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# Intergenerational Perspectives On Leadership By Men Of The Three Affiliated Tribes

Chad Beldon Dahlen

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INTERGENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP  
BY MEN OF THE THREE AFFILIATED TRIBES

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Grand Forks, North Dakota

December  
2018

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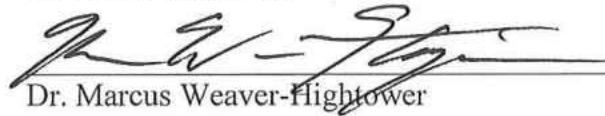
This dissertation, submitted by Chad Beldon Dahlen in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.



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This dissertation is being submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all of the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved.



Dr. Grant McGimpsey  
Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

December 6, 2018

Date

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Title            Intergenerational Perspectives on Leadership by Men of the Three  
                    Affiliated Tribes

Department    Educational Leadership

Degree         Doctor of Philosophy

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Chad Beldon Dahlen  
November 9, 2018

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine perceptions of leadership and education held by three father-son pairs of Native American Three Affiliated Tribes members. Two father-son pairs with one triad of grandfather, father and son have all graduated from college and are considered leaders by their peers or have accomplished significant achievements, and are recognized by their community. Portraiture was used as a methodological framework for this project. Qualitative data were collected using interviews, observations, and formal and informal visits. Document analysis was used to describe and analyze how these Native fathers and sons were able to navigate high school, college, and their current lives to make them leaders in their fields. This study explored participants' perspectives on leadership and offers an uncommon perspective on three sets of Native fathers and sons who were able to attain their college degrees as well as define their leadership roles both on and off the reservation. This study is unique in many ways by providing a deeply personal window into the lives of my subjects. I found a limited number of studies using qualitative research on Three Affiliated Tribes men as well as a limited number of research studies about Native American male perspectives on leadership.

Through the use of portraiture methodology, this study gives a voice to the participants by allowing them to tell their story using their own words. Several overarching themes such as the use of storytelling in teaching, the importance of cross-generational advice, the importance of mindset when going through life, and the collective view of tribal leadership sparked many conversations.

Key Words: Portraiture; Leadership; Intergenerational; Tribal Critical Race Theory, Three Affiliated Tribes, Male Perspectives

**MAXANA (CHAPTER I)**  
**THE GRAND ENTRY (INTRODUCTION)**



*Figure 1.* “Grand Entry.” Scene at the United Tribes Powwow, September 2016. Photo by Chad Dahlen.

When I was beginning this journey of writing my dissertation, the subject matter led me to think about the sacredness of the powwow’s Grand Entry. Our people treat the Grand Entry with the utmost respect. Flags are raised first thing in the morning and a prayer goes out for the powwow as the Eagle staff, along with the flags of the United States, local tribes, and visiting tribes, are brought into the arena. As the powwow is about to start, drums can be heard and excitement fills the air. Vendors line up around the arena with the smell of fresh fry bread teasing the senses. As a drum begins to beat, the tribal chairman or chief, members of the military, and powwow royalty make their

entrance into the powwow grounds. Soon elders come into the arena, dancing stoically, their faces filled with memories of times long ago. Then male dancers come in “strutting their stuff,” showing that they are here and hoping to make an impression on the grounds. Finally, jingles can be heard in a melody that blends in perfectly with the drums as the female dancers arrive showing their colors and braided hair, some smiling, and others stoic as they dance around the arena.

Powwows are systematic and have an order, as is common to all such events in Indian Country. This ritual is sacred, with everything conducted in a certain way, and the people participating respect the order. Everyone has a role—from the Master of Ceremonies to the host drums to the arena director—and all play a part in putting together the powwow.

Bringing my dissertation to life is similar in its rituals, with a solemn and prayerful beginning, respect for the journey it is going on, and a role for everyone who is involved in the research process. The researcher, the committee chairperson, committee members, research subjects, and the researcher’s family all play important roles in developing a successful dissertation.

The arbor in the powwow arena is the area where the people sit on the outside and the dancers dance on the inside of the powwow area. The circular nature of an arbor plays a vital part in this study as a metaphor for the constant comparative method adopted for the process of data collection and analysis. The arbor is built in a circle because it symbolizes Native Americans’ life cycles. As dancers move in a circular fashion empowering the valued sacred circle, so are interviews of fathers and sons analyzed to learn how they created their circles of leadership and education within families.

## **This Is My Grand Entry**

When I was 8 years old I attended a track meet where my Uncle Marty was running. I had heard stories of how good he was, so I was interested in seeing this phenomenon for myself. As an 8-year-old boy I still can picture his race in my mind. *The gun goes off and I start watching as I hear my folks talking in the background, "Same old Marty, start off slow, tease the runners ahead of him, and then he will outrun them with his kick at the end."* That is exactly how the race happened. Uncle Marty let the other runners get way ahead of him in the mile run, and then with about one-half lap to go, he kicked it in and blew by everyone to win the race. My Uncle would tell me how to train, how many miles I should be running, and he continued to give me racing advice as I got older. That advice was one of the first lessons in leadership that I received from someone other than my parents.

Watching my Uncle Marty win the mile race at a track meet in Dickinson, North Dakota, was my first taste of his success. Uncle Marty, a tribally enrolled member, would later go on to win state titles in the one mile and two mile runs during his junior and senior years in high school. I watched and tried to emulate him as I had seen not only his success in track, but also the level of self-discipline and work ethic that he demonstrated in training. I wanted to be like him, to emulate the confidence he had, and to hear the cheers from a crowd as I imagined myself running the last 200 yards to victory.

Leadership came naturally to me through sports, mainly running and basketball, at a young age. As a kid I would sit and listen to my Dad talk about the days when his team went to state finals for basketball. The stories about his teammates and coaches became ingrained in my memories. I found myself gravitating toward the successful people in our



area and trying to find out what magic formula they had for success as demonstrated by them in my youth. I watched and studied the leaders of various tribes to see what set them apart from others. It was a blessing to have an Aunt who would become Chairperson of our tribe. The grace and humility she exuded made leadership seem like such a humble endeavor to my young mind. The pull toward strong leaders and understanding what they could do for our communities, tribes, and schools impacted me.

### **The Research**

The premise of this study was to examine Native American education and perceptions of leadership using a traditional yet innovative research method. Instead of focusing on negative issues that pervade studies of Native Americans, the focus of this study was on Natives who demonstrated positive attitudes and who went on to become professionals and leaders in their field. Brayboy, Lomawaima, & Villegas (2007) recommend that when conducting research on Native men and boys, researchers should take a strengths-based approach to the research. This approach seeks to build on the cultural engagement in the world and wisdom in intergenerational exchanges of knowledge. I took this approach and enjoyed this type of engagement with the participants. All of the fathers and sons who participated in this study were college educated, had served in leadership positions, and had worked in their academic disciplines.

The three sets of Native intergenerational men agreed to take a critical look at how they navigated the cultural barriers of high school and college to become leaders and professionals in their fields. I encouraged them to share their stories of leadership and educational journeys in their own words. My research magnified the need for this type of

investigation into Native American leadership and the perceptions of what leadership is, specifically, through voices of Native American men.

As I engaged in data collection and analysis, the need for this type of research became even more apparent. In the process perhaps more questions were posed than were answered. As further questions arose, it showed that there had not been enough research on Native American men and leadership in the academic arena. Perspectives on educational leadership in the average graduate program draw on research conducted with White men, with little evidence while doing my literature review to show contrary.

To approach the subject of leadership from the perspective of Native men is to explore diverse cultural points of view. Looking through the lens of a Native leader to explore what it means to be a Native leader, one must first have a thoughtful look at the diverse cultural viewpoints of leadership. There are several viewpoints of leadership, but as Sandefur and Deloria (2018) point out, “Not all Indian leaders are war leaders; not all leaders are chiefs; not all leaders live in the past” (p.127). This is important to keep in mind as research shows Native leadership to be different from traditional Western models of leadership. Sandefur and Deloria go on to explain that Native Americans have a variety of different styles of leadership that range from visionaries to intellectuals to practical leaders who work with the mundane problems of every day tribal issues.

Although this study fleshed out concepts of leadership and the importance of education through voices of the participants, it was important to start this study with a definition of leadership and to follow that simple definition with a contemporary definition of leadership. Merriam-Webster’s Learner’s Dictionary (Leadership, 2018) has defined leadership as “1a: a position as a leader of a group, organization, etc. . . . b: the

time when a person holds the position of leader . . . 2: the power or ability to lead other people . . . 3: the leaders of a group, organization, or country” (pars. 1-4).

P.G. Northouse (2010), a leader in the educational leadership discipline, defines leadership from a Western perspective as a process that involves influencing others’ needs, group desires, and involves goals. He goes on to say that leadership involves and interplays between leaders and followers in order to function. This interpretation explains that a single definition is impossible while many theorists emphasize similar characteristics. He states that this attempt to truly define leadership is complex, situational, and dependent on the person and their perception and experience (2010).

Michael Fullan (2007), one of the most respected professionals in the educational leadership field, whose theories have evolved during a lifetime of practice, provides a definition of leadership saying effective leaders intertwine their natural abilities of personal, interpersonal, and cognitive skills with their competencies to handle challenges that come their way. Fullan conveys that they do this by being level headed, relating to others, and trying to come to agreements that involve joint actions. This style of leadership as a framework is made up of five components of independent, but “mutually reinforcing forces” (2007, p. 4) for positive change. Fullan used the term “positive” to acknowledge that different people have different perceptions of being leaders. The five pillars of Fullan’s leadership theory model require leaders to: have a moral purpose, understand the change process, actively build relationships, create knowledge and share it, and finally, build coherence and put everything together to make sense. Fullan’s (2015) leadership model is grounded in the educational field, but his model has many universal truths to it.

I adopted Fullan's (2015) model of leadership for this study as I explored my participants' perceptions of effective leadership. I understand that there are other theories of leadership that are available, but Fullan's model of leadership represents the current thinking about leadership in education.

I embarked on this journey to explore general perceptions of leadership preparation from a Native American man's perspective, experiences of leadership, intergenerational differences, and comparisons with existing theory. It was through the participants' voices, their perceptions, and their peers that a clearer understanding of leadership emerged from men of the Three Affiliated Tribes. As interviews unfolded, and patterns and codes began to appear, the participants' perceptions of leadership were explored in depth to discover how they related to mainstream America. Within cultures there are different perspectives of what leadership may look like depending on various demographics and regions.

Qualitative methods were employed to gather data from three father-son pairs with college degrees and experience of leadership in a variety of professions. Professions used for this purpose were any jobs that required some type of college degree. Investigation of how each father-son pair defined leadership was undertaken while linking age groups of participants to learn their perspectives of leadership compared and contrasted with each other. The researcher looked at the importance of education by asking the respondents to describe their educational journey and communicate how it contributed to their viewpoints on leadership.

### **Significance of Study**

Researching leadership perspectives of men from the Three Affiliated Tribes is

significant for many reasons. Although there have been several research studies conducted on Native Americans that looked at problems of reservations and the obstacles Native Americans face, there is a lack of research regarding leadership, especially qualitative studies conducted by Native researchers from the perspective of Native American men.

I used a form of Critical Race Theory that looks to decolonize research and make it useful for the local tribal members to share their stories and perspectives in a meaningful way to help understand Native leadership from a local level (Yazzie-Mintz, 2013). Tribal Critical Race Theory came about as an offshoot of Critical Race Theory designed to address issues of Native American educational disparities. Tribal Critical Race Theory has never been utilized on research relevant to the Three Affiliated Tribes. This particular type of qualitative research is related to many tribes' historical ways of communicating through storytelling. The conversation on both Critical Race Theory and Tribal Critical Race Theory will be explored more deeply in Chapter II.

“The most interesting claims people make are those about themselves,” Basso quoted Clyde Kluckmahohn (1996, p. 37) in his book titled, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, to illustrate the point that while doing research it is the small side conversations that sometimes lead to nuggets in research that you are looking for. With that in mind, this research led me to investigate tribal sons and compare and contrast their stories, experiences, and perceptions to those of their fathers (and grandfather). I interviewed participants and noted common and contrasting intergenerational patterns that came about in their responses and discussions.

Choosing father-son pairs for this study was a way to look at the value of

knowledge that is passed on from generation to generation, as well as the creation of circles of leadership and education within families. The focus of this research was to discover if there were any lessons to be learned from these families of college educated men that could be passed on to other members of my tribal community. In previous studies of Native Americans, the main focus has typically been on pursuing a deficit model of Native families. This study examined the circle of education within the family and how that has promoted leadership within families.

This method of research triangulates the data by using the individual transcripts, group transcripts of fathers-sons, the researcher journal, and observations. This style contradicts in many ways with itself, but it is one that helps to further the social justice cause (Stake, 2010). Triangulation of data does three things for a study: 1. Increases the validity of the study 2. Decreases researcher bias, and 3. Provides multiple perspectives of the phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). I used triangulation for my research as recommended by Renz, Carrington, & Badger, (2018) by preparing the data through transcriptions, doing several readings of the transcribed interviews, making notes of the interviews, reflexive journaling, defining the codes, themes and organizing them in a way that was understandable. The final steps were drawing conclusions from the coded data and interpreting these findings.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine how leadership is perceived by men that are tribal members and what helpful structures participants have utilized to reach leadership positions, and then, to retell these stories and the lessons inherent in them. I wanted to see if there was an intergenerational congruence between the elders' perception

of education and leadership and their “modern sons” viewpoint of education and leadership. In addition, for me personally, the purpose of this study was to look at developing a model of leadership that is more congruent with a Native perspective, especially of men from the Three Affiliated Tribes perspective, as well as to provide a starting point for more scholarly research in this area.

### **Research Questions**

Participants were asked to share life stories with a particular focus on their journeys to successful leadership positions. The following research questions were used to frame the study:

1. What traits do men from the Three Affiliated Tribes believe to be characteristic of effective leaders?
2. What are the generational differences/similarities between the leadership experience and beliefs of fathers and sons from the Three Affiliated Tribes?
3. What do men from the Three Affiliated Tribes believe, promote and challenge about education and leadership?

Some of the sub-questions that accompanied this study were:

1. What were the participants’ educational journeys like?
2. What benefits and barriers did participants experience?
3. What are the leadership lessons to be learned from this study?
4. Who were role models of the participants when they were growing up, and how did the participants’ role models shape who the participants were at the time of this study?

Given my research questions, I utilized my literature review to frame some of the research and scholarly discussion occurring at the time of my study surrounding leadership and success.

### **Researcher's Background**

Because I am a Mandan/Hidatsa/Lakota Native man and an enrolled member of the Three Affiliated Tribes, this study was relevant to tribal member needs as research was performed and results interpreted through the eyes of a fellow Three Affiliated Tribes member. Because I have six children—four girls and twin boys—this study was also relevant to my personal quest to become a better father and leader. By looking through the eyes of participants I interviewed, I was able to see what I could do to better help my kids as well as my fellow tribal members.

Growing up just off the Twin Buttes, North Dakota, segment of the Three Affiliated Tribes Reservation, I found few male role models with 4-year college degrees, and even fewer with advanced college degrees. It was through this study that I hoped tribal members would gain a better idea of how to improve leadership skills while also exploring participants' perspectives about the role education played in their lives. At the time of this study I had been an educator and former school administrator in the North Dakota educational system for more than 18 years. I had spent most my professional life working in areas of leadership as a class advisor, coach, teacher, athletic director, and a principal/superintendent. It was by conducting this research that I sought to improve the leadership skills of our upcoming young men on my reservation. This study is important because little research has been conducted on leadership in the Three Affiliated Tribes.

It is important to note that because I am a researcher and a Three Affiliated Tribal



member, my examination of this topic has a duality to it. This means I will be speaking from more than one viewpoint trying to walk in and navigate through two worlds to give clarity, voice and scholarship regarding the perceptions of leadership offered by the study participants. While I was doing this research, I had times where there was tension between the two identities. The time I first felt that tension was when I was presenting my research proposal to the Three Affiliated Tribes. As a researcher, I wanted to make sure that I presented my proposal in a scholarly manner, yet as a Three Affiliated Tribal member I wanted to be careful not to come across as too educated. Presenting this project in a humble, respectful manner to the tribe while still having a touch of academic rigor was a challenge. The biggest challenge was in writing this dissertation for both the academic audience and the Native community. I wanted this research to speak to both worlds to show an appreciation of the principles of a formal study while at the same time bridging two worlds in a narrative that speaks about positions and truths, and tells a story.

