal ideation, low academic achievement)

in their community. Dakota Wicoȟaŋ's staff, elder advisors, and Board of Directors chose the research topic and a strengths-based approach. Strengths-based approaches center Indigenous self-determination, use the resources and capacities of Indigenous people to minimize problems (Brough et al., 2004), and upend the deficit discourse often associated with Indigenous people (Askew et al., 2020; Brough et al., 2004; Fogarty et al., 2018).

Dakota Wicoȟaŋ's cultural intervention attempted to increase Native students' sense of belonging by incorporating the four intertwining factors (i.e., language, sacred history, ceremonial cycle, and land) outlined in the peoplehood sense of belonging theoretical framework (Tachine et al., 2017). This holistic framework integrates the concept of a sense of belonging with Holm et al.'s (2003) peoplehood model and contends that language, sacred history, ceremonial cycle, and land provide the theoretical foundation of a Native-specific sense of belonging (Tachine et al., 2017). Further, the cultural intervention centered Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing without defaulting to Eurocentric measures of validity (M. Battiste, 2002; Wilson, 2008) and explored the complicated and unique impacts of colonialism on Native Americans (Brayboy, 2005; Writer, 2008). Lastly, Dakota Wicoȟaŋ's curriculum and teacher training supported the sovereignty of Dakota communities by exerting their right to sustain physical, cultural, and spiritual relationships with their lands (Shear et al., 2018).

We chose CBPR and Indigenous and feminist epistemologies to guide the creation, implementation, and evaluation of the cultural intervention used in this study because these theoretical approaches share similarities and complement one another (see Peters et al., 2020, for more information), and all three perspectives value each research team member's unique contributions. As an example, we focused on the Dakota concept of *wowaciŋye*, which means to be reliable, accountable, and trustworthy. Wowaciŋye holds significance for a community's interdependent relations and specifies that the Creator gave everyone a role and purpose and that families and communities thrive when each person uses their talents and skills to fulfill their particular role and purpose. Our team created space for each person to use their talents and skills throughout the project.

The goal of this project was to develop a case study that demonstrates how a Native community created, implemented, and evaluated a cultural intervention designed to increase Native students' sense of belonging by incorporating Dakota language, sacred history, ceremonial cycle, and relationships to land (Tachine et al., 2017) into a public school's curriculum. The research question was, how does the cultural intervention, the MSM Curriculum, influence Native students' sense of belonging? Dakota Wicoȟaŋ's staff, elder advisors, and Board of Directors chose to gather both qualitative and quantitative data because they wanted to hear Native youth's voices and knew that many potential funding agencies would prefer, if not require, quantitative data to demonstrate the impact of the cultural intervention on Native students' sense of belonging.

Methods

Dakota Wicoȟaŋ's Board of Directors, the partnering school, and the university's institutional review board approved this study. Participants included 6th- and 10th-grade social studies students. The school was located in a Minnesota rural/tribal community and had a student population that consisted of 25.7% Native students, 65.6% White students, and 8.7% students from other racial backgrounds.

Research Team

Dakota Wicoȟaŋ research partners included Dakota Wicoȟaŋ's staff, elder advisors, and Board of Directors. This group represents tribally enrolled members who hold or have held leadership roles in tribal government and Indigenous education efforts along with college students, language speakers, teachers, learners, and activists. The research team consisted of two primary investigators (i.e., one Dakota and one European American) and two research assistants (i.e., one Dakota and one European American). The Dakota primary investigator served as the executive director to Dakota Wicoȟaŋ at the time of the study, as well as being an alumnus of the university. Our research team utilized CBPR methodology in that the Dakota Wicoȟaŋ community was the key unit of identity; co-learning occurred for all community and academic partners through genuine equitable and reciprocal relationships; issues of race and ethnicity were addressed; cultural humility was embraced; an ecological and person-in-context perspective was taken; Dakota community strengths were acknowledged and promoted; our research process was cyclical and iterative; we built Dakota Wicoȟaŋ community research partners' capacity in the research process; findings and knowledge benefitted the Dakota Wicoȟaŋ community; and our work led to relevant, sustainable, and positive changes for Dakota youth (Collins et al., 2018; Israel et al., 2017). Additionally, Dakota Wicoȟaŋ research partners shaped all phases of the research project (e.g., conceptualization, cultural intervention, design, data collection, analyses, sharing of results, and writing). To read about the story of our partnership, please see Peters et al. (2020).

Materials

Questionnaires. The pre- and post-in-class questionnaires contained demographic questions and three measures: The Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM; Goodenow, 1993); the Wicozani Instrument (Peters et al., 2019); and the Awareness of Connectedness Scale (Mohatt et al., 2011). Students could complete the optional Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire (Reynolds, 1988) outside of

class. The research team selected these measures because details of Dakota Wicoȟaŋ research partners' lives suggested that these factors likely influenced Native students in school. Given the volume of data and our desire to validate the Wicozani Instrument, which was created by and for Dakota Wicoȟaŋ, data from the Awareness of Connectedness Scale, the Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire, and the Wicozani Instrument have already been published (see Peters et al., 2019) Results related to sense of belonging (i.e., qualitative data and PSSM) are presented later.

Talking Circle Question Route. The question route (see Appendix) was developed in partnership with Dakota Wicoȟaŋ's research partners who identified what they wanted to learn about their youth's experiences in school. Questions were placed into five categories: opening, introduction, transition, key, and ending (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Questions asked students about their school experiences, situations in which they felt a sense of belonging or connectedness in school, how the Dakota way of life is valued in school, and ways Dakota people are represented in the curriculum.

Psychological Sense of School Membership. The PSSM was developed by Goodenow (1993) to measure belongingness within schools. All 18 items of the PSSM were written in a 5-point Likert format, with choices ranging from *not at all true* (1) to *completely true* (5). The PSSM overall scale was initially tested through three separate studies with internal reliability Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .88, .88, and .82. The PSSM subscales were tested through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. The Cronbach's alpha scoring provided the following results: perceptions of caring adult relationships .73, acceptance or belongingness at school .72, and rejection or disrespect .70, indicating internal reliability (You et al., 2011). These studies also found good predictive and construct validity. The PSSM has been validated with Native students (Hussain et al., 2018). Higher scores reflect higher levels of sense of belonging on the overall scale as well as all subscales because items associated with the rejection or disrespect subscale were reverse scored.