### **Organization of Study**

This study is organized into six chapters. Maxana (the Mandan word for one) is this “Grand Entry” chapter, which presents an introduction to the study, theoretical framework, significance of the study, purpose of the study, research questions, and the researcher’s background. Núp (the Mandan word for two), “Answer is on the Hill,” contains a review of available literature related to education, leadership, and intergenerational studies. It also provides the theoretical framework where I address the background/context of how I frame the “portraits” in this study. Namini is the Mandan word for three. “Giving the Tobacco” provides the methods used to gather and analyze data for the study. Toop is the Mandan word for four. In this chapter “Interpretations”

presents findings from interviews and how they relate to the interviewer's questions.

Kixö is the Mandan word for five. "Intergenerational Differences and Similarities"

explores how the circles of fathers and sons are interconnected. Kïimà is the Mandan

word for six. In this chapter "Storytelling" presents a discussion of results, analysis of the

data, conclusions, and recommendations for others conducting similar research.

## **CHAPTER NÚP (CHAPTER II)**

### **ANSWER IS ON THE HILL (LITERATURE REVIEW)**

The literature review examines areas related to leadership and Native Americans in general. The first section includes a review of the historical and modern eras of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation, referred to in this project as the Three Affiliated Tribes, as well as Native Americans in general. I also explore aspects of masculinity in research as well as previous intergenerational research studies applied to research.

The next section explores definitions of educational leadership from a Native American perspective. In addition to theories of Native American leadership, I examine Western contemporary leadership models exemplified by Fullan (2015). Lastly, I include a more extensive review of Tribal Critical Race Theory.

This literature review is not only limited to Three Affiliated Tribal epistemologies of leadership and theory; it pushes further to look at connections and universals between other Native tribes and contemporary Western leadership models. Cajete (2005) states that it is difficult to put all Native American tribes together in one study, as there are as many different Native American epistemologies as there are tribes. However, there are some universals and that is what I will examine closer.

This literature review would be grossly disrespectful if I did not acknowledge two respected Native American scholars whom led the way for meaningful Native American research. Brayboy, Lomawaima, & Villegas (2007) paid tribute to Beatrice Medicine and Vine Deloria, Jr., scholars who advocated for Native American strategies to help improve the standards of Native research. They advocated for more respectful studies from an indigenous viewpoint to fully understand how research is going to best serve Native communities.

### **The Answer is on the Hill—Personal Context**

*“People don’t get visions every time they fast. They humble themselves, and if a vision comes to them, then they have been blessed by the spirits.”* —Calf Woman, Mandan /Hidatsa (Red Feather & Colvin, 2012)

I was taught that if you had questions about life, your future, or what you were supposed to be doing, you went to the hill and gave an offering, smoked your pipe and prayed. Red Feather (2012) says these prayers do not go without sacrifice. Sometimes our ancestors would sit on the hill and go without food (fasting) or water for days until either a vision came to them or their helper would bring them down the hill when they had enough. Praying and sacrifice did not guarantee a vision; many people would do these things, but nothing happened. They still felt good knowing that they tried and their time would come eventually for a vision.

As this study came to be, I followed in the footsteps of Lomawaima (2013) whose research looks at the idea of living a life of indigenous stewardship to attain fulfillment. She sees this type of stewardship not as individual stewardship, but as group stewardship. Central to a strong foundation of leadership through stewardship, she suggests, is that we

all must look at the past, present and future as we go forward in life. I see this indigenous stewardship defined as a responsibility that we have to the ones before us, living with us, and the ones to come to look after and make choices that hold all three of these that are responsible and nurturing for all.

According to Goodbird, Wilson and Wilson (1985), a vision was something that was a powerful sign that came to those who were blessed enough to have one. People would pray for all of the community, animals, water, all of nature and for the relatives—living and dead. Visions would come in many forms—maybe a bird, snake, bear, wolf, spirit, or an ancestor who passed away would talk with you. I remember the story of my close friend where after praying and fasting for two days, a bear sat down and smoked his pipe with him. It was during this visit that they did not talk, but communicated through the silent presence of each other. The medicine man of the community would interpret the event; help you to interpret what the events meant to you, and how you were to use this vision to move forward to help yourself and your people. This ceremony gave you spiritual, psychological and physical strength as you moved along in your journey of life. More importantly, it gave you education and insight on how you could better lead your life. In their book about Mandan life, Goodbird et al. (1985) talked about praying and said that anyone could pray, but the man who had more dreams than other men would be called a mystery man or medicine man. The people believed this person had more connection to the other side than normal people, so he was given this gift from the Gods. Goodbird et al. (1985) talked about a main theme of our people's belief system that is everything has a spirit—rocks, animals, birds, water, everything. It was these early vision seekers that would be the leaders that our tribal members would look for when in need of

help. Therefore, as I continue this chapter and dissertation research, it comes with prayers and a hope that the spirit of this work will speak to the research of what I am seeking.

Given that I am a college educated member of the Three Affiliated Tribes, the father of six kids, two of whom are boys, this study on intergenerational leadership perceptions and education is relevant to me, personally, as a researcher and as a tribal member. Native Americans have been mostly disregarded in the research literature and our voices ignored, particularly when it comes to masculinity. Men are not invisible, but their lives AS MEN certainly are. It is through my voice and the stories of my study participants that I hope to add to the body of literature on Native American perspectives about leadership and education that has long been missing.

### **Three Affiliated Tribes**

The tribal nation of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara are located in present day in western North Dakota. These tribes are commonly referred to as the Three Affiliated Tribes and the reservation where they reside is called the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. The July 2017 Three Affiliated Tribal enrollment report shows that the tribe has 15,626 members (MHANation, 2018). Females outnumber males 8,097 to 7,529. The average life expectancy of Three Affiliated Tribes members is 55.08; males live an average of 52.52 years while females live on average to 57.07 years (MHANation, 2018)). When comparing the average life expectancy in the United States, according to the “CDC Health,” (n.d.) the average non-Native life expectancy is 78.8 years old. This is a 23-year difference in life expectancy for Three Affiliated Tribal members compared to non-Native America.

The Three Affiliated Tribes Reservation has close to one million acres of land. This land is made up of “badlands,” which is a type of dry earth that has been eroded by wind and water and is made up of clay, farmland, and the Missouri River that separates the tribe into six segments. These segments are Mandaree, Four Bears, New Town, Parshall, White Shield and my home segment of Twin Buttes. Of the 15,000 members of the Three Affiliated Tribes, 50% of the members live on the reservation with the remainder living off the reservation. The reservation was once home to a beautiful river bottom with rich farmland, timber and pasture for cattle. The tribe was self-sufficient until the government sponsored 1953 Garrison Dam flooding that displaced the once unified tribe putting them into six districts and forcing the tribe to move to the upper lands. The upper lands were considered the land above the river bottoms that did not have good soil or rich wood reserves.

After the Garrison Dam flooding, the reservation had few economic options until the 2010 oil boom when exploitation of one of the biggest oil fields in the world began in the area. The economic prosperity from oil production has brought opportunities for enrolled members to create their own companies and to provide tribe members more jobs than ever before. The tribe has been able to address housing and infrastructure shortages through the production of oil within its boundaries. The income generated from oil production has given the tribe an opportunity to begin to fulfill the needs of its people (Fort Berthold Agency, 2015). Cross (2011) acknowledges that although the tribe has had a boom in oil money, the oil has also brought its share of negative effects such as higher crime, overburdened municipal waste, soaring school populations and a culture shock for

the people of the Fort Berthold reservation. These physical and social impacts have had the biggest impact on the reservation since the Garrison Dam diversion in the 1950s.

Three Affiliated Tribes political leadership is centered on one tribal chairperson who is elected by a majority vote from all six segments. The tribal chairperson serves a 4-year term, after which enrolled members vote for a new tribal leader. Each segment has a tribal council member who serves as a representative for the segment and the tribe as a whole. The tribal council has a staggered vote in which only three segments are voted on every two years. Only the members of each segment are allowed to vote for their individual segment councilmember. The leadership of these elected members serves the tribe in multiple roles by working with the judicial, educational, healthcare, and law enforcement officials. They also have jurisdiction over tribal lands where contemporary issues of oil production, crime and an in-migration have impacted the reservation. The tribal council with the tribal chairperson holds monthly meetings and several committee meetings each month to address issues and look at Three Tribe nation building within these meetings (Constitution and Bylaws of the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation, 2010).

The Mandan tribe originally had 13 clans and was ranked according to the relationship with the Okipa ceremony. The Okipa ceremony was a 4-day ceremony that gave thanks to the creator; it was used for calling in the buffalo and to complete vows to the creator. It also was a retelling of the history of the earth and how the living things came about during this time. The clans were organized groups with elected leaders that were usually older tribal members who had success either on hunting expeditions or a history of success in battle. Each clan had obligations to take care of its own members,



care for the older people and orphans, and to manage the transfer of property when a family member died. Many of the leaders during the early times (1800's-1900's) were determined by the acquisition of bundles. These medicine bundles were acquired through trade and re-traded over time. They had several different types of leaders—not the Western perspective of one chief, but several co-leaders—that are similar to the contemporary leadership model of distributed leadership. They had war leaders, community leaders, and spiritual leaders within the tribe. The leaders were expected to work together and complement each other. One was a war/hunting leader who took men out to battle or hunt while another one would work out disputes within the tribe and look out for the general welfare of the community. The leaders were expected to be of the highest morals and follow the tribal rules closely. This way of operating is consistent with leadership theories that emphasize cultural tightness, shared expectations, values, and norms (Bowers, 1973).

The Hidatsa and Arikara each had their own rules and clans, but eventually, because the small pox epidemic from 1836 to 1840 greatly reduced their numbers, the Three Tribes converged into one tribe for protection from their enemies and to look after each other. Their leadership was similar to the Mandan's with bundle owners having power or positions of leadership within the group (Bowers, 1973).

North Dakota has five federally recognized tribes within the state: Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, which are also known as the Three Affiliated Tribes, the Spirit Lake Nation, the Standing Rock Sioux, the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, and the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Nation. There is also a community of Native Americans in the Trenton Chippewa band that is seeking its own federal recognition. They are currently

affiliated with the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. North Dakota has a population of roughly 31,000 Native Americans with close to 60% living on the reservation. The three schools located on the Three Affiliated Tribes Reservation are tribally run, operated by the tribal government, and funded through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Those schools are Twin Buttes Day School, Mandaree Day School and White Shield School. The other two schools, New Town Public School and Parshall Public School, receive the majority of their funding through the state (Tribal nations, n.d.).

As mentioned previously, the land of the Three Affiliated Tribes was once interlocked, but because of the 1950's Garrison Dam flooding by the United States government, tribal members were forced to relocate to different parts of the land. The best farmland and the timber industry were flooded. The Three Affiliated Tribe's schools, hospitals, stores, and homes had to be relocated. The devastating impacts this had on the people of the Three Affiliated Tribes is still felt today. Economically, the people of this area lost their livelihood of ranching, timber harvesting and farming, and were moved to areas that were not as soil and lumber rich as where they had been living. Socially, the impact was devastating for the Three Affiliated Tribes because they have always been a people that lived close together. With this flooding, families and communities were separated into segments. Because of that separation, the people lost a collective history that would be difficult to replace. The Three Affiliated Tribes has bounced back from this devastation and rebuilt the schools, hospitals, and homes as well as tribally-owned businesses; this helped the reservation to move forward. It is because of the actions of our former leaders that the Three Tribes people overcame this hardship (Cash & Wolf, 1974).

### **Masculinity Research**

In thinking about how Native American men hold a liminal position in American scholarly research, masculinity research can be said to hold an equally liminal position in the research world. Connell (2003) states that the study of masculinity in research represents a relatively new approach and relevance to contemporary men's studies. The scholarly use of masculinity research can be used to aid in the understanding of other studies by helping to understand gender issues as they relate to the study. This type of study works well with Tribal Critical Race Theory as Connell goes on to state that the ethnic and racial conflicts in a post-colonial world links masculinity to the construction of racial and ethnic hierarchies.

In another study, Connell (2008) states that in order to understand how the world works, we must not only understand the institutions, but realize that these institutions are gendered. The role of gender and gender issues is important in the process to increase our knowledge of masculinity studies for the good of the whole. Brayboy et al. (2016) conducted a masculinity study of indigenous boys and men where he discusses how these boys and men have so few numbers that the research does not recognize their population even though research is vital in this area. His research of masculinity of indigenous boys and men provided a template on community programs that are currently promoting the education and health of Native men and boys through a lens that will acknowledge these people that have been mostly ignored in the mainstream scholarly circles.

### **Native American Educational Leadership**

Native American education has always been a point of contention for our tribe and several tribes throughout the United States because of the historical trauma that education has caused to many of our current generation of elders. The mission schools of

past years forced assimilation onto a generation of Three Tribes people, taking away their language, culture and relationships with their communities along with committing physical, emotional and sexual abuse of many students who attended several of these mission schools over the years (Reyhner & Eder, 2006).

Swisher (1996) stated that the methods to capture authenticity in Native American research is by listening to the voices and making sure they are heard. Retelling the stories of the people and presenting the perspective of others to get a better understanding of being able to see through others' eyes. It is her argument that we need more Native American researchers in Indian country to gather the stories that are best told from a Native American perspective. There are few Native Americans who have been researching and writing on education; she made a call for more Native American professionals to take up this calling and help promote more Native scholarly research.

Consequently the Western viewpoint of the historical purpose of education for Native Americans was that schooling benefited the economy of the country. This Western viewpoint that education was the key to a "prosperous life," meaning that through education you could assimilate into the dominant White culture, be able to get a job, and provide for your family to help shape the moral fabric of the country. Throughout history federal education policies have stuck steadfastly to this way of thinking of education (Kantor & Lowe, 2011). Contrary to that belief, the Native American viewpoint of education emphasizes relationships between humans and all other things, nature, animals, Mother Earth and recognizes the role that we have with each other. The traditional education looked at reciprocity between the members, between nature, and at seeking knowledge. This traditional education was more of a nature-based

learning with the emphasis of relationships between all that was mentioned but education on how to get along with each other. This integration and interconnectedness are seen as universal traits between Native Americans (Cajete, 2005).

In David Adam's (1997) book titled *Education for Extinction*, he discusses the idea of colonization of the Indians through education. Native American education leadership from the early 1800's through the next century and one half was leadership from the non-Indian colonized perspective. One of the early goals according to Adams was to colonize the Indian through education. This colonization was in the form of taking Native American children from their homes and sending them to off-reservation boarding schools. Once at these schools Native children were not allowed to speak their language. They were given White, Christian names and were not allowed to practice their culture. This action of educational assimilation left many tribes with a generation of lost cultural ways that they were never able to get back. These boarding school experiences left another black mark in the history of White-Indian relations. It also set back Native Americans' education experiences for generations to come.

According to Buckmiller (2015), the education of Native American students has historically shown that Native students as a whole have not kept up with non-Native students on achievement and assessment tests. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2012) showed that scores in reading assessment tests show that Native students are 19 points behind non-Native students. Native American students also have the highest dropout and poverty rates in the nation.

Buckmiller's (2015) research shows that a Native American principal leadership program could help improve the quality of education for Native students. Further

research into college training programs that provide multicultural training for administrators would be beneficial for Native students as well as Native principals.

Brayboy (2004) discussed college from a different perspective while researching students that attended elite universities. He found that students came up with strategies to walk in both worlds while off the reservation and on college campuses that helped them survive. The main hurdle they had to overcome was how to keep their Native identity while also being a member of an elite university. They were challenged on how to use their Native teachings and relate it to this whole new world. College Native students going to off-reservation schools have to deal with cultural integrity issues to be successful and the strategies they use, either from mentors or their teachings, help them to overcome the tension of being a minority in a majority university.

One key emphasis of many Native scholars is to promote Native leadership within the school systems—elementary, secondary and higher education—with the idea of relationships at the core. Henderson, Carjuzaa, & Ruff (2015) contend that the relationships that Native Americans have with their ancestors, future generations, and Mother Earth are what is unique about promoting a Native education leadership program. White Western thinking tends to be more authoritarian and linear, e.g. the step-by-step type of thought process where the goal is to always have an end result. Whereas the Native thought process is more rounded as the leader is in a state of “being” not “doing.” According to Henderson, Carjuzaa, & Ruff (2015), one of the keys to being a Native educational leader is the relationships the Native leader has with the students, staff, community members and with fellow administrators. Native leaders with a flair for fostering relationships also have a deep identity of themselves. They understand where

they came from, their relatives, and the needs of their communities, family and themselves. They are able to connect relationally with a majority of the people in their community. This deep identity leads to practices that look at the basic questions of what they can do to best aid students, teachers, staff, and the community at large.