Cultural Intervention: Mni Sota Makoce: Dakota Homelands Curriculum. A team of Dakota leaders, educators, and advisors, with review and support from Dakota and non-Dakota educators and educational partners, developed Dakota Wicoȟaŋ's MSM Curriculum. Dakota Wicoȟaŋ was intentional in bringing forward a broad perspective in the design and development of the cultural intervention and included perspectives from laypeople as well as trained educators. The curriculum is comprised of 10 50-minute lessons: (1) Mitakuye Owasiŋ: We Are All Related; (2) *Mni Sota Makoce*: Lands that reflect the sky (Minnesota); (3) Roles & Responsibilities; (4) Storytelling; (5) Loss of Land; (6) The War; (7) Assimilation; (8) Reclamation; (9) *Dakota Iapi*: Dakota language; and (10) Engaged Relatives. These lessons were developed based on essential understandings (e.g., land as relative, tribal sovereignty, relationality, belongingness) identified by the team—built upon Indigenous epistemology (e.g., multiple realities and truths coexist; a relational worldview that considers relations past, present, and future); introduce students to Dakota language, history, and culture; and use Native learning strategies (e.g., storytelling; Cajete, 2005). Throughout the curriculum, videos of Dakota elders and youth share stories emphasizing their relationship with land and people. Students engage in activities designed to connect them to their family and environment. The cultural intervention includes Dakota language, sacred history, ceremonial cycle, and relationships to land, which are the four aspects of the peoplehood sense of belonging theoretical framework (Tachine et al., 2017). Further, each lesson is tied to Minnesota State Social Studies Standards and Minnesota State Benchmarks. The creation of the curriculum was supported by several partners (e.g., Minnesota Legacy Funds through Minnesota Historical Society, Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources, and University of Minnesota Morris). The partnering school's 6th- and 10th-grade social studies teachers implemented the cultural intervention.

Procedure and Participants

The school superintendent sent letters and e-mails to all parents/guardians describing the curriculum, the project, what and when data would be collected, and the voluntary nature of participation. All 147 social studies students, 93 in 6th grade and 54 in 10th grade, received the cultural intervention. During class, prior to and following the cultural intervention, research assistants invited all participants to complete the in-class questionnaires, provided directions, answered questions, and explained that participation was voluntary. A total of 107 students (72.8% response rate)—64 6th grade (age $M = 11.17$, $SD = .423$; 32 females, 31 males, 1 missing data) and 43 10th grade (age $M = 15.21$, $SD = .412$; 18 females, 25 males), completed both pre- and post-questionnaires. The 6th-grade students identified their race as Native ($n = 12$), Native and European American ($n = 1$), Native and another race ($n = 4$), European American ($n = 44$), or Latino American ($n = 1$). Two 6th-grade students did not report their race. The 10th-grade students identified their race as Native ($n = 9$), Native and European American ($n = 5$), Native and another race ($n = 1$), or European American ($n = 28$). Survey completion times ranged from 10 to 20 minutes. Paraprofessionals assisted students with reading or writing as needed. Once finished, research assistants invited students to participate in the talking circles after school. Students who indicated a Native or biracial Native identity

were combined for data analyses. Students who did not report data ($n = 2$) or whose race was not Native ($n = 73$) were excluded from analyses.

To provide a safe space, Native students were invited to participate in the talking circles either at school or at Dakota Wicoȟaŋ during their after-school cultural program. Prior to the cultural intervention, 16 6th- and 10th-grade Native students participated in one of two talking circles. Following the cultural intervention, eight 6th- and 10th-grade Native students participated in one of two talking circles. The four talking circles (two pre, two post) lasted between 19[10] and 60 minutes ($M = 42.6$ min, $SD = 20.67$) and consisted of two to eight students. The talking circles were led by the Dakota primary investigator to support student comfort and trust. Students received refreshments prior to and following the talking circles. Students sat in a circle with two audio recorders in the center. Prior to starting, the facilitator read the assent form, invited questions, and asked open-ended questions to ensure students understood what they were being asked. After assent was obtained, the talking circle began. Upon completion, the facilitator debriefed the students and gave each $10. Researchers utilized Huberman and Miles's (1994) guidelines for data management and storage.

Data Analysis

Qualitative

One research assistant transcribed the pre- and post-talking circles, another compared each audio file and transcript and corrected errors. The Dakota principal investigator and research assistants comprised the analysis team and used NVivo, a qualitative analysis software, for inductive data analysis. Dakota Wicoȟaŋ research partners chose to have the Dakota principal investigator as part of the analysis team so she could draw upon her lived experiences and knowledge of the community during analysis. The European American principal investigator served as the group's auditor, similar to consensual qualitative research (Hill et al., 2005). The team applied Moustakas's (1994) structured method of analysis[11] to increase validity throughout the process. For example, researchers used a question guide to reflect on their own experiences with the phenomenon and read the transcripts of the talking circles numerous times to develop deep understanding of the students' experiences. The analysis team independently combined statements into themes and then met with the auditor, who compared and contrasted their independent work, encouraged divergent perspectives, and assisted with theme finalization. Once themes were identified, thoroughly discussed, and agreed upon, the analysis team individually reread the transcripts and assigned each quote to a theme. Next, they met with the auditor and discussed each quote's theme. They repeated this process until all themes and quotes were consensually

decided. This process was repeated for post-talking circle transcripts. To increase validity, attention throughout data collection and analysis was given to credibility (e.g., centering Dakota Wicoȟaŋ research partners' perceptions and experiences), transferability (e.g., providing thick descriptions of the results so others can determine how the data generalize), dependability (e.g., utilizing the same procedures for talking circles and data analysis), and confirmability (e.g., providing information about the research team [see Supplemental Materials]) (Morrow, 2005).

Quantitative

A research assistant entered data directly into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). A second research assistant cleaned the data. One purpose of this study was to gather quantitative data to examine changes in 6th- and 10th-grade Native students' sense of belonging (i.e., PSSM scores) from pre- to post-cultural intervention. A paired samples t-test was used because it assesses for changes in variables over time within participants. A significance level of $p = 0.05$ was used. Because there was no control group, differences in PSSM scores may be attributed to confounding variables, such as natural changes in students' sense of belonging.

Results

Qualitative

Dakota Wicoȟaŋ's research partners and our research team decided to include themes that had a small number of statements or were reflective of one talking circle, because these results acknowledge Native voices, which have historically been silenced in the research process due to the small number of Natives in most studies (Shotton et al., 2013). Eight themes were produced both prior to and following the intervention. We describe the themes using exemplary quotations, typical of other student's statements. See Table 1 for a summary of the results.

Themes Before the Cultural Intervention

Pre-invalidating Native Students' Peoplehood Sense of Belonging. Precultural intervention, four themes related to "invalidating Native students' peoplehood sense of belonging," were identified: the Dakota way of life not valued in school; absent or inaccurate representation of Native Americans in curriculum; Native student experiences of racism in school; and lack of sense of belonging due to predominantly white environments.

Pre-theme 1: The Dakota Way of Life Not Valued in Schools. Native students expressed a general lack of inclusion of Dakota cultural knowledge in schools and classrooms. For example, when asked, "How is the Dakota way of life

TABLE 1

Themes of Native Students Experiences Before and After the Cultural Intervention

Theme	No. of students	No. of talking circles	No. of responses
Experiences of Native Students Before the Cultural Intervention (n = 16, two talking circles)			
Pre-invalidating Native Students' Peoplehood Sense of Belonging			
Pre-theme 1: The Dakota way of life not valued in school	10	2	15
Pre-theme 2: Absent or inaccurate representation of Native Americans in curriculum	8	2	16
Pre-theme 3: Native student experiences of racism in school	8	2	16
Pre-theme 4: Lack of sense of belonging due to predominantly white environments	3	1	5
Pre-supporting Native Students' Peoplehood Sense of Belonging			
Pre-theme 5: Suggestions for including Dakota content in school curriculum	6	2	8
Pre-theme 6: Sense of belonging due to the importance of Indian education	9	2	13
Pre-theme 7: Sense of belonging due to friends/relatives	4	2	5
Pre-theme 8: Affirming Dakota identity	4	1	8
Experiences of Native Students After the Cultural Intervention (n = 8, two talking circles)			
Post-invalidating Native Students' Peoplehood Sense of Belonging			
Post-theme 1: Native students' negative experiences in school	7	2	13
Post-theme 2: The Dakota way of life not valued in school	6	2	8
Post-supporting Native Students' Peoplehood Sense of Belonging			
Post-theme 3: The Dakota way of life valued in school	8	2	22
Post-theme 4: Liked the *Mni Sota Makoce* curriculum	3	2	6
Post-theme 5: Sense of belonging due to importance of Indian education	7	2	8
Post-theme 6: Sense of belonging due to teachers defending Native Students	4	2	8
Post-theme 7: Sense of belonging due to teachers respecting/acknowledging aspects of the Dakota culture	4	2	6
Post-theme 8: Sense of belonging due to the *Mni Sota Makoce* Curriculum	3	2	4

valued in school?" student responses included, "It's not valued," "Nope," "No," "Terrible, I think it was terrible." Students also indicated that when Dakota cultural knowledge was discussed or shared, some fellow non-Native students devalued it by making jokes, laughing, and mocking Dakota culture. For example, a student shared:

There is this kid and he was laughing because there was this Dakota hoop dancer that came in and he was wearing his traditional outfit. He said, "Oh he must not be a boy because he is wearing that skirt. He's just a little girl dancing around with hoops."

Pre-theme 2: Absent or Inaccurate Representation of Native Americans in Curriculum. Student responses reflected an absence of Native content and an emphasis on European American content. For example, students shared, "I haven't learned about it [Native content]" or "Our teacher he don't bring up no Native stuff. He only brings up like White stuff." Student responses also reflected an inaccurate representation of Native Americans, "sometimes they don't like tell the right story." Another student shared:

I think that sometimes they tell lies like in the books. They say the Whites won, it was the best thing ever. Like they don't say nothing

about one or two stories there would be the Indians won. The rest, like five hundred more stories the Whites won.

Pre-theme 3: Native Student Experiences of Racism in School. Native students talked about their experiences of racism in school, "Yeah there is a lot of racism" and "Lotta stereotypes." Other students indicated when the racism occurred, "Yeah, dealt with racism last year" and "Like Native American month, that's when we get a lot of our racism." Students also shared common experiences of racism through stories. For example:

In eighth grade there was some kid, and this was from last year. We set up our tipi in front of the school, he said, "Why don't you just go in your tipi and do drugs and commit suicide in there?" Like Dakotas [students] were coming in their [Dakota teachers'] offices and crying, it's just sad and ugly.

Pre-theme 4: Lack of Sense of Belonging due to Predominantly White Environments. Native students described a lack of belonging in school—"I didn't fit in," "I felt out of place," and "I don't feel like I belong." They attributed this lack of belonging to the racial imbalances in the school and

classrooms—"In school we can hardly fit in with the other people because they are all White." Students discussed how curricular content also contributed to their lack of sense of belonging—"They bring up the White stuff and then I sit there in the corner and then I'm like oh my gosh, I don't feel like I belong there. Just throws me off."

Pre-invalidating Native Students' Peoplehood Sense of Belonging Interpretation. While the peoplehood sense of belonging theoretical framework demonstrates how to support Native students' sense of belonging, it also shows how, when one's culture is attacked or demeaned, Native students' peoplehood sense of belonging can be undermined and diminished (Tachine et al., 2017). Given the importance of language, sacred history, land, and ceremonial cycle in the peoplehood sense of belonging framework (Tachine et al., 2017), the absence or inaccurate representation of Native Americans in the curriculum, the devaluing of the Dakota way of life, and experiences of racism created a hostile environment that attacked Native students' culture and diminished their peoplehood sense of belonging in school (Strayhorn, 2012). These factors are examples of the difficulties Native students can experience when attending school in predominantly white environments. The disconnect between the educational environment and Dakota culture created an atmosphere where Native students felt out of place, making it difficult for them to be "of a place" that supports their peoplehood sense of belonging (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Holm et al., 2003; Tachine et al., 2017).