Yazzi-Mintz's (2007) research talks about identity when discussing culturally appropriate curriculum and asks "Appropriate for whom?" She states that as each student has a different learning style, teachers, too, have different places that they come from when teaching students. The teachers approach to teaching culture within the curriculum depends on the individual knowledge base that he/she has about his/her own culture and the culture that he/she is teaching in. The teacher then has to become embedded in the community he/she is teaching and develop his/her own cultural identity to bring to the classroom.

Fullan & Hargreaves (2016) echo in their research that for educators to improve, they must have a strong individual autonomy while looking at the collective autonomy of the students. They state that to be effective for their students, teachers need a strong sense of identity. That strong sense of identity could relate well to establishing an identity of the community, culture and school that they work in.

Research conducted by Quijda Cerecer (2013) about perspectives on schooling by Native American youth showed how Native American school leadership could be further enhanced. Her study looked at how students who were successful in school had certain strategies they used to overcome the racist policies some schools had instituted toward Native children. One of the big keys to success was the forming of sturdy peer networks by students. These networks seemed to help the students when school got tough. Another

key was the students' awareness of racialized policies or rules that affected their educational opportunities. Cerecer (2013) states that if school leaders are aware of the need for students to form networks and to take a multicultural approach to looking at policies that are not in the best interest of the students, this could reshape many of the relationships that Native school leaders, students, staff and community may have with each other, and further enhance the learning process.

The findings of Minthorn (2014) affirm that Native American leadership from Native college students' perspectives is closely related to the traditional model of Native leadership. Her research revealed that Native students valued community and collaboration with people along with a sense of commitment closely relating to what has been discussed earlier. In her interviews the participants said that leaders have to understand their identity, which they are as a tribal members and how they can contribute to the greater good.

In postsecondary education, leadership training for Native American administrators has emphasized what leadership should look like in an educational setting with a Native American perspective. Ambler (2002) describes the tribal college's role in developing leadership as the key to bringing many Native Americans back to education through the respect and trust that many of the leaders within the tribal colleges demonstrate to their students. She described many situations where the local tribal presidents and faculty are on a first name basis with the students and have provided leadership, guidance and mentorship to its tribal college members.

Faircloth and Tippeconnic (2015) addressed the lack of Native American leadership within the Bureau of Indian Education and public schools, and put forth a



program to help improve this area. The framework looked at identity-based leadership as a way to help. The researchers contend that a good leader must first have a deep understanding of who they are individually. Once individuals are able to connect with themselves they will start to become effective leaders. According to Faircloth and Tippeconnic (2015), storytelling is one of the ways that great leaders are able to distinguish themselves and is one of the key traits of an effective multicultural leader.

In his review of Fullan's theory, Normore (2010) found that higher education is a place that is more resistant to change than any other area. He found the key characteristic of successful leadership is the ability to listen and to use what is heard to provide links and lead an organization to make changes. Normore calls this turnaround leadership at the higher education level. As colleges face more and more multicultural issues, Native American leaders are calling for programs of a multicultural nature. Normore (2010) suggests higher education on a whole needs to start looking through this lens to aspire in a proactive way to reach more students of ethnic backgrounds.

Brayboy and Maaka (2015) examined the broadening achievement gaps between Native students and non-Natives in both reading and math. They advise that achievement needs to be improved in the elementary grades so that students are on track early. Then, once they reach the secondary grades they are ready for upper level math courses and are able to read at grade level. Their research points out that parental support is the most important role in children wanting to attend college. Outside resources such as school counselors, school climate, teachers and principals all factor in the success rate of Native students getting over the achievement gap and going on to college. Education is a

collaborative effort and through improved educational leadership, improvements can be made in the education arena.

One way to address achievement gaps is through the use of culturally responsive schooling. According to Lopez, Schram and Heilig (2013), the core of improving these gaps goes to the idea that there needs to be a spiritual well-being of Native students, early focus on cognitive growth, avenues to improve a sense of identity for Native students, and a social and cultural wisdom from the students. A culturally responsive school would mandate language of the community and culture as its base with the teachings of traditions and knowledge of the community to help further enhance the Native students. The researchers contend that this style of education would be far more effective than the non-traditional Western style of education.

Brayboy (2006) conveys that for tribal communities to become complete individuals must be part of the communities they serve and this servitude is necessary to improve the quality of life. Flecha's (2012) study of families states that leadership begins within the family and that strong family leadership leads to higher impacts on their children's educational attainment. The three domains that Flecha claims to come from a family with a strong leadership core are that family members have higher self-esteem, leadership, and healthy lifestyles. Flecha contends that through strengthening these domains, Native students will likely be more successful and eventually become leaders themselves (2012).

### **Native Leadership**

As Metoyer (2010) states in her review of Native American leadership, little research has been conducted regarding Native leadership with only 13 articles and 4 book

chapters between 2003 and 2008. The areas that were covered during that time had three themes: traditional models, contemporary Native American Women as leaders and educational leadership. Studies of Native American leadership themes within healthcare, nursing, business, Native rebuilding and wellness research have emerged in my literature review of Native leadership.

Metoyer (2010) goes on to say that continued research on Native leadership is vital to American Indian communities as the tribal leaders have issues of sovereignty, economic growth and many more daily issues to contend with. She states that traditional Native American leadership is grounded in culture and a strong relationship with the community. Her research conveys that one of the tenets of traditional Native American leadership is the importance of the spoken word. A leader must possess the oratory and persuasion skills to form relationships with the community, and to use the knowledge and values for the best of the community.

Metoyer (2010) shares that the majority of research shows that spirituality is at the core of Native leadership. The individual who participates in ceremonies and shows an intellect for the “old ways” are better able to help and connect with the community.

Gladstone and Pepion (2017) state in their research on the Blackfeet tribe that both traditional and contemporary leadership use spirituality as its core for leadership of the tribe. They also found three common threads of leadership: shared authority, contingent leadership, and situational concepts. Shared authority is having more than one person in charge or leading a cause. Contingent leadership means that the leadership depends on what type of leader is needed for a particular situation. A situational concept is defined as when a leader is able to adjust to the style of leadership that is needed at the

moment or time. All three of these threads are directly related to the art of persuasion or the ability to influence others. This skill was seen as the most important part of Native leadership.

One of the lessons or skills in leadership that Marshall (2004) discusses in his book titled *Crazy Horse* is the lesson of pulling everyone together for the same purpose. When the leader can get everyone to pursue the same goal there is a strength that goes with feeling. He called it the kinship of purpose.

Sandefur and Deloria (2018) spoke about the ability to influence others for the common good. The ability to walk in both worlds is the ability to influence non-Natives as well. Those leaders who are able to figure out how to circumnavigate from the Native to the non-Native world and back are definitely needed more than ever. One example the researchers gave is of Standing Rock's former Chairman, David Archambault, who had to navigate the Dakota Access Pipeline protest. They described his skills ranging from writing editorials for major newspapers to speaking at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva to protesting with his people. He also had to handle the end of the protest following the closing of the camp all while maintaining his duties as tribal chairman for his tribe.

### **Native American Female Leadership**

Much of the current literature on Native research centers on Native American female leadership rather than Native American male leadership (Metoyer, 2010; Henderson, Carijuzaa & Ruff 2015). Traditionally women held leadership roles that varied within each tribe from being clan mothers to spiritual or medicine women to being women warriors. With the advent of colonialism throughout the United States, these roles

have shifted to contemporary leadership roles in high education, law, criminal justice and in Urban Indian organizations (Tippeconnic Fox, Luna-Firebaugh, & Williams, 2015; Gambrell, 2016).

Tippeconnic et al. (2015) state that generally Native Americans lead by example in terms of leadership instead of the Western viewpoint that leadership is more authority based. Some of the features of traditional leadership were spirituality, generosity, humble servitude and a fostering of future generations. The last point was that leaders took good care of their inner spirits and worked toward harmony within themselves and with others. In another study by Tippeconnic and Fox (2009), it was found that although many Native American women continue to experience obstacles such as racism, discrimination, gender bias and cultural issues within many higher education institutions, they are swelling in the growth of entrance into doctoral programs. She discovered that some of the keys to overcoming these obstacles and completing their college degrees are factors like strong cultural identity, commitment to serving their people, network of support, and keeping balance in their lives by taking care of themselves.

When looking specifically at Lakota women in leadership, Gambrell (2016) found the Lakota's perspective welcomes their traditional ways while at the same time maintains a bicultural lens into the world. One of the keys to their leadership style was education, which brought about healing from the injustices that were experienced in previous generations. Again, as in previous literature, spirituality was something that was necessary—the cultural literacy to be able to serve all the people. McLeod (2002) says this spirituality is seen as a gift that must be shared with others. Authoritarian leadership

is foreign to Native leadership themes, which is a caring leadership style—for the community, future generations, the elders, and for ones self.

Ina Hall, the mother, grandmother and great grandmother of one of the participants that I interviewed, was a member of the Three Affiliated Tribes and highly regarded as the first Three Tribes member to have graduated from a public school. She went on to Dickinson State College and received her college degree, after which she became a school principal. She also was a community organizer, served on a commission for Adult Education, was the extension agent for her reservation, and was honored as North Dakota’s “Mother of the Year” in 1966 (American Indian Curricula Development Program: A feather to each, 1975). Her leadership in ways other than the traditional authoritarian leadership model exemplifies what traditional Native leadership looks like. It is not pretentious or glorifying, but rather motivated by a desire to help local communities.

### **Multicultural Leadership**

As Gambrell (2016) touched on multicultural leadership skills, McLeod (2002) goes further and states that multicultural leadership is a necessary skill for all Native American leaders. To be able to function effectively she states that not only do Native American leaders need to know their own culture, history and traditions, but they also need to know the Western White society to be able to function effectively in both worlds. Delpit’s (1992) suggestions on multicultural leadership is to recognize when there is a significant difference between the school culture and the home culture. The ability to recognize the difference is a key step by both parties. She recommends that gaining knowledge of your community as well as the people it serves would enhance

multicultural leadership on many levels. Thus tribal leadership is a lifestyle of culture, values and beliefs, and being able to see the need within community to make a difference. Northouse (2010) conveys that culture from a leadership perspective is an abstract term that is difficult to define, but generally is the learned beliefs, values, rules and traditions from a community or group of people. Multicultural leadership involves working with more than one culture within a group. Ladson-Billings defines cultural competence as “the ability to help students appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge of and fluency in at least one other culture” (2014, p.75).

Theories of business leadership view multicultural leadership skills as a necessary ability to be able to circumnavigate the ocean between Native business and the dominant U.S. business model. Stewart, Verbos, Birmingham, Black & Gladstone’s (2017) research on leadership found that many Natives in the business world followed the authentic leadership structure by their values and culture as the force that motivates their actions. They found that Natives in the business world were not running their businesses for personal wealth and gain, but for the betterment of the tribe. The subjects they studied all took great pride in their Native American heritage and values, and used those characteristics to help them lead their respective companies.

Keene (2016), in her portraiture study of a pre-college program for Native students, found that the program, College Horizons, was able to be a model for Native students to walk that multicultural tightrope by helping students learn how to navigate college successfully. The dualism of maintaining a Native identity and a college student identity is the focus of that program. The study builds upon the Native nation building theories and pushes the goal of getting your education to build capacity, preserve Native

sovereignty and to improve the quality of life. This program builds on that theme as well and looks at what the students need to know from a Western viewpoint to survive and thrive in the college setting.

Once students complete college courses there are several who want to return home to help their Native communities. The research shows that there needs to be a correlation between culturally traditional Natives and the viewpoint of using higher education as a means to go back and help community rather than personal gain. This may help in retaining Native American college students in programs that look at sources of strength to keep these future leaders in college and to help them move forward toward community building (Huffman, 2011).

The contemporary Native American leaders have to be able to keep walking the multicultural road as they begin to deal with people on a more global level. Understanding that being a diverse leader means not only knowing your own culture and having a strong sense of identity, but also means taking time to study cultures other than your own to gain self-understanding of how you can best serve others. Promoting a multicultural approach to not only your Native communities, but also celebrating and promoting other cultures within your community is what will prompt Native leaders to be both multicultural and contemporary leaders (Chin, Desormeaux, & Sawyer, 2016).

### **Contemporary Leadership**

In today's world, you cannot make sense of all the information unless you have a mental model to begin with. Leaders need to be able to think, and this thinking has to come from the lens of multi-frame thinking. Leaders need to use the stories of the issues to help provide clarity and offer management strategies (Bolman & Deal, 2015).



Although there are several leadership domains and theories of leadership in the research scholarship today (Northouse, 2010), I explored the leadership styles that best fit some of the qualities of Native American leadership.

Consequently servant leadership is a style that fits many of the characteristics of what a Native leader should look like—putting people or community first, helping the people for the greater good of the group and using persuasion to appeal to decency of the group or individual (Davis, 2017). Similarly, Eva, Robin, Sendjaya, Dierendonck and Liden (2018) say that servant leadership’s approach is to prioritize the one-on-one follower that a leader may have. The leader has a deep empathy for his/her employees and looks to help those within the organization. The purpose of accepting a leadership role is not for personal gain, but for the betterment of the organization/community. This aligns with what research shows to be characteristic of Native leaders. Finally, a servant leadership approach demonstrates that the satisfaction of followers’ needs is in direct relation to how closely the followers support the leader. It is a give and take relationship that demonstrates the leaders have the followers’ needs first (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016).

Likewise, transformational leaders work with the people under them, listen to what they are having trouble with and encourage them to grow by rethinking what they are doing (Rockinson-Szapkiw, Payne, and West, 2011). For this reason Bass (1995) states that when you listen to your people, trust becomes firmly entrenched in your relationship. The ultimate goal of transformational leadership is to lift those who are following you to higher levels of achievement and self-actualization. They teach you how to move beyond yourself to the greater good of the community. The transformational leader is a higher influencer than the normal leader; they have the ability to be

inspirational motivators. One of the key traits of most transformative leaders is that they have a highly developed moral compass. Bass's (1995) model of transformational leadership holds characteristics similar to that of traditional Native American perceptions of leadership: a moral compass, trust, oral ability to persuade, and a fondness for the greater good of the community.

A similar leadership theory that goes along with the literature on Native leadership is that of authentic leadership. Braun and Nieberle (2017) see authentic leaders as being confident, optimistic and resilient. They know who they are, have a deep understanding of what they believe in and what they value, and they act upon those values and a beliefs to be congruent in their approach to leadership. This creates a trustworthy atmosphere for the people with whom they are working. Likewise, Algera & Lips-Wiersma, (2012) found that authentic leadership is the moral compass of the organization, leads with ethics and in a socially responsible manner. They found that these leaders have a strong sense of self-awareness and conscious choice of situations. In addition, Steffens, Mols, Haslam, and Ikimoto (2016) contend that when you are seen as authentic you are able to inspire positive outcomes from those who are following you. These leaders stand up for the vision and mission of the group, and use both listening and persuasion skills to ensure everyone is in line with the same mission goals so that what they are doing is true to everyone.

Fullan's (2015) model of leadership has many components to it that is still a work in progress as it changes and adapts over the years. His philosophy of leading from the middle looks at the goals of the community, school or company and sees what the needs are to bring about more effective leadership. Keys aspects of this leadership model are

strong collaboration, high trust, and frequent interaction with the stakeholders. This style is a whole system style that works with all stakeholders involved. Fullan and Scott (2016) go on to say that effective change leaders have the following characteristics: ethical, moral center, humility, confidence, shared goal, ability to build capacity within the community, school or institution, and are motivators. Fullan and Pinchot (2018) further expand this description by saying that this leadership model has a strong sense of urgency about reducing inequality. This inequality is shown on reservations as economics, education and in the justice system that shows an imbalance in how Native Americans are doing compared to the rest of the world. This sense of urgency is a state of looking at improving this imbalance through leadership. Fullan and Pinchot discussed the impact of seeding leadership within a culture to impact change in a positive way. They discuss this forming of leaders through helping more people understand what needs to be changed and how they as individuals are part of the process. Being more specific and having a strategic plan that involves all the community members produces a culture that has a high energy to get items done through the community instead of just one person. Fullan's views sync up with what Native American leadership has traditionally looked like: 1. Involvement of the community; 2. Growing leadership; and 3. Having a strategic plan on what needs to be accomplished.