Pre-supporting Native Students' Peoplehood Sense of Belonging. Prior to the cultural intervention, four themes related to "supporting Native students' peoplehood sense of belonging" were identified: suggestions for including Dakota content in school curriculum; sense of belonging due to the importance of Indian education;[12] sense of belonging due to friends/relatives; and affirming Dakota identity.

Pre-theme 5: Suggestions for Including Dakota Content in School Curriculum. Native students wanted teachers to include Dakota contributions in curricula and portray Dakota people and culture positively. For example, one student expressed the wish that their school would:

> Like actually show the positive things about us [Dakota] instead of always trying to show the negative because they always try to make it seem like we started most of the wars and like we are against them [White people] all the time. When this was kind of our place. This is our land.

Students also talked about how including Dakota contributions in curricula would help. "If we had more Dakota videos and things about Native, I'd feel more connected."

Pre-theme 6: Sense of Belonging due to the Importance of Indian Education. Native students talked about the importance of Indian education to their sense of belonging. Several students identified the Indian Education room as the only place in school—"Indian Ed, that's it"—where they felt "accepted," "safe," and a sense of belonging. Students felt safe because of the environment established by the Indian Education staff. One student said:

> Whenever I'm in [the Indian Education teacher's] room I feel safe because she has a whole bunch of Dakota stuff on her walls and she knows a lot about it. So I learn from her too. And I'm also safe because my friends are there with me.

Another student reported, "I feel safe in there, cause there's no one to judge you in there because we are all the same. So [I] don't really have to feel that someone's going to be mean to me."

Pre-theme 7: Sense of Belonging due to Friends/Relatives. Native students talked about having a sense of belonging when around their friends and relatives. For example, one student said, "Hanging out with my friends and relatives make me feel happy and accepted into the school." Another student shared:

> Ah once my friends . . . I was really happy once I said my introduction, cause that's like the main key you have to know to like introduce yourself to people . . . they said oh that's like really cool that you can do that. They were really interested at that time and I knew that they're really good friends cause they didn't make fun of me or any of that stuff, they really liked it.

Pre-theme 8: Affirming Dakota Identity. Native students expressed that they are "happy" and that it is "cool to be Native." Students affirmed their Dakota culture—"I love the Native ways" and "I like doing stuff our way"—and reaffirmed their positive feelings toward their identity. For example, one student conveyed the following to her fellow Native students:

> I just want us girls to be strong and hang in there. Don't let them bother you. Racial comments that you hear, just keep on moving in life. Just know that you're Dakota and that's who you are. Don't let anybody else tell you wrong, just try to be strong [students started clapping].

Pre-supporting Native Students' Peoplehood Sense of Belonging Interpretation. Given the importance of land and place (Holm et al., 2003) to a Native student's peoplehood sense of belonging, it is not surprising that Native students expressed a desire to see their culture and history depicted in school curriculum and wanted it known that "This is our land." Similar to Native college students who attributed their sense of belonging to a family member who was attending the same school (Tachine et al., 2017), Native students expressed that hanging out with relatives made them feel accepted in school. This finding aligns with existing literature that states family creates a shared sacred history and

can help individuals "fit within a particular environment" (Holm et al., 2003, p. 14). Not surprisingly, Indian education provided Native students with a place where they could come together and feel "safe" and "accepted" because their Dakota culture was supported.

Themes After the Cultural Intervention

Post-invalidating Native Students' Peoplehood Sense of Belonging. Following the cultural intervention, two themes related to "invalidating Native students' peoplehood sense of belonging" were identified: Native students' negative experiences in school and the Dakota way of life not valued in school.

Post-theme 1: Native Students' Negative Experiences in School. Native students described experiencing negative events in a variety of school settings (e.g., lunch, physical education, and talent show) and expressed, "We don't get treated always like the Whites do." For example, students talked about being picked on for being Native:

> We were playing volleyball. It [volleyball] landed near the boys, like where they were playing with the other volleyball, and then they took it and they would throw it at us. Like and then it would go bouncing off of us. And then they'd grab it and they'd start laughing. And then like whenever [a non-Native girl] threw it over there, they just kicked it back to her.

Students also expressed that when students were picking on them, teachers either did nothing or were selective when addressing peer provocation. For example:

> Well, sometimes in Novemb- in the Dakota month, during the classroom they [teachers] don't let kids be mean or anything. But whenever they're [non-Native kids are] in the halls and the teachers go by [and hear kids being mean], they don't really care.

Post-theme 2: The Dakota Way of Life Not Valued in School. Native students shared examples of European American students having negative reactions when Dakota knowledge and culture was shared in school and during implementation of the MSM Curriculum. For example, when Dakota students shared their Dakota traditions, such as language and dancing, "everyone will laugh," or when teachers were beginning another lesson from the curriculum some European American students "scream out, 'No.'" Other Native students believed that Dakota contributions, like the curriculum, would not be discussed after this project ended—"Yeah, I don't think after this curriculum thing in school we are not going to learn about it again."

Post-invalidating Native Students' Peoplehood Sense of Belonging Interpretation. It is not surprising that some European American students openly criticized the curriculum because, as Smith (1999) wrote, history is "the story of the powerful and how they became powerful" (p. 34), and

it provides tools essential for the maintenance of power, which affords European Americans' "positions in which they can continue to dominate others" (Smith, 1999, p. 34). Further, most social studies curriculum promotes American "exceptionalism" and avoids exploring issues connected to racism and inequality, which weaken the vision of a nation built on freedom and democracy (Shear, 2015). Thus, resistance may have occurred because the curriculum questioned European Americans' "right" to dominate others and disrupted the comfort associated with the dominant narrative, which presents history in a more palatable light (Rosaldo, 1989).

The negative comments directed at the curriculum undermined Native students' peoplehood sense of belonging by criticizing their culture. Further, Native students feeling as though they were not treated as well as White students reinforced a colonial past and present in which being White is perceived as superior to being Native. The frequency of microaggressions, such as these, not only invalidates Native students' peoplehood sense of belonging but also has a cumulative impact that can increase feelings of isolation, negatively impact academic achievement, and promote depression (Sue, 2010). Unfortunately, Native students are likely to continue to experience these types of microaggressions in school settings considering Native college students also report experiencing microaggressions, specifically microinvalidations, based on their cultural identity (Tachine et al., 2017; Yosso et al., 2009).