The literature review has shown that tribal leaders share many of the same qualities of authentic leadership and of Fullan's (2015) leadership model. Traits such as, having a strong sense of self, knowing the culture and traditions of your tribe to best serve everyone within your tribe, and the idea of stewardship and optimistic viewpoints of life that can help lead a community. These are the effective Native leadership qualities

that crossover to Western leadership theories and better help the Native leader walk in both worlds (Lomawaima, 2013). Brayboy (2013) states that the principle of serving others with humility and relationship is what wise leaders possess. The people who have a calling to assist their communities, who search out answers for social problems, and who want to do right rather than being right are thought to be characteristic of effective leaders.

### **Intergenerational Literature**

Because of the United States colonization and eradication policies, Native Americans have endured major historical trauma. The effects of the 1953 Garrison Dam flooding and consequential relocation of the Three Affiliated Tribes brought on generational trauma to our people in one form or another. However, we are a resilient people and have celebrated the first Three Affiliated Tribes female member to graduate from a public high school and many intergenerational family members whom have graduated from college. How these historical events shape our families is something that needs to be mentioned.

Walls & Whitback (2012) looked at Native Americans and intergenerational connections specifically, and found that generational trauma has a direct correlation with substance abuse. Now that we realize these connections, how do we reshape the narrative for future generations?

De Mol, Lemmens, Verhofstadt & Kucznski (2013) state that the process by which parents pass down their teachings to the next generation is called internalization; others researchers call it transmissions. De Mol, et al. (2013) continue to say that traditional research has these teachings as a top down model, but modern research is

showing it to be more bidirectional and that children are having a significant influence on their parents as well. The previous research was skewed to show the significant influence as being just a one-way platform with the child being the only one benefitting from the relationship with their parents (2013).

I reference Lycette (2014) for the purpose of this section to define culture as all the information, knowledge, ideas and beliefs that are shared by families, communities or regions. He states that culture is shared by all humans so when I start to listen to the voices of father and sons, I have to keep in mind that culture is an element of sharing and passing down ideas from generation to generation.

Examples of passing down this culture from generation to generation are not always found in strict family settings, but sometimes when both generations have a shared interest. The generation gap can serve both generations well; the youthful energy and a fresh view on cultural practice combined with the experience of the past compliments each generation well in cultural transmission (McLymont, 2010). Research on families with strong leadership characteristics shows that intergenerational transmission of leadership has three factors that are associated with this phenomenon. The first factor is a shared vision of leadership. The second factor is the climate of the household. And the third factor is open communication. All of these factors are key to transmitting leadership generationally (Miller, 2014).

Intergenerational learning is not a transmission of knowledge from the older generation to the younger generation, but it is a reciprocal relationship where both parties learn from each other and contribute to lifelong learning practices. This passing of knowledge has become more apparent with the technical age in which we live with

computers, laptops, tablets and phones helping to make this more of a dual role of knowledge sharing. The younger generations have taken a bigger role in recent years in helping the older generation become more accustomed to technology (Passey, 2014).

Luthra and Soehl (2015) found that the line of educational transmission generationally is directly influenced by the educational attainment of the parents. The children of immigrants who achieved an educational degree tended to do better in school than those who had parents with little to no education. In my research the participants were all college educated fathers and sons from a minority group. I discovered that all of the participants did well in school and they all credited their parents for their success.

### **Theoretical Framework**

One tradition of many Native American tribes is that of teaching lessons through storytelling (Lambert, 2014). Through storytelling lessons on leadership and definitions of leadership are shared with future generations of our Three Affiliated Tribes members.

My biggest hurdle in writing this dissertation was choosing how I would write the dissertation from an indigenous viewpoint while keeping the research legitimate. I chose Tribal Critical Race Theory as a foundational basis for my research because of the perspective that my research questions fell into an indigenous framework that requires story telling. Tribal Critical Race Theory is important to this study because it allows the use of Native American storytelling as the basis for research, and because it acknowledges that there are alternative ways to study leadership other than those methods commonly used in mainstream America. Tribal Critical Race Theory (TRIBCRIT) has its roots in Critical Race Theory (CRT).

Critical Race Theory was established out of a necessity to look at the legal theory policies made up by the ruling majority (White males) to control minority people. This legal theory used race as a lens for dissecting all public policies and political laws enacted in the United States (Chapman, 2007). Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, (1995) argued that CRT offers a voice for people of color through storytelling. This research recorded the voices of Three Affiliated Tribal members telling their stories of leadership and sharing their perspectives of effective leadership to determine a joint framework of leadership.

CRT was primarily used by scholars as a framework to analyze legal issues that involved race and has since become a predominant theory, spreading out into other areas such as education, politics, and social issues. This theory looks at how people of color are able to transcend barriers of racial inequities and still become successful (Chapman, 2007). Throughout the last century, educational issues started to emerge that involved inequalities because of race. Marginalized groups started to feel excluded from educational opportunities that members of the dominant class were given. Scholars started to use Critical Race Theory to break down and identify ostracized groups consisting of African Americans, Native Americans, Asians, Hispanics, women, and the poor. Achievement gaps between marginalized groups and the dominant class became more and more pronounced as time went on (Howard & Navarro, 2016).

Tribal Critical Race Theory came about as an offshoot of Critical Race Theory designed to address issues of Native American educational disparities. Brayboy (2006) contends that Native Americans should start to educate themselves using not only the dominant society's devices, but also indigenous wisdom that Natives have in their own

communities. Brayboy (2006) proposed nine tenets of Tribal Critical Race Theory:

1. Colonization is endemic to society.
2. U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain.
3. Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of our identities.
4. Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification.
5. The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens.
6. Governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation.
7. Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups.
8. Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being.
9. Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change. (Pp. 429-430)

Tribal Critical Race Theory is different from Critical Race Theory in that it looks through a lens emphasizing colonization rather than racism as being endemic in society. It sees the goal of the dominant U.S. society as civilizing Indians rather than making



them fit into society. Brayboy (2006) saw this as one area Native Americans have to overcome. Natives must learn how to simultaneously blend both Native cultures and dominant cultures together, although Native Americans have this liminal distinction—a sense of being in between cultures or places—and this has caused many of our people to believe their role in society is undefined.

An undefined role by minorities allows Western society through Hollywood movies and especially old westerns to contribute their version of the narrative and define how many people in America view Native Americans. Characters like Tonto in the Lone Ranger, and Chuck Norris's series Walker Texas Ranger, all have Native Americans acting in subservient roles. The Natives in the movies are stereotyped in the typical sidekick manner as ignorant or minor characters, whereas the old westerns typically show Native Americans as the bad guys and the White settlers as good and innocent (Fitzgerald, 2014).

Using Tribal Critical Race Theory I looked forward to exploring the wisdom of my Native participants—looking through their eyes to see what their reality has been and do my part to disprove the Western and Hollywood narratives of Native Americans one research paper at a time. Brayboy's (2006) tenets of TRIBCRIT were central to what I was searching for as I discussed leadership stories with my participants. As I conducted my research I kept in mind Brayboy's (2006) theory and how it could be used to promote social change.

While searching for perspectives of Native leadership, Critical Race Theory was one of the first theories that this research was based upon. Hall (2014) used this theory in his examination of school administration by looking at how racism impacted the minority

students. He used the Critical Race Theory (CRT) to see how race interacts with policies, leadership, high stakes testing, and at culturally appropriate training for staff. Davis, Gooden & Micheaux (2015) used CRT to examine the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (ISSLC) policy standards and Educational Leaders Constituent Council standards to see how a color blind approach to leadership-affected schools. Gooden & Micheaux contend that by using CRT they are acknowledging that racism is out there and it is common in their institutions. They use this filter to first acknowledge racism and then to offer a different counter narrative to give more accuracy to the reality.

In addition, Writer (2008) states that not only does CRT give research an alternative narrative, but it also gives people of color a voice and helps to reshape the narrative as a whole. Likewise, Tribal Critical Race theory is built on the same concept, but is looking at race through the lens of Native Americans and how colonization of Native Americans has affected Native people. It also looks at how Native Americans have been subjected to racism, discrimination and harmfully subjected to government policies that do not help Native Americans, but promote the United States governments' cause. Both viewpoints give researchers solid frameworks for the purpose of social justice work and to spread knowledge to work for change.

Tribal Critical Race Theory is used as a guide as well as a partner in creating an indigenous method of research. This theory looks for ways to challenge the status quo while drawing attention to the injustices that are part of the colonization of Native Americans (Padgett, 2015). This Tribal Critical Race framework helps to approach Native issues from a Native framework by addressing issues that are unique to each

Native community, whether the issue is political, cultural, or racial (Castagno, 2012).

One of the outcome statements of TRIBCRIT is that through self-education we can achieve self-determination (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009).

With the hope that this research will add to the existing scholarship of Native Americans, I approached this study by using a method I believed would decolonize both the methodology and the type of theory that guided this project. In Brayboy & Deyhle's (2000) discussion on this topic, they state that as researchers enter into indigenous research they should do so with a cultural awareness and a cooperative spirit with the participants. They argue that indigenous research should question the traditional Western viewpoint of how research is conducted and try to find a method that will better provide further scholarship for the Native community.

Furthermore, Beeman-Caldwallader, Quigley, & Yazzie-Mintz (2011) contend there is no one set way to study Indigenous people. It is the intent of the research that makes forming your methodology and theory important to the study. They state that some of the keys to effective Indigenous research are in the forming of relationships, storytelling, the context, and the purposefulness in which you are doing the research. The acknowledgement that this research is not traditional is one way of decolonizing methodologies to make them more relevant to the indigenous communities.

"I simply remembered what this person had said, how they said it, what their body language was like, the rhythms of their speech, and the overall tone of their being" (Beer, 2013, p. 3). This simple sentence is how I can best describe the definition of portraiture through portraiture. It is a method of using impressions, reflections, narratives and storytelling as a research method. Gerstenblatt (2013) defines portraiture as a research

method of using documentation, analysis and narrative that blends the arts and stories to create a picture of the account as well as an analysis of the research.

Although portraiture has been used in other fields, it is relatively new to education and leadership research. This is one of several challenges that using this method offered. The other challenge was creating a portrait that is true to the participants that I worked with. I felt extreme pressure to make sure that I captured as closely without bias the essence of the participants with whom I was working. The final challenge of using this method was to be able to write to the community, my tribe, and the readers of this research so that it was understandable to the masses yet met the rigors of scholarship. I talk about walking two worlds and this is yet another challenge, i.e. that this style of writing impacts me and others using this methodology in research (Hampsten, 2015).

The use of storytelling through portraiture offers direction through reflection on the subject that is being studied. This opportunity to allow participants to tell their stories gives both the researcher and the participants a level of confirmation on the topic (Beers, 2013). Metoyer (2010) shares that one of the trademarks of Native communities is the use of story and the spoken word within the community—how traditional stories about leadership is connected with the oral tradition that helps form the viewpoints of it Native communities.

Lastly, Yazzie-Mintz (2007) makes her case for using portraiture in studying Native Americans through three of the tenets of portraiture: 1. The systematic techniques that describe in rich detail the interaction between the research and participants, 2. Portraiture speaks to a broad audience with the goal of giving back to the community, and 3. Portraiture supports the need to capture goodness. These three tenets along with

navigating the context in a culturally respectful manner is beneficial to all parties involved.

**CHAPTER NAMINI (CHAPTER III)**  
**GIVING THE TOBACCO (RESEARCH METHODS)**

**Introduction**

Teachings across Native American culture look at traditional tobacco as a gift given to us from Mother Earth. Many tribes have various uses for tobacco, but it is a widespread custom to offer tobacco to the Creator, back to Mother Earth or to gift it to someone. The use of tobacco is believed to carry your prayers and good wishes to the Creator (Nadeau, Blake, Poupart, Rhodes, and Forster, 2012).

My portraits of leadership of father-son pairs from the Three Affiliated Tribes involved listening to their stories and then extracting nuggets of wisdom from interviews designed to explore their perceptions of what it means to be a leader and what the characteristics of leadership are. I was excited to learn about the benefits these men had derived from their experiences as leaders, to see life through their eyes, and to hear their leadership stories. More importantly, I needed to hear their perceptions of the impact that personal leadership had on their families and others.

While interviewing the men from the Three Affiliated Tribes, I looked at the generational differences in their stories to explore generational similarities and differences, and to discern how leadership had changed over the generations. I asked myself questions as the interviews transpired: What, if any, differences will there be? How are they going to define leadership and success in their own voices? What strategies

did they utilize to be able to become leaders in their own personal lives? I probed them about what leadership means in the Native context.

Growing up 10 miles off of the reservation, I often lived in two worlds. The White world treated me as an “Indian” and the feeling of disdain from several of my school classmates was always there. At the same time that I was going to a White school off the reservation, some of my Native peers treated me as a “White boy” because I was light skinned and did not attend the local reservation school in Twin Buttes.

My background knowledge made this study important to me because I have lived and worked in both worlds. I have witnessed a need for a leadership perspective that describes and explains Native leadership, and I have wished to know what methods of leadership would do justice to a Native perspective. Because I am Native, I have also realized I need to be careful to adhere to the norms and cultural expectations of my participants while at the same time holding on to a sense of the structure required of a scholarly project. The fine line I walked between both worlds, personal and academic, suggested the need for a method that would embrace both the formal and informal methodology used in this study.

This chapter incorporates a discussion of the purpose of qualitative research, the rationale for using qualitative research as well as a conversation and a description of the portraiture methodology used for this study. The method for selecting participating individuals, setting up interviews, the interview questions, and the protocol of this study will all be discussed in detail. Through these questions and the methods presented, this chapter provides the methodology and theoretical framework that was used in this study.

### **Purpose and Rationale for Qualitative Research**

Maxwell (2013) discussed the strengths of approaching a research question from the perspective of qualitative research by clarifying what the five intellectual goals of qualitative research are:

- Understanding the perspective of the participants,
- Understanding the context which the participants come from,
- Understanding the process by which events take place,
- Identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences and creating new theories,
- Developing causal explanations.

Maxwell's (2013) five goals are all vital in obtaining the best data possible from a research project. Being able to see through the lens of a participant and knowing the context in which a participant "got to where they are" often involves prolonged interaction between a researcher and participants who can produce rich data not otherwise obtainable using different methods. A researcher needs to have a clear picture of research processes so when it comes to implementing the research, interviews and time together with participants is used with maximum efficiency.

Seidman (2006) says to plan for unanticipated phenomena and expect it to happen during qualitative research because interviews are not in a controlled environment. I had dogs barking, kids asking questions, phone call interruptions, and friends and family arriving during my interviews. A researcher has to be able to handle unexpected phenomena, note it, and not set it aside; there might be some value in any occurrence.

Maxwell (2013) made the case for causal explanation in that it can be directly observed and makes context relevant for understanding any of the phenomena that



happens during an interview. The strength of this research is the process through which the participants came up with their perceptions of leadership. As I interviewed my participants, I was looking for causal conclusions to help tie the overall conceptual framework of this study together. Noting that not all qualitative research looks to draw conclusions, this study indeed intended to do that, but through the rigor required to provide evidence through interviews, data analysis, coding and the final portrait.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) expanded Maxwell's ideas by defining qualitative research as having its own field of inquiry as it crosses over perspectives of qualitative research, borrowing from many distinct disciplines using the traditional field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. While at the same time making qualitative research more situational and contextual.

This study involves interpreting data from participants including their perceptions of leadership in a search for meaning regarding leadership. Qualitative researchers study participants in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpreting phenomena in terms of the perspectives people bring to those phenomena. Interviewing participants in their natural settings is desirable because research methods are better applied in a real setting as opposed to interviewing participants out of context and having them remember how they react when "at home." Seeing participants speak and react in their natural settings was the foundation for how I gathered data to create portraits of my participants.

Before gathering data, I had assumptions already playing in my mind from the deep reading of existing research I conducted during my literature review. Creswell (2013) argued that in a qualitative study every research project begins with assumptions

and a strong theoretical foundation. It is the design of qualitative research combined with an approach to fit a problem to an appropriate methodology that makes qualitative research unique. Using qualitative research, I began my project with assumptions and a theoretical framework of Tribal Critical Race Theory in order to address not only the research questions, but also the meaning participants had for the question: What characteristics make up an effective leader? Because I was looking for answers through the eyes of my participants, I chose qualitative research as an appropriate style of research, and storytelling through portraiture was the qualitative method utilized for this project.