Post-supporting Native Students' Peoplehood Sense of Belonging. Following the cultural intervention, six themes related to "supporting Native students' peoplehood sense of belonging" were produced: the Dakota way of life valued in school; liked the *Mni Sota Makoce* Curriculum; a sense of belonging due to the importance of Indian education; a sense of belonging due to teachers defending Native students; a sense of belonging due to teachers respecting/acknowledging aspects of Dakota culture; and a sense of belonging due to the *Mni Sota Makoce* Curriculum.

Post-theme 3: The Dakota Way of Life Valued in School. The Dakota way of life was viewed as being valued in classrooms, by teacher's actions, in Indian education, through curricula, and by students being allowed to express their culture through classroom projects. The MSM Curriculum, and its supportive classroom materials (e.g., videos and language), was cited most often as an example of how the Dakota way of life was valued, "In social [our teacher] taught us the values and all that. Same with curriculum and the stories too." Teachers' actions were the second most-cited example of how the Dakota way of life was valued in school: "In language he [a teacher] always picks out what we get to read, like Dakota books and stuff."

Post-theme 4: Liked the Mni Sota Makoce Curriculum. Native students want the MSM Curriculum to continue and positively described aspects of the curriculum, "I like the story one about the bird. Yeah, we got to lay down and turn off the lights and just listen to it." Another student appreciated learning important details of history, "Whenever we were learning how that it was unfair that the fur traders and stuff, they tricked us into getting less and less land. It's cause, we couldn't, they couldn't read or write or understand English."

Post-theme 5: Sense of Belonging due to the Importance of Indian Education. Native students talked about the importance of Indian education to their sense of belonging. For example, "I feel like I belong when I go in the Indian Ed room," "I feel belonging in there," and "You can't really feel misplaced." Students identified the Indian Education room as a place "no one makes fun of you," they "don't judge," and "everyone has to be nice"; a place where they were surrounded by Native culture, "In her room it's only the Native stuff" and "They're all Natives in there"; and a place where they feel understood and accepted, "I feel like I belong when I go in the Indian Ed room because they like help me and they understand like where I come from and stuff like that. They don't like judge or anything."

Post-theme 6: Sense of Belonging due to Teachers Defending Native Students. Native students discussed having a sense of belonging because teachers defended them from negative and racist peer interactions in class. For example, students described teachers' actions, such as "makes everyone be nice to each other" and "If you're being racist [the teacher will] take care of it right away." Students described situations where teachers would reprimand negative or racist comments and behaviors in class. For example, one student shared:

> Whenever [my teacher] asked me if I'd do it [share language or songs] I said, "yeah." Then like whenever I sat back down [another student] started laughing and stuff and then said, "that's funny." And I said, "no it's not." And then [the student said] like, "yeah it is." Then [my teacher] just looked at them and told them to go out in the hall.

Post-theme 7: Sense of Belonging due to Teachers Respecting/Acknowledging Aspects of Dakota Culture. Native students talked about having a sense of belonging when teachers respected and/or acknowledged aspects of their Dakota culture. For example, students expressed, "feel like I belong," "now I feel safe in [my teacher's] room," and "because [my teacher] really understands you and your race." Students felt a sense of belonging when teachers expressed interest in or asked questions about Dakota culture, participated in Dakota community events, and asked students to share their Dakota language introductions. For example, one student shared, "My woods teacher is actually taking part in building traditional lacrosse sticks. He's coming out to the event that we have we're making. So he's been really getting into it too."

Post-theme 8: Sense of Belonging due to the Mni Sota Makoce Curriculum. Native students discussed feeling a sense of belonging in class due to the MSM Curriculum. For example, students stated they were "happy" when they had to do an assignment about Native Americans. Students also described how positive aspects of the curriculum made them feel accepted: "I feel accepted when I see my relatives on the videos." Another student discussed the positive impact the curriculum had on non-Native students:

> Once that guy said that we should go commit suicide and do drugs in a tipi, that like threw me off, and now that they watched the video they know that how we think about it. And now they kind of get it, like who we are and what we're meant to be. How we're meant to be here just like them.

Post-supporting Native Students' Peoplehood Sense of Belonging Interpretation. Native students experienced peoplehood sense of belonging when engaging with the MSM Curriculum, when learning about their culture, when sharing their culture with others, when teachers defended them against negative or racist peer interactions, due to Indian education, and when teachers respected and acknowledged their Dakota culture. Thus, Native students experienced a sense of belonging when their Indigenous peoplehood was affirmed and when they experienced cultural validation. Similar to previous findings, Native students' peoplehood sense of belonging begins with their Native heritage, language, customs, and history (Tachine et al., 2017) and was impacted by how it was, or was not, present and supported within the school environment.

Quantitative

Psychological Sense of School Membership. One purpose of the study was to gather quantitative data on changes in Native 6th ($n = 17$) and 10th ($n = 15$) grade students' sense of belonging prior to and following the cultural intervention. See Table 2 for means and standard deviations. The results from the paired sample *t*-tests indicate that from pre- to post-cultural intervention, 6th-grade students experienced decreases in their PSSM total scores, t(8) = 1.91, p = .046, and their rejection or disrespect subscale scores, t(13) = 1.88, p = .041. The effect sizes for the differences between pre- and post-scores were calculated using Cohen's *d*, resulting in a value of .54 for the PSSM total score, which is considered a moderate effect, and 1.33 for the rejection or disrespect subscale score, which is considered a large effect. No differences occurred for the subscale scores for caring adult relationships, t(13) = .38, p = .356, and acceptance or belongingness at school, t(14) = .06, p = .475. The results

TABLE 2
Native Students' Mean PSSM Scores Before and After the Cultural Intervention

Scale	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Mean	(*SD*)	Mean	(*SD*)
6th Grade				
PSSM Total scale*	3.67	(0.74)	3.32	(0.84)
Caring adult relationships	4.09	(0.51)	4.00	(0.77)
Acceptance or belongingness	3.33	(0.82)	3.32	(1.17)
Rejection or disrespect*	3.62	(1.16)	2.95	(1.35)
10th Grade				
PSSM Total scale	3.30	(0.54)	3.36	(0.61)
Caring adult relationships*	3.65	(0.94)	3.98	(0.81)
Acceptance or belongingness	2.99	(0.66)	3.07	(0.66)
Rejection or disrespect	3.62	(0.83)	3.55	(1.01)

Note. $*p < .05$.

indicate that from pre- to post-cultural intervention, Native 6th-grade students experienced a decrease in their overall psychological sense of school membership and higher levels of rejection or disrespect.