### **Storytelling (Portraiture as an Indigenous Method)**

*“One of the riches of American Indian communities resides within the beauty, significance, and power of the spoken word. ...More studies could examine the language related to leadership that forms and informs the worldviews of the people (Metoyer, 2010, p. 9).*

The epistemology of this study began with my cultural ties to the Three Affiliated Tribes. I conducted my research in a way that blended my tribal heritage with a scientifically sound method. The main elements of this dissertation have been a search for: (a) the positive leadership perspectives of my tribal members, and (b) where my research can benefit the Three Affiliated Tribes by possibly identifying some relevant findings that would be transferable to needs of the Three Affiliated Tribes. This study was conducted to help inform leadership practices in a general sense while also providing a new perspective on existing leadership models. The final goal of this project was to

utilize my research from a Native American perspective to give voice to a population that has not otherwise been heard.

One of the main ways that many Native tribes instruct or lead youth is through winter lessons, or stories. These winter lessons serve the purpose of addressing how to serve the community and what the appropriate relationship between a leader and a community is. A young Native's leadership roots go back to the culture as well as the ways of knowing or traditions of each individual tribe. It is through these stories that leadership is taught to the young people of each tribal community (Metoyer, 2010).

The Three Affiliate Tribes has their stories or lessons about good and bad—teachings of leadership through Old Man Coyote, who was a trickster. He was always trying to get one over on the other animals or people. His bad tricks would come back on him and through his misdeeds; the lessons of right and wrong would come out. The Three Tribes also had other characters like Lone Man and First Creator who taught stories and ceremonies to the people. They were God-like figures whose oral histories gave the Mandan's and Hidatsa's their creation stories. Oral story telling was important for all three tribes because the stories served to pass on qualities of bravery, looking out for the community, and taking care of your elders. These stories continue to be passed down to today's generation (Bowers, 1973, 1992; Parks, Jones, & Hollow, 1978). Thus it is through oral story telling that a methodology that stresses storytelling is appropriate for a study such as this.

Portraiture is a qualitative methodology that presents an opportunity to encapsulate three elements I believed were necessary for this project: (a) positive truths, (b) utilization of storytelling, and (c) narrative methodology. By using this approach, I

sought to reveal positive truths written in a way the common person could understand. Portraiture allows a researcher to combine scholarly study and the vernacular language of a people to better serve not only the scholarly community, but also the communities in which the research is conducted.

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) contended that through the use of metaphors and symbols, researchers are able to reach out to bigger and more diverse audiences to encourage dialogue on a variety of issues. This style of writing differs from traditional scholarly writing in that it is not solely for scholarly advancement. It also serves to provoke and stimulate all individuals and communities toward deeper conversations about the topics being researched.

For this research, I utilized storytelling aspects of traditional Three Affiliated Tribes culture—that is, using traditional stories to teach lessons, and using narrative methodology by painting a portrait of an individual’s story through inquiry and documentation. This methodology allows voices of not only the participants, but also the researcher to be heard. I not only heard my participants’ stories, but also shared my stories with the participants as we engaged in rich dialogue with each other. Together, participants and researcher paint a portrait on a canvas through the stories shared with each other (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). By using portraiture, I painted a canvas; I created a narrative picture supplemented by my participants’ narrative photographs to provide even more rich detail of the participants’ voices. The result was a crisp, detailed visual picture of Native leadership.

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) wrote the template for portraiture in their book titled *The Art and Science of Portraiture* with the goal of blending the rigors of

science and the words from storytelling. This blending can be described as painting a narrative that accurately portrays participants. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997, p.5) described this method by saying:

This gives voice to participants while they help in the process through their descriptions, facial expressions, and tone of voice when they are telling their stories. Portraiture encourages the researcher to become fully involved with the process and to allow the researcher to put their voice into the process.

Portraiture looks for the goodness within each of the stories while understanding that the world is full of imperfections. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) argued that this is to be an “intentionally generous and eclectic process by searching for what is good and healthy” (p. 9). This was important to me because so much research on Native Americans is focused on the negative, with a faultfinding emphasis. It was this focus on good and positive things in life, and the focus on storytelling and retelling, that made me choose portraiture as my research method to accompany me on this journey.

The Three Affiliated Tribes’ culture of storytelling is the primary means of transporting information, education, and our theories from generation to generation. The foundation of portraiture is storytelling (narrative) and being able to extract codes and theories from every nuance of the context from which a story is being told is what makes the research unique to qualitative studies.

This foundation of storytelling is built on trust. One of the main steps in conducting Native American research is establishing trust with the people with whom you are working. Some of the recommendations for effective research of this kind include preparing letters of consent, being transparent about your intentions, having a positive

reputation, listening and being fair (Burnette & Sanders, 2014). I have upheld all of these recommendations and rechecked them throughout this process.

Before deciding on the method of portraiture for my research methodology, I explored critical research using an approach by English (2000). A few critiques of qualitative research using portraiture were made by English, in which he stated three main points to be cautious of when using this research method. The first point he made is the problem of a researcher not being objective when doing the research. Portraiture requires participation by both a researcher and participants, thus making it difficult for the researcher to remain a neutral observer. English failed to mention that it is not intended that the researcher be a neutral observer during this time, but an active participant in a study.

One purpose of portraiture is to incorporate a researcher's perspective on the subject being studied. However, I had to deal with making sure my visual portraits were accurate. I did this by stepping back during the analysis portion of the project and doing some member checking. I needed to step back to make sure the "truth" included participants' perspectives and not just mine. So, I made sure participants reviewed transcripts and agreed to the accuracy of transcripts. I also sent transcribed interviews to two of my colleagues and to my advisor to review the transcriptions and to engage in coding the documents. I also had them review some of my coded documents and check to see that my "truths" were valid. The final steps I took were to share my interpretations with my colleagues and check that they were close to how they interpreted the codes. I also shared my final portraits with the participants to gather their feedback and check that

what I interpreted with the participants was agreeable to what they believed had occurred. This helped strengthen the validity of my analysis.

The second point English (2000) made was that of “truth seeking” through thick and rich descriptions. He pointed out that portraiture does not offer the reader an opportunity to see the truth in any other way, but through the eyes of the researcher. This, he says, erodes the ability for a reader and participants to see the resulting portrait by any other perspective. English failed to mention that this is what qualitative research is about—“thick and rich” descriptions to put together a narrative of a story.

The last point that English (2000) made regarding his healthy skepticism for portraiture is that the final drawing, the portrait, is the only view you get and that becomes hard to replicate with another similar study. Replication is the language of a quantitative researcher and not a qualitative researcher; so yes, the portrait is the final piece. The goal of portraiture is not to be able to replicate a portrait (results), but to tell the stories of individuals with a rich and deep understanding. This method requires a non-traditional approach to research and understanding that a study using portraiture is difficult to replicate with the final goal of this research being different from a traditional study.

What was my role in this study? It was special because I had a relationship with my participants that would bring a cultural bond to my research that is unique. My in-depth understanding of the individuals portrayed is something that would be difficult to replicate. Through portraiture, I was not trying to be objective, but to use who I am and what I am to be able to report how these seven participants viewed their world through a cultural understanding that is difficult to replicate—I would not expect anyone to

replicate this study. My goal was to enable people not only in academia, but also in the real world to understand leadership from men from the Three Affiliated Tribes perspective and to be able to deepen the conversation of what leadership should look like in tribal communities.

Another distinction of this type of research is that most traditional types of research studies inform other scholarly people, whereas this type of research breaks from that traditional concept and looks to inspire a distinct community of people. With storytelling at the center, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) called this research of blending science with that of a people's voice the "People's Scholarship" (p. 9).

Portraiture fits into guidelines set forth in Lambert's (2014) book on indigenous research by giving back to members of a community and by adding to the conversation of community building. Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) both preach about the power of the oral word and the multiple layers that storytelling can be used as a medium to teach. Storytelling has always been a tradition amongst Native Americans of all tribes used as direction, lecture and to show your leadership skills through your oratory skills.

### **The Gathering Plan (Research Design)**

In traditional Mandan culture, a gathering party did not go out to pick wild fruit without a plan in place. This gathering consisted of deciding where they would be gathering, what they would be gathering, and how much of the wild fruit they intended to gather. This plan included three main elements: (a) location, (b) type of berries, and (c) quantity to be harvested. One of the ethical guidelines for the gatherers was to not take more than they could use. They needed to be economical in their gatherings so they



would have fruit left over for the birds, insects and animals. The realization that all humans, birds, insects and wildlife need to live together in harmony was common.

This study is similar in that I made my plan ahead of time about how this study was going to take place, the types of participants I wished to interview, and the amount of data I needed to harvest. I can draw more analogies to traditional gathering and this research project by looking through my Three Affiliated Tribes' lens. This lens helped me make sense of this process by relating it to something I know well—gathering. My family picked wild Juneberries, Chokecherries, Plums and even wild strawberries throughout different times of the year. This traditional harvesting helps my children learn how to plan when to go, and where to go as we teach them to share with the animals, birds and insects.

Using portraiture and the gathering analogy, one of the first things I did was gather everything I could on Lawrence-Lightfoot (2016) and her portraiture methods. And like the berries I picked over the years, I devoured everything I could on portraiture and her writings. I read her book titled *The Good High School* (1983) in which she used portraiture to research the question of what makes a good school. I also read her books, *Respect* (2000) and *Exit* (2012), and studied how she put her portraits together, looked at the flow of her writing, and how she was able to put her research into poetry to produce her final manuscript. The first book that I purchased soon became my Bible for research. *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, is the 1997 book she wrote with Sara Jessica Hoffman. This book served as the foundation of my interpretation of how this research was going to be conducted.

The use of portraiture involved reflection, observation, narratives, and data analysis tightly aligned with a theory that would be the structure of this project. Another area of portraiture research included context—where and how interviews would take place. I looked at historical, personal, and internal context throughout the process to be able to create these portraits as accurately as possible. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) stated, “that context is the skeleton of the research as it helps to understand what is being said and done during the course of the interviews” (p. 31).

By being dynamically connected to my participants, I was able to retell their stories as accurately and passionately as possible. The balance of rationality and emotion was important to this study as I was walking a tightrope of scholarly study while at the same time making the voice of participants heard in a manner that non-scholars could understand.

Portraiture does not romanticize anything. It does try to paint the canvas as accurately as possible, even if there are flaws, shortcomings, or other items that come up within the flow of a narrative. These imperfections are what makes the portrait that much more valid and reliable. The key to the research is the researcher’s ability to be up front with his views of the narrative identity and confront his bias to keep that awareness on the edge of the consciousness (Matthias & Petchauer, 2012). The shared and individual histories, the close father-son (grandfather) relationships, and the existing relationships I had with my participants gave me an opportunity to explore the phenomenon of leadership at a separate level of context for each of the seven participants. Context and relationships was key to making this process genuine and authentic.

Chapman (2007) talked about using portraiture when your goal is to create as complete a picture of a whole scene as possible. Everything is taken into account—the scene, event, participant, and researcher. It is with this spirit that Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) described portraiture as “capturing the essence of the image through probing, layering and interpreting the whole scene” (p. 4).

### **Gaining Permission to Conduct Research**

To start my project I went to the Three Affiliated Tribes Education Committee and sought their permission to conduct the study. Education committee meetings are held at tribal headquarters an hour and one-half drive from my home. The monthly meetings have agendas, so I had to get placed on the agenda and I was told to show up at 10:00 a.m. Education committee meetings last up to eight hours, and I ended up last on the agenda. It was 4:00 in the afternoon when the education committee moved that my request be taken to the full tribal council. This meant another trip to New Town for another 5-hour wait until my place on the agenda came up. The process at the time of my study was that I had to go in front of the education committee and the full tribal council, explain my research study to the tribal council, and let them know what my intentions were. The tribal council asked me questions about my research, and they voted on whether or not to allow me to do research involving Three Affiliated Tribal members. It was a good process for me, and for educating the tribal council members and those in attendance about what I was planning on doing, why I believed it was necessary, and how it could benefit the tribe. The tribe has since moved to have an Institutional Review Board (IRB) established through their local community college to address all research on the reservation.

I followed the IRB process at the University of North Dakota (UND) and received permission to conduct my study. I have attached both the IRB approval from UND and the Three Affiliated Tribes approval letters in Appendix F and Appendix G, respectively.

### **Offering of Tobacco and Identifying the Warriors for Success**

#### **(Selecting Participants)**

“How will you decide who will be a part of your research, especially when we have several members of this community that will fit your criteria of being a leader?” is a question my wife asked me when I excitedly told her about my research project. I originally thought that I would have four interviewees, but added three sets of Native American father-son subjects from the Three Affiliated Tribes to give me a broader perspective.

The toughest part was defining leadership, as it applies to Three Affiliated Tribes people in particular. I mentioned in Chapters I and II some of the different definitions of leadership and I chose to go with Fullan’s (2015) definition and model of leadership as my starting point. Looking through the lens of Tribal Critical Race Theory, the conceptual framework of leadership, to some, is embodied in the people who took time to learn about the cultural ways of our people and use those ways, in turn, to help our people in times of need. I have observed these unique characteristics firsthand in traditional medicine men, strong culturally wise men and in contemporary tribal politics—the culturally adept individuals using their teachings to serve and help the people. The admiration I have for these leaders is the reason I began to research and explore this subject in great depth. This is a reflection of the two worlds that I straddle—the first being the teaching world I have experienced in my doctoral program, and the second being the teaching I have experienced through my traditional Three Affiliated Tribes

context. (I refer to men in my tribe often as my study is about the men in the Three Tribes. However, I am proud of many women in our tribe that I look up to and admire for their strength, wisdom, and leadership, and that I have been fortunate to be around.) As I was deciding upon my topic, my original study was going to be on Native leadership in general, but I found that there was actually little to no research on Native men and specifically Three Affiliated Tribal men that were researched regarding leadership. I believed this was an area that needed to be looked at more closely and researched.

Through the use of the local Three Affiliated Tribes newspaper, referrals, suggestions from elders, and national Native media resources, I identified 10 sets of intergenerational Three Affiliated Tribes father-son pairs as potential participants in this study. Three sets of participants were selected using the following selection criteria: (a) they had to be college graduates, (b) they had to have earned a bachelor's degree or equivalent, (c) they had to hold some type of leadership position in the past in either business, education, or within the tribe, and (d) they had to be enrolled members of the Three Affiliated Tribes. I developed further criteria as I took into account positions of leadership, job positions that leadership was needed for, or high profile tribal leaders. I put these criteria into the study to narrow down my list as well as to be able to retrieve stories from the participants who had navigated through different obstacles and still became college educated professionals in their respective fields. I believed it was necessary for participants to have graduated from a 4-year university or to have an equivalent degree because this study was about those with degrees; individuals who had earned college degrees was my starting point. As I listened to their stories, I searched for ways to help other tribal members see the perspectives of these Native men participants

and to give participants a voice among tribal members for sharing their thoughts on leadership.

This list of criteria helped me to come up with a short list of 10 pairs of possible participants. Using this short list, I reviewed the current information on my potential participants and decided to do a random draw of three pairs of father-son males to be interviewed. I also drew an additional three pairs in the event that any of the first three pairs did not want to participate in the research project. After the drawing, I contacted the participants by letter (Appendix A), explained my research study, and invited them to participate. I found out that one of the father-son pairs had a third generation predecessor, a grandfather, who also had his college degree, so I asked the grandpa if he would participate as well and received his blessing. Of the seven men in the study, I knew six of them already and the seventh, Ed Hall, I knew about some of his history but had not met him before. I had not engaged in long conversations with many of the men prior to this interview, but had casual contact with six of the men prior to this process.

Giving of the tobacco is a teaching that has stuck with me from my Uncle Edwin Benson, one of the last fluent Mandan speakers in our tribe. He said if you look to call upon someone to help you, especially for wisdom or advice, you offer that person tobacco. This tobacco has a spirit, and this offering will show the respect you have for that person you are calling upon to help you. Tobacco is strong medicine that will help you, and is a symbol of respect that you have for the person helping you. Another teaching that I have learned is that if you ask something important of someone, and you are of the Knife Clan, you should give him a knife in return for him helping you out. It is a simple gesture, but powerful when following the ways of my people. I followed

traditional protocol and gave both a knife and tobacco to my participants for the wisdom and the time I sought from them.

Consent forms (Appendix C) were sent out in a mailing along with a list of interview questions that were going to be asked when we met so that participants would be aware of the types of questions I would be asking. This was sent out approximately two weeks before interviews were conducted. Consent forms were also brought to the interviews clearly stating that an interviewee would be allowed to drop out of the study at any time. I interviewed a total of seven participants. Each participant was interviewed two times alone, as an individual. Then participants were interviewed a third time as a father-son pair (or in one case, as a father-son-grandfather group).