The results from the paired sample *t*-tests indicate that from pre- to post-cultural intervention, 10th-grade students experienced an increase in their caring adult relationships subscale scores, $t(12) = -1.82, p = .047$. The effect size for the difference between pre- and post-scores was calculated using Cohen's *d*, resulting in a value of .65, which is considered a moderate effect. No differences occurred for the PSSM total score, $t(12) = -.44, p = .333$, or the subscale scores for acceptance or belongingness at school, $t(13) = -.49, p = .317$, and rejection or disrespect, $t(13) = .30, p = .383$. The results indicate that from pre- to post-cultural intervention, Native 10th-grade students experienced an increase in their caring adult relationships.

Discussion

Our results indicate that the overarching goal of this CBPR case study was achieved, in that a Native community created, implemented, and evaluated a cultural intervention to increase Native students' sense of belonging by incorporating Dakota language, sacred history, ceremonial cycle, and relationships to land (Tachine et al., 2017) into a public school's curriculum. The curriculum included stories of Native resiliency and survival despite colonization and emphasized the cultural strengths of Dakota people. This focus is in agreement with the concept of "persistent peoples," which acknowledges the first people's survival despite past and present colonization (Holm et al., 2003; Vizenor, 2008), a foundation of the peoplehood sense of belonging theoretical framework (Tachine et al., 2017).

The qualitative and quantitative results provide a nuanced picture of how the cultural intervention influenced Native students' peoplehood sense of belonging within a predominantly white environment. Specifically, while Native students liked the curriculum and reported an increase in support and a decrease in invalidation of their peoplehood sense of belonging, and 10th-grade students experienced an increase in caring relationships, Native students also witnessed some European American students criticizing the curriculum. Criticism of the curriculum, along with other negative events (e.g., being picked on in the hallways and perceptions of being treated more poorly than White students), likely contributed to Native 6th-grade students' decreased levels of school membership and increased levels of rejection or disrespect. This work reinforces a previous finding that Native students' peoplehood sense of belonging increases to the degree to which they can be both connected to their Indigenous cultural heritage and also free from experiencing racism and microaggressions in school environments (Tachine et al., 2017).

Prior to the cultural intervention, Native students described either an absence of Native-related content or inaccurate representations of Native Americans in the school curriculum. This finding is not surprising, considering American education traditionally portrays Natives with a romanticized and inaccurate past or as invisible in the present (First Nations Development Institute & Echo Hawk Consulting, 2018; McMurchy-Pilkington et al., 2008). Native students saw the absent and inaccurate representations as problematic and expressed a desire for their teachers to include Dakota content in the curriculum, which would increase their peoplehood sense of belonging. After the cultural intervention, Native students overwhelmingly reported that the Dakota way of life was being valued in school. Not only did the number of statements regarding the Dakota way of life not being valued in the school decrease, a new theme, the largest in the study, about the Dakota way of life being valued in school was produced. These results demonstrate some of the positive impacts that arose from supporting Native students' peoplehood sense of belonging in school.

Prior to the cultural intervention, Native students discussed feeling as though they did not belong in the school's predominantly white environment. Native students' lack of sense of belonging may have occurred because they were questioning whether the school's environment and curricula reflected their culture (Voelkl, 1996) and because they experienced racist incidents. Experiencing racism at school likely decreased Native students' perceptions of safety, which plays an important role in students' sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2018). The adverse impact of racism on Native students' sense of belonging is similar to previous research that found stereotypes, racism, and microaggressions negatively impacted Native college students (Brayboy, 2015; Caplan & Ford,

2014) and racism intensified Native students' feelings of isolation and marginalization (Jackson et al., 2003). Further, prior to the cultural intervention, Native students felt the need to affirm their Dakota identity. By encouraging one another to be proud of their Dakota culture, students drew upon their cultural background and gained strength to deal with the discrimination they experienced (Fryberg & Leavitt, 2014) and the lack of sense of belonging they felt in the predominantly white environment.

Native students indicated the importance of Indian education both prior to and following the cultural intervention. This finding, which occurred in a K–12 environment, relates to previous research that found a Native student center supported Native college students' peoplehood sense of belonging (Tachine et al., 2017) and Native staff enriched college students' sense of belonging (Oxendine, 2015). Native students indicated that they felt "accepted" and "safe" because they were surrounded by Dakota culture and Indigenous friends, and they learned from the Indian Education staff. The results suggest that Indian education, a racially homogenous environment, provided Native students space to cope with rejection due to racism (Moran, 1999) and reinforced the importance of "claiming Indigenous space" in a school environment (Windchief & Joseph, 2015).

Following the cultural intervention, Native students stated teachers supported their peoplehood sense of belonging by defending them from negative peer interactions and demonstrating understanding of or interest in the Dakota culture. These results are supported by a recent meta-analysis, which found that teacher support was the strongest factor impacting school belonging (Allen et al., 2018). These new sources of Native sense of belonging relate to two of the four defining attributes—positive social relations, positive emotions, involvement, and harmonization—of sense of belonging (St-Amand et al., 2017). Specifically, the curriculum supported positive social relations with teachers because Native students received support, respect, encouragement, and acceptance when teachers defended them and respected and acknowledged aspects of their Dakota culture. Native students also experienced positive emotions, because learning about Dakota culture in school provided them with a sense of pride, attachment, and usefulness and supported their peoplehood sense of belonging. This cultural intervention is an example of how K–12 students' sense of belonging can be strengthened through a targeted strategy, which addresses a criticism within the field (Allen et al., 2018).