For each participant, the first two interviews lasted approximately one hour, with the initial interview serving as a time to build rapport, explain the research and the consent form, and begin the interview process. The interviews were purposeful in having both a standard set of questions as well as being reflexive in nature, allowing the flow of conversation to go organically to wherever it ended up. I had conversations ranging from sports and the tribal constitution to the Dakota Pipeline. These conversations were noted in my reflexive journal for the reason of further data analysis later on. I conducted follow up interviews (the second round of interviews) that also lasted approximately one hour with all participants individually; this second interview helped me to clarify any questions I might have missed during the first interview and to help expand on the question of leadership after the participants had a chance to reflect on the first interview. The final interview consisted of meeting with father-son pairs (and one father-son-grandfather group) together discussing leadership and utilizing a non-traditional talking

circle to let them describe each other's leadership traits as well as the topic of leadership. The talking circle consisted of the three or four of us sitting down and discussing the leadership virtues of each other. In a traditional talking circle we would have smudged (This is the practice of burning sacred herbs such as cedar, sage, or other herbs for spiritual cleansing) down and had either a talking stick or feather that signified whose turn it was to talk or when the person with the talking stick or feather was done expressing himself/herself. Although this talking circle was less formal, we all conformed to the unstated rules of being respectful, taking turns talking, and letting the conversation sometimes go off track as that is what makes talking circles so powerful. I made observations during this time and created memos to record these observations. I also participated in a shared analysis of the portraiture with the participants. I allowed them the opportunity to read and react to the portraits as well as give me additional details that they believed would provide a deeper view of the portraits. I also telephoned/texted all of the participants prior to completing my final dissertation manuscript to seek and confirm their final approval and participation. Brayboy and Deyle (2000) recommended shared analysis in their article titled *Theory into Practice* to allow for a more collaborative and powerful process that is also respectful and trustworthy to the participants.

### **Harvesting the Corn (Data Collection and Analysis)**

A time of the year the Mandan people looked forward to in the "Old Days" was harvesting the corn. This harvesting was the central piece of a trade empire the Mandan Nation (also known as Nu Eta) conducted with tribes all across the western prairies. Corn was treated with great respect; women in a community sang songs to the corn and prayed for a great harvest. There were ceremonies of thanks after the corn harvest to show



appreciation for the corn and for Mother Nature, as Mother Nature had helped lead the People to a good harvest at the end of the year.

### **Data Collection**

Portraiture and qualitative research include a wide range of appropriate and prescribed methods for an effective qualitative study; they are the questions and issues a researcher is studying. Data can be anything a researcher wants to include that is related to the canvas the researcher is trying to paint (Maxwell, 2013). Using portraiture, context is key for both formal and informal settings throughout the research process. I used three methods to collect data including on site interviews, participant observations, and contextual notes/impressionistic records.

**Interview method.** I harvested my data through interviews at a location convenient for my subjects. A key staple of portraiture is to meet participants in their natural setting to get needed information in a way that allows for incorporating context from that natural setting into the data. All my interviews were conducted in natural settings of the participants' choosing. Locations ranged from the living rooms of participants' homes, to school classrooms, the tribal business office, kitchen tables, and personal office spaces. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) stressed that context allows participants to be more at ease and natural in settings they are familiar with. Choosing to interview participants in locations of their choosing allows for an outside-in viewpoint of the location—simple things like the ambience of a room, the architecture of a building, or the smells of a classroom all helped me paint my canvas of each individual portrait. Capturing the context in which each participant lived before the actual interviews started was the first and most important part of each portrait as the interview process began. Preparing for

interviews and my impressionistic records of the trips to conduct each interview played a major role in my development of each portrait. I found that I had to leave more information out than I could put in, but that is part of the process of putting together portraits.

The location of choice for participants also allowed me a rare opportunity to observe interactions that occurred in context during interviews. The smell of pizza cooking or hot coffee brewing made these interviews unique and special. Participants who allowed me to see personal pictures on their walls, trophies from marathons, stacks of maps of the Three Affiliated Tribes, or even look at the mundane rules of a classroom let me see more than I would have had I met my participants at a public facility. The case for portraiture is to meet participants in their natural settings to get that additional contextual information from a place that feels normal for participants.

The first two rounds of interviews were conducted with individual participants, and I allowed the participants to lead the narrative. However, I used a set of probing questions for when further understanding was needed or to clarify information discussed. A third round of interviews was conducted with father-son pairs and was more like a traditional talking circle method of data collection that allowed participants to take turns and to describe each other's leadership styles. I also used a set of questions during this third round of interviews to help keep the process somewhat structured, although the method became more organic, happened naturally, as we moved through the interview. Interviews covered defining leadership, the process of graduating from college, leadership examples that each participant had experienced, and if and how participants helped or gave back to their tribe. I probed to see what they saw as their preferred

leadership style and why they thought that style was effective for them. I attached interview protocols as well as interview probes from all three rounds of interviews in Appendix D.

The key to this study was establishing relationships with participants at the onset and to keep those relationships going. Seidman (2006) talked about the importance of a relationship in a qualitative study and he spoke of walking a fine line. A researcher cannot be too close or too distant when conducting research with participants. The nature of the research and the personality of a researcher is what Seidman (2006) said is key to making relationships happen in a productive way. I had a unique history with each of my participants, thus rapport and trust were established before I began my research. This relationship made the interview process develop naturally over time.

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) saw rapport between a portraitist and a participant as a needed “empathetic rapport” in order for the portraitist to be able to see the same picture that the participant was seeing. I found the rapport came easily during my interviews and worked intentionally on establishing trust from the onset of the interviews by finding common ground, developing a bond, and discussing relatives or friends that we had in common. I knew that I achieved rapport with the participants by reading their body language, by noting the rate of conversation, and the joking and laughing that is common within our tribe. With every interview I made it clear that if a question was too personal or the participants’ felt uncomfortable, they could let me know and I would be happy to move on to other topics. I ended up asking all my questions. Participants appeared to want to answer everything, although many wanted clarification on what I was asking. This was because of some questions being vague or probing in an

effort on my part to solicit more open ended answers rather than easy yes or no answers. The ability for a portraitist to be able to relate to a participant, but to also seek out clarity is clearly necessary.

The relationships forged in this process became evident as I listened to descriptions by the participants of themselves and of their fathers-sons-grandfather. Good relationships between father-son pairs and the one father-son-grandfather group were evident through the rapport felt at interviews. As the researcher, I needed to understand my participants in such a way that I could produce a manuscript that everyone could see and understand. I wanted to produce a manuscript that did not romanticize, but did justice to the actual account that took place between the researcher and the participants.

Triangulation of information occurred when stories were received from different individuals, and stories showed no conflict. It was during the third round of interviews that I was able to look for triangulation of self-statements that were made when asking participants to describe the other person or persons at the individual's interview. I sought permission from each of the participants to photograph, videotape, and to digitally audiotape them at each of the interviews as well as garnering photographs of the father-son pairs and father-son-grandfather group. I also took photographs with each of the participants at the end of our last session. I found this session to be like a celebration of the time we had together during this research. The father-son (grandfather) sessions also gave me an opportunity to examine intergenerational similarities and differences regarding attitudes toward leadership. The third round of interviews also gave me an opportunity to view interactions between individuals as interviews took place.

**Research Notes.** As I visited with each participant, I observed them in their context noting any activities that took place, relationships with other random people that they encountered, and how they proceeded to function in their daily lives. I saw random people stand on the side and listen to the interview and took notes of their reactions as well. During the course of all the interviews, I observed families, friends, and school children randomly come and go without disrupting the process, but actually helping the process along because it gave me contextual notes to observe my participants' interactions within various settings. I had pizza, coffee, and donuts with my participants (If you ever want to make a Native at ease, share some food. It is common within our culture to sit down and break bread, share a cup of coffee and have a good conversation. Food is always at the center of building a relationship.). It was at this time we discussed participants' perceptions and stories of their fathers and sons, and laughed at the humor that went with stories. This experience was more like old friends getting together and sharing memories than it was a structured, rigid interview. Rigor occurred later when looking at an interview transcript and checking for consistency in how fathers, sons, and/or grandfathers viewed each other and themselves during this period of research.

**Historical data.** While I was looking at leadership, I invited my participants to show off some of their examples of success, such as newspaper articles, tribal acknowledgements, athletic or student achievements, and even media coverage that they may have saved over the years. I gathered this information either in contextual notes or with documents they gave me and used this as part of my triangulation of data to reinforce some of what I had found through interviews and observations, and to help validate the accuracy of information received.

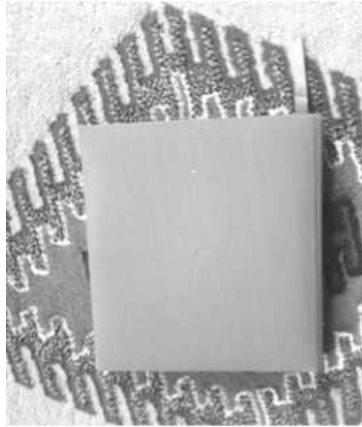


Figure 2. “Red Journal.” Photo by Chad Dahlen, 2018.



Figure 3. “Reflective Notes.” Photo by Chad Dahlen, 2018.

**Data Analysis.** Data analysis was ongoing. I kept a red journal (Figure 2.) of my daily reflections called “Impressionistic Records” that helped guide me as I started to see emerging themes, a process that Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) recommended that portraitists do as they begin the interview process. I purposely selected this journal because the color stood out and it is a hardcover cloth bound book that would endure the many journeys that it was to take with me. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) recommended that within a journal, a researcher looks for their own codes, and shifts in perspectives and ideas that may need attention as the analysis process unfolds. This

impressionistic record helped me as I shifted from seeing codes to unlocking themes during data collection and analysis. I started recording in my red journal on the second day of my doctoral classes and used it in various classes as I went through my education. I scrawled notes and different ideas for my dissertation into it, but I also used this journal to keep impressionistic records of encounters with my participants. I took notes of everything as I left my house—the weather, the trees, the person’s office or house. This red journal accompanied me on my journey throughout this entire process from start to finish. It was invaluable as I looked back to reflect on what was going on, the schedules I set for myself, and the kind of feeling each setting gave me. I tried to be honest and aware each and every time I made a visit to my participants.

**Coding.** Once interviews were completed, I developed codes and categories from the various sources of data I had compiled including: transcripts of interviews, notes from personal observations, historical documents, and reflections in my red journal. From all these sources of data, I isolated facts, assigned codes to those facts, and grouped similar facts into categories.

Table 1.  
*Sample of the Coding Process and the Emergence of Categories and Themes*

Code	Data Supporting the Code	Interpretive Summary
Leadership	Doing things nobody else wants to like picking up garbage in the hall.	Hidden leadership and modeling.
Mindset	I knew I had to get an education, not getting one was never an option. I embraced the struggle.	Persistent in pursuit education. Education is supposed to be difficult.
Humble	Know when you are wrong.	Not being prideful.
Trust	A handshake is a handshake.	Taking some one for

their word.  
Agreements made  
through mutual  
respect and honesty.

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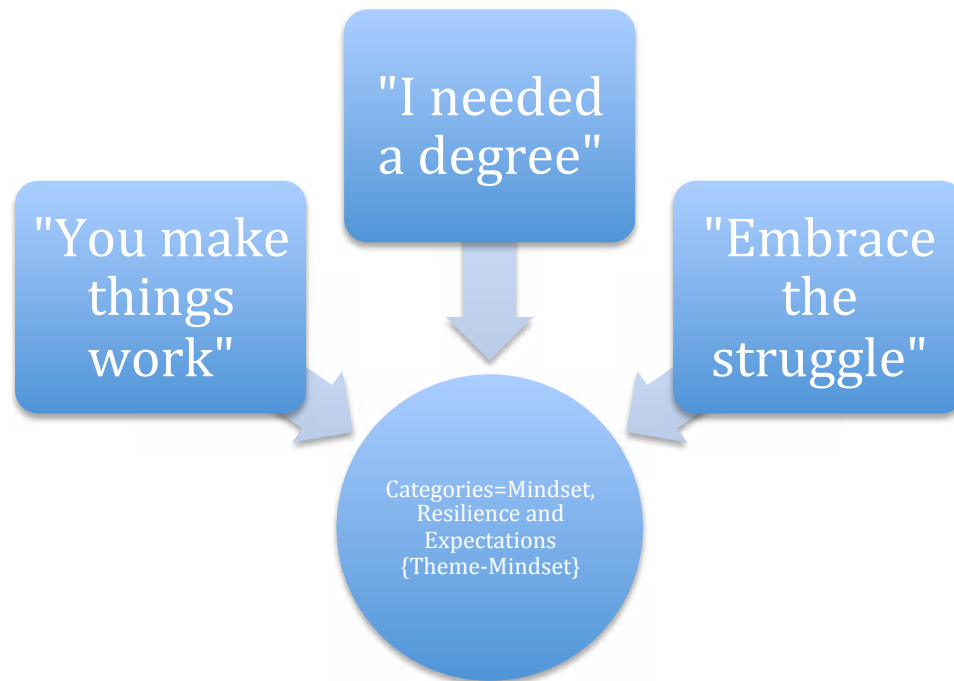
For my analysis of data, I used portraiture to help me determine the themes inherent in my data. Portraiture uses five steps in constructing emergent themes. A portraitist will:

- “Listen for repetitive refrains that are spoken . . . frequently”
- “Listen for resonant metaphors, poetic and symbolic expressions that reveal the ways . . . [participants] experience their realities”
- “Listen for the themes expressed through cultural and institutional rituals that seem to be important to organizational continuity and coherence”
- “Use triangulation to weave together the threads of data converging from a variety of sources”
- “Construct themes and reveal patterns among perspectives that are often experienced as” points of contrast. (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 193)

While assigning codes to my data, I looked and listened for repetitive refrains spoken frequently during interviews. I grouped similar phrases into categories revealing themes running throughout the interviews. I tried to identify symbolic expressions, clues to how my respondents experienced their realities. I coded transcripts of the interviews, notes from observations, the historical documents, and relevant notes from my red journal. I ended up with a total of 550 codes; some of them were duplicates as I went through the



data. By using information from several different types of data I was able to triangulate the sources for more accurate final results (or portraits) of my participants.



*Figure 4.* From Code to Category to Theme.

### **Justification of Methods**

Portraiture research does not recommend any one prescribed method of carrying out a research project. There is no one size fits all formula for conducting research. The methods chosen for this study—interviews, reflection, and observation—all fall within commonly accepted areas of methodology in portraiture theory. The interview method is one way in which a researcher is able to obtain a perspective from a participant on success, educational success, leadership, and giving back.

The old style of ensuring validity in research does not follow portraiture rules. Ensuring validity through a portraitist lens depends on how well you, the researcher, can weave a story based on information received from participants so your readers, participants, and you (the researcher) can all agree or feel the same response to your

story, the results of your research. A story that is credible becomes one of our bases for validity. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) suggest that in order to have validity, we need to look at threats to validity in a project. A researcher should be aware of three areas in order to avoid researcher bias and have a valid portrait:

1. *Holistic fallacy*: interpreting events as more patterned and congruent than they really are....
2. *Elite bias*: overweighting data from articulate, well informed, usually high status informants and underrepresenting data from less articulate lower-status ones.
3. *Going native*: losing your perspective . . . being coopted into the perceptions and explanations of local informants. (p. 246)

One of the ways I maintained validity was to have two of my peer researchers review my transcriptions to double check that my themes and codes are valid. Having a strategy in place ahead of time, as well as keeping a journal of personal reflections and reviewing that as I transcribe interviews, enabled me to double check that what I was perceiving was not compromised in the process. During this process, I found some useful codes that I had not thought of such as Trauma, hero, Role of grandmother to men?, Teenage rebellion, and Influence of women on these men. These insightful comments helped me recheck the codes as I went through the process.