Before the cultural intervention, Native students reported experiencing racism, whereas following the intervention, they discussed negative experiences in school. There are at least two possible explanations for why students reported negative rather than racist experiences post-cultural intervention. First, Native students reported that, after the cultural intervention, but not before, teachers defended them against racist behaviors and comments. It is possible that European American

students also perceived this change in teacher behavior and subsequently decreased their racist actions. Second, the cultural intervention supported Native students' racial-ethnic socialization by providing culturally supportive socialization, which teaches youth cultural knowledge, values, and history while practicing cultural traditions to promote cultural pride (Priest et al., 2014). Ethnic-racial socialization has been found to moderate negative outcomes associated with racial discrimination and racism (Stevenson & Arrington, 2009). Further, use of Native culture and language has been found to provide students with a buffer against the impacts of discrimination and cultural biases (Demmert, 2005). Thus, the cultural intervention likely helped Native students mitigate the negative impacts of racist experiences. Further, after the cultural intervention, Native students did not feel the need to affirm their Dakota identity as they did before, possibly because they received affirmation from the cultural intervention and more support of their peoplehood sense of belonging. This information suggests that the cultural intervention supported Native students' racial-ethnic socialization and gave them a stronger sense of self, less vulnerable to racist aggressions.

While 10th-grade students experienced an increase in caring adult relationships, 6th-grade students experienced a decrease in their overall psychological sense of school membership and increased levels of rejection or disrespect. Ethnic identity shows a developmental progression (Phinney, 1993) and adolescents with achieved ego identity are less susceptible to self-esteem manipulation (Marcia, 1966). This information suggests that 10th-grade students likely had an achieved ego identity and a more stable sense of belonging compared to 6th-grade students. Further, Native 10th-grade students likely reconciled their racial and cultural group membership with the stereotypes and expectations of others outside their group when they developed their ethnic-racial identity (Way et al., 2013), explaining why they did not experience an increase in rejection or disrespect after hearing non-Native students criticize the cultural intervention.

European American students' negative reaction to the curriculum is not surprising considering teachers report experiencing push-back when they teach information that counters the dominant narrative (Rains, 2003). This cultural intervention is an example of how inclusion of diverse voices disrupts the mainstream narrative by including the critical dialogue and counterstories of experienced oppression (e.g., Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Although uncomfortable for some European American students, the exclusion of Native history and this reality is harmful to Native students and a disservice to Indigenous and non-Native students alike (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). Further, "All students deserve to learn the dark and light parts of U.S. history and to work together to envision and create a country where Indigenous self-determination and treaty rights are upheld" (Shear, 2015, p. 34). Our results suggest that for teachers working with students who are in the process of developing their ego

identity (e.g., 6th-grade students), it is especially important to effectively address racism and negativity from non-Indigenous students immediately and overtly so teachers can create atmospheres that support rather than invalidate Native students' peoplehood sense of belonging.

In pre-talking circles, Native students noted that previous attempts to integrate their culture into school (e.g., Native American History Month) prompted racist incidents that alienated them. While the cultural intervention did not result in overt racism, there is a concern that any "extra" inclusion of Native topics may have unintended negative consequences on Native students' sense of belonging. With this concern in mind, it is important to note that statements that supported Native students' peoplehood sense of belonging increased from pre- ($n = 34$, 39.5%) to post- ($n = 54$, 72%) cultural intervention while statements that invalidated Native students' peoplehood sense of belonging decreased from pre- ($n = 52$, 60.5%) to post- ($n = 21$, 28%) cultural intervention. Additionally, post-intervention Native students experienced three new sources of sense of belonging (i.e., sense of belonging due to teachers defending Native students, teachers respecting/acknowledging aspects of their Dakota culture, and the *Mni Sota Makoce* Curriculum) and reported liking the curriculum. In sum, our results do not suggest discontinuation of the curriculum, rather more education is needed regarding how Dakota way of life can be integrated into the school so Dakota culture is not seen as strange or unfamiliar and something to be criticized. This recommendation accords with Sleeter (2011) who suggests that multicultural studies should be integrated throughout curricula and not serve as a separate subject, which often perpetuates negative stereotypes or undermines the value of multiculturalism. Further, NCSS (2018) recommends:

> Indigenous Peoples, Nations, and histories are foundational to the story of America, and thus, should be *foundational*, not peripheral, to social studies curriculum (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2015). Rather than including Indigenous Peoples in isolated units of study, multicultural activities, or the month of November, Indigenous perspectives, knowledges, and analyses should be meaningfully integrated into social studies. Social studies education must move from learning only *about* Indigenous peoples, to learning *from* Indigenous analyses. (Sabzalian, 2016, p. 169)

For the education system in the United States to transition from learning about Indigenous peoples to learning from Indigenous peoples, communities, worldviews, and pedagogies, decolonization of K–12 classrooms and post-secondary institutions is necessary. We can learn from Canadian educational institutions that are in the midst of decolonizing their educational spaces (for a review see Webb & Mashford-Pringle, 2022) following the release of the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report, which called for schools, colleges, and universities to "develop culturally

appropriate curricula" and "provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms" (TRC of Canada, 2015, pp. 2, 7). To effectively reach the above goals, teachers need to be taught how to create cultural safety in their classrooms. Cultural safety is considered:

> The effective teaching of a person/family from another culture by a teacher who has undertaken a process of reflection on his/her own cultural identity and recognizes the impact of the teacher's culture on his/her own classroom practice. . . . Unsafe cultural practice is any action that diminishes, demeans or disempowers the cultural identity and well-being of an individual or group. (Harrison et al., 2012, p. 324)

As more educational institutions work to decolonize their curriculum, our results reinforce the need to keep in mind that, according to systemic change, literature education reform efforts often include an implementation "dip" (Fixsen et al., 2005; Fullan, 2001). Thus, some initial negative outcomes should be expected and not used as a reason to avoid integrating Indigenous epistemologies (how knowledge can be known) and pedagogies (how knowledge can be taught) into schools.

Limitations and Future Research

A limitation of this study is that it lacked a comparison group, thus it is impossible to know if any pre- and post-differences are due to the cultural intervention or other confounding variables. For example, the cultural intervention was implemented over the first two quarters of the school year. Thus, pre-cultural intervention data were collected when students were developing relationships with their teachers, possibly influencing the findings related to teachers and sense of belonging. Future researchers should consider controlling the time of implementation of a cultural intervention. Although our small sample size limited our power to detect statistically significant results, it is important to make more visible the data regarding Native students. Too often, Native students are treated as an asterisk or footnote (Shotton et al., 2013), excluded from educational conversations and rendered largely invisible (Brayboy, 2004; Fryberg & Stephens, 2010). Another limitation is that the long-term impacts of the curriculum were not assessed, which is something future researchers should study. Additionally, scholars should study if and how decolonizing school curriculum and environments results in an initial "dip" in outcomes (e.g., teacher satisfaction, student sense of belonging) and how to properly prepare Native and non-Native teachers to create cultural safety in their classrooms and to understand and utilize Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies.