Maxwell (2013) set out a series of validity tests for researchers as a checklist to make sure their qualitative research would be valid. The following strategies were used in this study to make sure my research met the standards for validity:

1. Intensive and/or long-term involvement—I met with each respondent in three separate interviews to develop rapport and a trusting relationship. The time with the participants was between 45 minutes to 3 hours each time depending on the participant. It involved discussing research along with politics, sports, kids and tribal news.
2. Rich Data—Intensive and long-term involvement along with pictures, videotapes and audio-recordings of interviews provided enough data for me to be able to extract rich data. The journal I kept also provided me with key insights. My video card accidentally erased while I transferred data to my home computer so unfortunately I only have videotapes of three interviews. The videotape that I did get helped me pull rich details from the interviews and was invaluable for those portraits.
3. Respondent Validation—I provided transcripts of interviews to the participants so they could relay corrected information. I followed up with telephone calls to the respondents to make sure they received the transcripts and were comfortable with me going forward with the transcripts. I also shared my transcriptions with two fellow researchers to check for accuracy of themes and codes as I analyzed the data.
4. Intervention—My intervention was my presence at the participants' staging areas. Since interviews were held at settings of the participants' choosing, I was able to watch and observe how participants interacted with others, and I was able to check for qualities such as leadership and success in my observations.

5. Searching for discrepancies—Throughout my research I looked for statements that did not correlate with what a subject had stated earlier and revisited those statements during my second or third interview with the subject. Note: I did not find any discrepancies as I went through the interviews with the other participants. I learned that these men told their stories without much bravado and when it came time for the fathers and sons to talk about them, they backed up many of the comments that were made.
6. Triangulation—I explored multiple sources of data collection. The father-son interviews helped the process of triangulation within members of the same family. I asked questions such as: “What do you think your father would say is his biggest success?” Alternatively, “How do you think your son is going to give back to the tribe with his education?”

Berger (2015) recommends the use of reflection through self-knowledge, understanding of the self, and self-monitoring of a researcher’s biases and beliefs. Through this practice of reflexivity I made it a constant practice to evaluate my own bias as I was analyzing the data to ensure the accuracy and validity of the research was sound. I maintained awareness of my personal thoughts through my journal, while at the same time embracing the shared experience that I had with the participants.

### **Ethical Issues**

The best practices, according to Damianakis & Woodford (2012), regarding ethical issues is to put everything you plan on doing on paper. You have dual roles in research; one role is to produce knowledge and the other is to conduct your research with

the highest of ethics. I took audio recordings of each interview and plan to either destroy them after two years or donate the recordings to the participants if they request to have them for their own histories. Subjects were able to withdraw from the research at any time. The subjects also were allowed to review the transcripts and were provided another opportunity to withdraw any or all of their transcribed material during this review. I sought approval from my participants for their portraits and names to appear in this study. If they did not want their names or pictures in the study, they were able to choose to leave their personal data out of the study. Participants were informed they would receive a copy of the final project results once the study was complete.

I provided the participants with their final portrait and allowed them two weeks to review the portrait and give me any feedback that they would like to provide about their portraits. I informed them that I would change anything that they did not like in the portraits and that they had the right to pull any or all of their information at any time up to the set deadline. I also telephoned all the participants and received their verbal blessings before I submitted the final draft to my dissertation committee.

Finally, I gave the participants each a knife, tobacco, and will give them a hardbound copy of my dissertation once it is published. The knife was given because I am a grandson of the Knife Clan. The gifting of a knife in our culture is a symbol of great honor to give to someone whom you have asked to help. The gifting of the tobacco is also a gift to honor for someone in my culture of giving you knowledge. The Mandan People traditionally were a bartering tribe and our elders passed down this tradition at an early age. If you wanted something from an elder, such as knowledge or clothing, you traded. Tobacco was traditionally for knowledge, such as how to make a bow or an arrow, how

to chip flint or to know what the ways of the world are. I have given the participants each of these items with a prayer of thanks that I was allowed into their lives for a short period of time.

## **CHAPTER TOOP (CHAPTER IV)**

### **PORTRAITS (RESULTS)**

#### **Introduction**

Many people look at Native Americans as all the same and associate the word “Indian” or “Teepee” with the image of a brown-skinned stoic man standing tall with feathers in his hair and nothing but a breach cloth covering him up. Do they ever look deeper? As a Native American, I ask what is our story, our voice? This study explores the perspectives of seven Native Three Affiliated Tribes men by digging deep through interviews to learn what their perceptions of leadership are and what lessons can be passed down to future generations of leaders.

I will introduce you to seven Native Three Affiliated Tribal men who have all graduated from college, have professional jobs, and have become leaders in their fields. These seven men are all fathers and sons who shared their stories of leadership with me. This is an exciting time because a study like this has not been conducted before with Three Affiliated Tribal members. At the onset of this project, I realized that with our tribe as small as it is, having anonymity would be difficult and nearly impossible if I was to tell their stories and to produce a portrait that would be accurate and valid. I chose to ask each of the participants if they would voluntarily waive their anonymity for this research project. They all agreed that they would and none of them had an issue with the way the study took place.

The participants in this study are a school teacher/coach named Wylee Bearstail and his father, Daryl Bearstail, a state champion basketball coach and social worker. Pem Hall and his dad, Ed Hall, both have civil engineering degrees and Jess Hall, son of Pem and grandson of Ed lights up the world with his electrical engineering degree. And then there is former tribal chairman Marcus Levings and his father “The accountant,” Marcus Wells, Sr. They all shared their stories with me during two individual interviews and a third interview that included the father and son. Together we had great fellowship and conversation regarding the perceptions and stories of leadership. Below is Table 2., which includes the participants’ abbreviated profiles.

Table 2.  
*Abbreviated Profiles of Leadership Interviewees*

Participant	G-Grandfather F-Father S-Son	Age	Category of Profession	Degree Type	Current Job at time of interview	Living on/off reserve
<b>Wylee Bearstail</b>	S	36	Elementary Teacher/ Coach/ Athletic Director	BS. Education	Elementary Teacher	On
<b>Daryl Bearstail</b>	F	58	Social Worker	Masters in Social Work	Tribal Health Insurance Director	Off
<b>Jess Hall</b>	S	31	Electrical Engineer	BS. Electrical Engineering	Engineer at Montana Dakota Utilities	Off
<b>Pem Hall</b>	F/S	58	Civil Engineer	BS. Civil Engineering	Project Officer at	On
<b>Ed Hall</b>	G	83	Civil Engineer	BS. Civil Engineering	Adjunct Teacher at FBCC	On
<b>Marcus Levings</b>	S	50	Consulting/Political/Accounting	B.S. Business Management Masters in Business Management	Four Bears Special Projects Officer	On
<b>Marcus Wells Sr.</b>	F	70	Accounting/Business Owner	BC Accounting	Business Owner	On



Their stories about leadership were told to me in their voices. I have shared them by adding my voice to theirs so others may learn from them. The photographs I took of each of the participants were a collaborative approach; they were not staged and the participants were not asked to smile or look a certain way. I wanted to capture the participants with respect to them as well as reflect their natural personalities. I strived to reflect their voices even in the photographs that I took, because I believed it was important to complete their final portrait. All the participants were given the opportunity to respond to not only the portraits but also the photographs that I took. I received their approval prior to submitting final portraits of each of the participants.

### **Portrait 1: Wylee Bearstail**



*Figure 5.* “The Teacher and Coach.” Wylee Bearstail in his school classroom in White Shield, North Dakota. Photo by Chad Dahlen, 2016.

**“Leadership is an Everyday Thing!” —Wylee Bearstail**

I always say to my sons—be a positive leader; do the things that nobody likes to do.... getting in all your homework on time, getting straight A's in school; that's being a positive leader. Being to school on time every day and answering all the questions in the classroom is a leader. You know, nobody really likes to do that in school. Being a positive leader in school means you are not afraid to stand up for what you want to believe in and for what is right. I mean, it's an everyday thing!

### **Context-Historical**

I traveled to the little reservation community of White Shield, North Dakota on a cool fall day to visit with Wylee for the first time. White Shield is located on the East end of the Three Affiliated Tribes reservation. A beautiful isolated community located close to the grand waters of Lake Sakakawea. The Arikara band of the Three Affiliated Tribes historically inhabited this community, although like the rest of the reservation, there are many other tribal and ethnic mixes in this small community. The school is an old institution and the center hub of the community. It was built in the same style as many of the reservation schools after the great flooding of our people's land and is made up of brick and mortar. It reminds me more of a penal institution than a warm welcoming image that the thought of a school invokes. This school building was erected by the United States government in the early 1950s to honor the agreements made during the flooding of the Three Affiliated Tribes homelands during the construction of the Garrison Dam. The old building has served as a school and for gathering events like funerals, celebrations, and for various basketball games and tournaments held during the year. It will be serving the community for a couple more years until new school construction is completed.

I visited White Shield many times when I was growing up, sometimes for powwows, visiting relatives, funerals, but the majority of the time for basketball. Each community on the reservation puts on a powwow and White Shield invokes memories of teepees and tents all over during the middle of July. The community bands together and becomes gracious hosts for the many people, both Native and non-Native, who come and visit for the four-day event.

I pulled into the almost empty school parking lot and as I stepped out of my pickup truck, three middle school girls walked up and asked if I needed help with anything. I thanked them and asked what side of the school was Mr. Bearstail's classroom; they excitedly gave me directions pointing and smiling the whole time. As I walked toward the school I could see the big "Warriors" wording on the wall with the school mascot; it reminded me of the many battles I had playing and coaching basketball in the White Shield School. The hospitality the school showed that all of the players and coaches were second to none. I always looked forward to after game activities when opposing teams were invited downstairs to the cafeteria for supper. Sometimes it would be a sack lunch and other times Indian Tacos—a food staple on our reservation made up of fry bread with taco seasoned ground meat, lettuce, cheese, sour cream, refried beans, black olives and taco sauce.

As I walked into the school, Wylee met me and we made small talk, joking with each other, like long lost friends seeing each other after a long time. I walked with him into his classroom and he had his twin boys working on computers with their friends. The school was empty since everyone except for Wylee had left for the day. He said it was typical for him to be at the school long after everyone left. The classroom was a

traditional classroom with small chairs for his elementary students, classroom schedules on the walls, and rules and exemplars of some of the students' drawings, essays and classroom art decorated the room.

Wylee, who is about 6 feet 1 inch and is of slender build, was wearing a White Shield basketball t-shirt and a North Carolina hat. Wylee is not dark in complexion, but he has black hair and a small goatee beard. He comes at you with a big smile; he put me at ease with his approachable personality. His arms are decorated with artistic tattoos of feathers, horses and names of loved ones. His face filled the room with his warm smile and his sense of humor. His humor is typical of many of my Native friends in our area—self-deprecating as well as teasing in a playful manner. He came up to me and gave me a hug and we both laughed; it gave me the feeling as though we were old friends.

Once we finished with our small talk, I proceeded to set up my equipment and we walked through the interview process. With this being my third interview, I had worked out all the kinks from the first two interviews and I was ready to get going right away. I wondered what nuggets I was going to take away from this process. I had watched Wylee from his high school days playing basketball for the Mandaree Warrior's team. The winter of his senior year I was doing play-by-play announcing for the reservation radio station, KMHA. Wylee was a gifted runner, basketball player and grass dancer known throughout Indian Country for his many championships and titles. The grass dance for Native Americans is a competitive form of dancing unique to the Northern Plains. The grass dance outfit has few feathers on it, except for the roach feathers. The dance is a swaying motion similar to grass moving on a windy day. Wylee is one of the best known

and successful grass dancers in the United States. He was smooth with his movements and had a flash about his style that was unique to his own form of dancing.

Besides being a nationally known grass dancer, Wylee was just as popular on the basketball court having been successful in high school, college and later on he was a force on the independent men's circuit with his long range shooting, driving to the basket, and post up moves. That particular winter, in his high school junior year, Wylee took the little community of Mandaree with a school population of about 60 kids in grades 7-12 on a surprising trip to the state basketball tournament. I commented in wonder during the play-by-play how this young man was able to shoot from Pouch Point, which is a local marina located 30 miles from Mandaree, and still make the three-point basket. I still remember vividly calling his game on the radio: "Wylee Bearstail being double teamed, brings the ball up the court, pulls up near Bear's Den and let's loose the three...IT'S GOOD! He shoots from close to 20 miles out and knocks down the shot like a sniper!" My radio partner and I would exaggerate a little, but we used this exaggeration to give the listeners a picture of the places around Mandaree and the impression that he was shooting from way outside the three-point line.

Our conversations always started with talks of family and education and in our last interview with his dad present, a lot of our discussion also included family. The themes of family and education were present throughout all of his interviews and interwoven through our discussions. The family was both a reminder of his past explaining why he had to get his education, his present as he is able to provide for his family through his education, and for the future as he wants his boys to be able to get

their education as well. Wylee is the oldest of eight children and talked glowingly about how he has seven brothers and sisters.

... cool thing about it is that all eight of us grew up with our mom and dad.

Together we have the same mom and dad and that is what I was really blessed with, because you know, in today's society that is rare to have both mom and dad and all brothers and sisters growing up together in the same household.

This is a factor that Wylee believes may be a part of why he has had success in his life as he has grown older. He reflected on this sense of family in all three of our interviews stating that he is where he is at today because of his family being together.

Wylee discussed his belief about the value of education that he learned from his parents:

The main thing I went to school, because my mom and dad were always saying you got to go to school. If you want a good paying job, you have to go to school in order to provide for your family. It was always instilled in me... my dad was always walking or running to class, he had to run all the way to the University of Mary and run back, he kind of taught me to do anything for my family.

His mom and dad were and are still his heroes. The strong influence that they imprinted on him is lasting. I asked him about who his heroes were, I was thinking it was maybe some basketball players or television superheroes, but to my surprise he answered, Mom and Dad, and then said:

My mom gave us the leadership of telling us how to be respectful... my mom was always telling us stories about where we came from, who we are related to, and

not only that, but the ways of life. The leadership part was like leading me, but at same time telling me that culture was a big part of our life.

As we talked and got deeper into the importance of his mom, he shared that she was the stable part of his life. She showed the family how to cook, clean, how to do laundry, to fix their beds and gave them all chores growing up. He said his mom was his cultural teacher as she taught him the cultural ways over the years. He is appreciative of knowing how to have a naming ceremony put on, how to do giveaways and the clanship system of the Hidatsa People. Her leadership helped teach him about his cultural knowledge so that he is able to give back to his students.

Wylee and I laughed at the support our mom's both have given us in our athletic careers. As we exchanged stories he told me of the whistle that she does that only he can hear in a gymnasium full of people.

You know, it's weird, she does this whistle and I know right away where she is sitting in a maxed out crowd. It seems like I am the only one that can hear it too, once I hear that whistle, I know she is there and I feel a lot more relaxed.

This dialogue demonstrated the closeness between a son and mother, and that Wylee perceived leadership as coming from the family. The structure of support that he received from his mother is comforting, nurturing as well as inspiring. Wylee also shared the following:

Dad, it was different for him. He did not show us how to change oil; he did not show us how to fix the car. Him, it was more of a work ethic as far as sports goes.

You know, being healthy- we need to go for a run, running is good for your spirit,

your body. Not only that, but he brought the praying with us.... he brought spirituality in that part of our household.

We talked about the importance of having a male role model in our lives to teach young men that it is okay to pray, to have a healthy lifestyle, to be constant role models for your kids and others. I conjured up an image of his dad running seven miles to the University of Mary and seeing his kids watch him as he left for college on foot. That daily modeling made an impact on Wylee as he referred to it throughout our interviews.

**Dissonance-“ I was on an Island by myself...”**

Although in portraiture we look for the positive stories, we also have to be true to the stories. I have taught classes where we discussed culture shock, and it always centered around people going from their own culture to a different one and the disconnect that goes with it. I never thought of a reverse culture shock, but as we were visiting about Wylee’s school history, he talked a lot about growing up in the bigger schools of Bismarck. He went to about 20 different schools by the time he graduated from high school because of his dad getting different jobs and moving to better places from where they started out. The one story that stood out for Wylee was when his family moved to Mandaree during his freshman year.

My 9th grade year, we moved to Mandaree, before that while I was at Bismarck, I was meeting new people every day. In Bismarck, we are going every day and we are seeing somebody new, somebody different every day going to school, and then going to Mandaree, it was like... where is everybody? Forty students you know. I got sick, I got physically sick, and I know it was probably culture



shock... I did not know how to handle being in that small of a community. The limited people...no stores. It was kind of a change.

The reflection that Wylee shared with me was a deep understanding of his time in Mandaree. He was not talking down Mandaree in any way, just reflecting on how hard it was for him to adjust to such a small reservation community after living most of his life in a larger school district. I never thought of a Native person having a hard time leaving the urban city and moving to the reservation, so this became a moment of disconnect in my thought process. I always looked at it from my perspective and the difficulties I had when living out on a ranch and going away to college. The difficulties I had with the bigger towns and the loneliness that a person can have living in a place of 15,000 people compared to the sociable ways of the country folk. This was one of those learning moments for me as I went through the interview process; it showed my lack of knowledge of “Urban Indians” and the plights they face. This challenged my perceptions and I had to note this in my reflective journal because it would have an impact on my research findings. Wylee did end up leaving Mandaree his sophomore year, but he returned for his junior and senior year and graduated from Mandaree’s public school.