Recommendations for Funders, Schools, Researchers, and Native Communities

Native Americans consistently have the lowest graduation rates in the country (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). The persistent low graduation rates, the important role sense of belonging plays in intention to persist (Hausmann et al., 2007) and graduate (Hoffman et al., 2002), and the sense of belonging's central role in many Native cultures necessitates centering the voice of Native communities in curricula (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010). Funders should support community-based research partnerships between Native communities and researchers to develop cultural interventions designed to increase Native students' people-hood sense of belonging. School districts should adopt cultural interventions instead of culturally adapted or culturally based interventions and educational materials because, although the latter produce practices that have cultural content or activities, these interventions and educational materials are conceptualized, designed, and evaluated from a Western theoretical perspective (Allen et al., 2011), providing a further means of colonization (Lucero, 2011).

Dakota Wicohaŋ is partnering with Minnesota schools and districts and has coupled receipt and use of the MSM Curriculum with a two-day teacher training. To date, over 200 teachers have received training designed to support teachers' examination of their own educational experiences related to Native Americans, understanding of why the curriculum is needed, introduction to the curriculum, and learning about Dakota worldview and Indigenous teachings, concepts, and orientations centered in the curriculum. While this work has introduced the MSM Curriculum to thousands of students across Minnesota, moving forward teacher education programs should adopt the curriculum and two-day teacher training as one step toward systematically addressing educational disparities. Additional efforts should support the development of policies regarding the teaching and incorporation of Indigenous content in school curricula and resources for teachers to acquire the skills and cultural sensitivity necessary to teach and incorporate Indigenous content effectively and safely into curricula (Webb & Mashford-Pringle, 2022). Moreover, teacher education programs can support Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and Tribal Nation–building through the preparation of Indigenous teachers (Anthony-Stevens et al., 2020). Further, teachers and preteachers need to be taught how to effectively address racism both in and out of the classroom. Future researchers should examine how such work with teachers and preteachers influences Native students' peoplehood sense of belonging.

This CBPR case study demonstrates how a cultural intervention, designed by a Native community and adopted by a school partner, can increase Native students' peoplehood sense of belonging through a targeted strategy. Teachers can facilitate Native students' sense of belonging by defending them against fellow students' racist and invalidating behaviors and by respecting and acknowledging aspects of Native their culture. Cultural interventions can provide Native students a source of racial-ethnic socialization that will help mitigate the negative impacts of racism experienced in predominantly white school environments. Indigenous knowledge should be infused into the curriculum so that cultural interventions are seen as the norm rather than strange and unfamiliar. Further, teacher education programs and schools need to prepare teachers to effectively deal with racist and discriminatory behavior and integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms. The MSM Curriculum joins others (e.g., NCSS, 2018; Shear et al., 2018) in providing examples and recommendations for how schools can decolonize their social studies curriculum and is a model for how Native communities can partner with researchers to develop cultural interventions to increase Native students' peoplehood sense of belonging in their own homelands.

Appendix

Question Route for Talking Circles
Opening question:

1. At this time, we would like each of you to say your first name or pseudonym, your age, and something you do for fun in your free time.

Introductory questions:

2. Please describe your general experience of being an American Indian student in the school system.

We want to hear as many stories as possible. It doesn't matter if your story is just like someone else's or you feel like it is not important, we are interested in your unique experience.
Transition question:

3. In thinking about your own experiences, can you describe a situation in which you felt a sense of belonging or connectedness in school?

Key questions:

4. How is the Dakota way of life valued in school?
5. In what ways are Dakota people represented in the curriculum?
6. What is your sense of belonging in the classroom?
7. What are your feelings of connectedness in the classroom?

Ending questions:

8. Is there anything else that you would like to share regarding your experiences of sense of belonging, connectedness, and/or visibility of Dakota people in the school system? Any additional insight you have to offer is helpful to our research and genuinely appreciated.
9. *(facilitator)* Today you shared several experiences. Some of you said . . .
10. What are some themes you heard from one another's experiences?
11. Do you feel like we missed any key points?

Open Practices Statement

The questionnaires, question route, and data analysis files for this article can be found at https://www.openicpsr.org/openicpsr/project/194830/version/V1/view.

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Notes

1. When referring to Native populations, we use Native and Indigenous interchangeably.
2. We Are Still Here Minnesota: https://washmn.org/about/.
3. Tribal Nations Education Committee: https://www.tnecmn.com/.
4. National Congress of American Indians Becoming Visible toolkit: https://www.ncai.org/policy-research-center/research-data/prc-publications/NCAI-Becoming_Visible_Report-Digital_FINAL_10_2019.pdf.
5. St. Cloud State University's Minnesota Indian Teacher Training Program; https://www.stcloudstate.edu/aic/resources/mittp.aspx.
6. University of Oregon Sapsik'ʷałá program: Sapsik'ʷałá Teacher Education Program | College of Education (uoregon.edu).
7. University of Idaho's Indigenous Knowledge for Effective Education Program: IKEEP-College of Education, Health and Human Sciences-University of Idaho (uidaho.edu).

8. Canada has made progress in decolonizing education and improving the cultural safety in both K–12 and postsecondary classrooms. See Webb and Mashford-Pringle (2022) for a review.
9. A cultural intervention (i.e., culture is the intervention and cultural activities are derived from the community) differs from a culturally adapted intervention (i.e., culturally adapts evidence-based interventions) or culturally based intervention (i.e., designed for specific communities) in that it is conceptualized, designed, and evaluated from an Indigenous rather than Western theoretical perspective (Allen et al., 2011).
10. The 19-minute talking circle consisted of two students.
11. Moustakas's (1994) structured method of analysis was used because, in accordance with wowaciŋye, Dakota Wicohaŋ research partners chose to utilize the non-Native principal investigator's skills and knowledge.
12. The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Indian Education, funds Title VI Indian Education Formula Grants that are often used to support Indian education staff and spaces in elementary and secondary schools.

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