Wylee and I talked further about his time in Bismarck and some of the challenges he faced as he went to elementary and high school there. He talked about the reason that he decided to go into education was because of both the opportunities and lack of opportunities for Native Americans, i.e. the lack of support for students of color and the feeling that he had that there was nobody to back him up. Wylee said:

I was the only minority in the school at the time, no other race in my class ever. It was to the point where Native American studies, I had no back, nobody to back

me at that time. It was a lot of racism, but it was somewhat different towards me because I was a basketball player in the public schools. ... So they would say, 'we don't mean you when we say Indians that don't have jobs or "dirty Indians"' 'you know the stereotypes. I heard jokes, different jokes, my so-called friends growing up would say, well we don't mean you, you're different, you're not like them.... So you know growing up, I had to prove something, I wanted to say I am the best cross country runner, I am going to be the best basketball player and I am going to show them that Native Americans can succeed even though I grew up in the Bismarck area and I didn't grow up on the reservation... I felt like I was on an island by myself and I need to survive and I had to show these guys that this Indian boy, this skinny Indian boy could be successful!

Frustrated by the lack of candor that many of his early White friends had expressed when he was growing up, Wylee seemed to resent many Whites for their racist attitudes toward Indians. We shared several stories about how these experiences were frustrating, but actually shaped and hardened our viewpoint of the importance of having role models in our lives.

### **Philosophy of Leadership-“ I know my experiences”**

Wylee and I got back to the matter of leadership. I asked him to outline the important values of leadership that guide him as a person. He sat back and gave a short pause, and then looked up as he was in deep thought, then he replied:

I thought about this question and the one thing that I try to bring is a positive attitude to this position. You need to be a good person, by being committed, being on time or early to work, by being flexible and a strong communicator.

We discussed some of these ideas together, but then Wylee said, “Whatever is going on in my life, I have to make sure that I’m being positive because these students are looking up to me.” This showed a great sense of awareness and reflectiveness on the importance of his stature in the school and the responsibility he holds for his students. When discussing his expectations that he shares with his students and players, he said it “boils down” to four expectations: 1. Be responsible, 2. Be safe, 3. Be kind, and 4. Be respectful.

Wylee’s philosophy of leadership goes back to his expectations of himself and his accomplishments. One might think of his outstanding basketball career or his grass dancing titles that he has won throughout the United States as his biggest accomplishments, but as I posed that question to Wylee, he did not hesitate in answering that the top four things that he values about himself are:

- A. College Degree
- B. Taking care of family—being a provider
- C. Being a Dad
- D. Sharing the Native culture with students

Wylee expanded on his answer by saying:

I needed to get a four-year degree, I needed to, and it wasn’t a choice. I had some bumps along the way, but the main thing in my life was that I needed that four year degree...I am taking care of my family, providing for them, I’m paying my own bills and putting food on the table and clothes on my kids back. Culture was one of the reasons why I came home, working with Indian kids, letting them know

why we have our songs, why we do giveaways. Where do we come from? I'm not saying that I know everything, I'm learning to, but I know my experiences.

**Ethical Leadership-“Leadership is an everyday thing, when I think of leadership, it is somebody who wants to do the right thing first of all.”**

As Wylee and I got deeper into our conversation about leadership, I asked him, “What does an ethical leader look like?” Working in leadership in one form or another, I have seen the best and worst in leadership within the school institutions. My experience with this first-hand in education left me wondering what position Wylee would take on this question. Wylee smiled and said, “I think of someone who stands out by either their actions or their speaking. Someone who wants to do the right thing first of all.” Earlier in our conversation, we had talked about what a leader was or looked like, then I asked Wylee more about what characteristics ethical leadership should have. He told me:

Being an ethical leader involves doing the right thing the right way all the time.... while being positive. ...Being a leader, you have to be accountable, your words have to match your actions and you have to be able to bring something to the table... You have to have expectations and be able to work together... the culture of leadership is you have to be able to work together as a team, always a part of a team. We all know who we are and where we come from. Need to be humble and have a great deal of humility. As Native people, we should not be out there trying to be noticed...because you never know what is going to happen.

The response was like a perfect coach's handbook response to a team before the season begins. One of those locker room speeches that I had heard many times and transfers over to the real world. Wylee's command of his leadership philosophy was

evident as we dove deeper into our conversation. He said: “As a leader, I am trying to work every day to improve, to try to get through to my students.”

Wylee discussed his strategies to improve his own leadership by comparing what other people did that was successful and trying to model that. We talked about an accomplished athlete who was a little older than Wylee and who played Division 1 basketball. Wylee told me that he worked out with this athlete and witnessed this athlete's work habits first hand. The amount of time he put in in the weight room and the amount of shots that he put up was incredible. Wylee then disclosed that after working out with this athlete, he started to increase his own workouts to try and match the other athlete's. As we sat in his classroom, we talked about how leadership was like a laboratory where you are constantly trying to figure out what works and what does not work for each circumstance. Once again, Wylee showed his humility when I asked him what he valued most about his leadership style and he responded by telling me the mistakes he has made in life, and how he has been able to turn those mistakes into teaching moments for his students.

**Tribal Leadership-“ I only have a certain amount of energy and all my energy goes into what I'm doing now...”**

I arrived at the White Shield School for my last interview with Wylee. By this time the days had gotten colder and winter had set in. A couple of months had passed since we had our first interview and I was looking forward to this next sit down with Wylee. When I arrived at his classroom there were six boys there—all about the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade age. They are working together playing games in the back of the room. I told him it

was good to see him, and he greeted me with a hug and a smile and said, “Good to see you too, bro!”

I started this interview by talking about tribal leadership and tribal politics. Wylee made clear that his efforts are focused on the young people and not the politics of the tribe. He emphasized that his focus was what made that distinction between politics vs. leadership clear in our talk. He spoke about the limited amount of time in his day-to-day schedule with teaching, grading, preparing for class and being an athletic director/ basketball coach. I remembered why teachers and coaches have so little time for anything else, much less politics of the day. As I watched Wylee across the table, I saw a man who has a focus on young people, who demands respect and has high expectations. I noticed this when I first arrived because he had five young people in his classroom after school that he was tutoring. They were addressing him as Mr. Bearstail and were well behaved. He had a sign on his wall that signaled expectations in the classroom; he explained that he reminded all of the students in his class regularly. He has a presence and a way that he carries himself that helps him to lead in the way that he knows best. I continued to press him on what a good tribal leader should look like for our people. He said:

Well leaders, especially tribal leaders, they have so many people they have to make happy, you know. They have to hear everyone’s story; they are going to know about certain things that they might not want to know about. So to be a good tribal leader, you have to be a good listener, be there for the community, lead in a positive way.... In addition, go to bat for the people of all the communities. One of the most important things of being a tribal leader is promoting education.

## **Legacy-Final lessons**

Reflecting back on my time with Wylee, I recognized his consistent connections to his family, his repeated phrase of positive leadership, and his humility. The one quote that stuck out the most to me was when he told me, “A leader is one that does what nobody likes to do... I mean it’s like an everyday thing...you just can’t become a leader overnight...we need leaders.”

One of the things that I valued was Wylee’s openness about his family and his pride in being able to provide for his family, while also being aware of twin boys watching his every move. “My boys, it’s all about them now,” was a comment he made as we discussed his legacy and what he wanted to leave behind. He said, “The best thing in the world is when one of my twins say, ‘Dad, I want to be just like you.’ I always tell them NO, you’re going to be better than me, way better than me.”

## **Summary**

The classroom where I met with Wylee for two interviews and a total time of three hours had one window looking outside. The room was spacious and was the perfect temperature—not too hot or too cold. The soft whir of the furnace that kept the students and staff warm for more than 60 years started to buzz for the first time this winter when I arrived at Wylee’s classroom. The large rectangular office desk had papers that were waiting patiently to be corrected; note pads with scribbling marks and random books were shoved into a pile on the desk corner. There were pictures of the Three Affiliated Tribes tribal leaders hung up in various areas of the room reminding students of the ancestors that had come before them. It seemed as if those past leaders were watching over the students as Wylee groomed them for their future.

Wylee created a feeling of intimacy when I arrived—a good feeling. Each time we met for the interviews new layers of trust and rapport were introduced. Wylee opened up more and more when we talked about leadership traits that he perceived were the foundations of strong leadership. I used my voice as we intertwined our thoughts, experiences and stories to further cement our bond as we explored leadership together.

Wylee struck on the theme of being a positive leader that showed humility and respect for everyone in his life. He repeated the term “positive” throughout our interviews. I perceived that his main leadership model was a combination of servant and authentic leadership because of his comments about putting people first and using persuasion. He gave the impression of confidence and optimism as he spoke glowingly of the future. Wylee was resilient when he talked about the struggles he went through to earn his education.

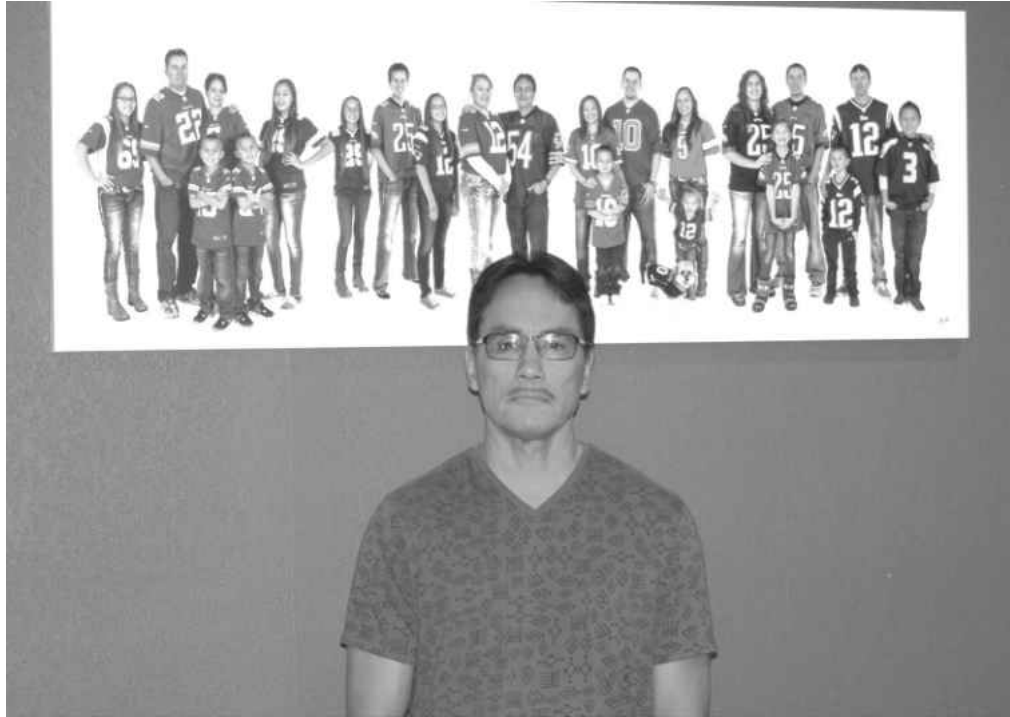
Throughout the interviews it became more apparent that Wylee fit the Native American Leadership model in nearly all areas. His responses about the importance of storytelling, being respectful, and the self-awareness and reflectiveness are common among people that follow this model. Wylee also revealed model leadership traits when he shared the importance of having a moral compass, being able to adjust to obstacles and the importance of culture in helping to promote education.

Throughout the interviews Wylee recognized the significance of education in order to get a good job. The strong imprint his parents made on him about getting an education kept him focused and self-aware of his need to be a lifelong learner. He believed that it was because of his parents that education, and indirectly leadership,



helped shape his goals. Through their teachings he knew he must attain an education and have expectations of himself in order to make the successful journey to where he is today.

### **Portrait 2: Daryl Bearstail**



*Figure 6.* “Coach.” Daryl Bearstail in his home. Photo by Chad Dahlen, 2018.

**“My Leadership style, it’s just to try to be an example, to try to lead by example....**

**I don’t claim to be a humble person, but I strive to be humble.” —Daryl Bearstail**

#### **Context-Historical**

Daryl Bearstail was the first person that I interviewed. As I jumped into my old Dodge pickup to make the 2-hour trip to Bismarck, I thought back to my experiences I had with Daryl. I had competed against him and with him in many basketball tournaments. He was a fierce competitor, but at the same time a true gentleman and class act whether he was winning or losing. I remember watching him as the head coach for the girl’s state champion, Shiloh Skyhawks, the year before. Watching his team play each

night I became more and more impressed with the way he carried himself, both on the court and off the court. He exuded humbleness and humility throughout the tournament by the way he gave praise to his team and how he conducted interviews on TV and during the games.

While watching the championship awards being handed out I noticed that Daryl saw the television camera and intentionally walked out of its way so as not to take the spotlight away from the people who were being interviewed. He coached with a grace that was evident even when his team was not doing well. He had a gentleness about him that carried over to his team, but at the same time a competitive spirit that his team took on as the games got tight. I never once saw him yell at a player or berate an official for a lousy call; instead he had focus and serenity that exuded from him. It was something that I really admire.

Going into this interview I was anxious to talk leadership AND basketball. As a fellow basketball coach, I was eager to pick his brain about his philosophy of hoops, have some good fellowship and basketball “talk”. I had watched and played basketball with Daryl and many of his boys. The Bearstail family is well known for their basketball accomplishments and that is something that I value, too. His family, from his wife who was also a state basketball participant in her day, to all of their kids made their marks in the basketball arena.

Daryl is also well known throughout Indian Country for his grass dancing on the powwow circuit. As much as I loved watching him coach, he is one of the favorite grass dancers that I have ever watched. His smoothness around the arbor makes dancing look effortless. I remember going to powwows and once Daryl entered the powwow arena to

grass dance it was like everybody stopped doing what they were doing and just watched him float throughout the arena. He has that ability to make you forget about what you are doing for a few minutes, and just enjoy his grace and flow as he does his thing.

I called Daryl prior to the interview and asked him where he would like to conduct the interview; he instantly invited me to come over to his home. As I stumbled my way through the north part of Bismarck searching for his place on my cell phone Google maps app, I found myself going in circles. He and his wife reside in a newer outskirts part of town and his place was not listed correctly on my navigational tool. I pulled up to his house and was impressed with his newer home and the layout of the block that he lives on. The houses in this area looked like they had been built within the last five years.

Daryl greeted me at the door. He is a man in his early 50s, wears glasses, has black hair and physically fit. His appearance presented a man who is about 5 feet 11 inches and lean; he's not a skinny lean, but a lean that conveys his dedication to fitness. We immediately exchanged hugs, smiles and laughter; I could feel the positive energy he projected. His girl's basketball team was going to be playing my hometown team of Killdeer in a couple of weeks so we talked about the teams and how they are shaping up. Basketball talk came easy for the two of us; we both lived and breathed basketball, and all sports for that matter. Daryl showed me around the house and offered me some refreshments as we continued our conversation regarding some of the top players in the area. We moved downstairs to his basement and he showed me some of the pictures of his family as well as some of the sports memorabilia that he had decorating the room. I laughed and told him, "You have a real man cave down here!" He laughed and said,

“Yeah, this is where the whole family spends a lot of our time when there are games on the television.” He had a couple of sofa chairs where we sat and began the interview. As I looked around the room, I was reminded of the athletic talent that his family has; the room is a hidden shrine of his family.

Daryl grew up in the country 17 miles west of the reservation town of White Shield, stuck between White Shield and Lucky Mound. He grew up with his grandma and several close relatives in a Hidatsa-speaking household. His grandma was able to speak both Hidatsa and English; Hidatsa was the first language spoken with many of the older adults. Much of his time was spent outdoors as his grandma had him helping her in the garden, carrying water to the house and riding horses. With three gardens to attend to, everybody in the household had to do their share in helping tend to it during the summer. The garden was what fed them during the year, so great care was taken during this time to keep the weeds out and other garden-related chores.

“My grandma taught me the value of hard work and she made us work everyday. She also took us out and taught us how to hunt and fish...this was done all summer long,” said Daryl. The life skills that were taught to Daryl by his grandma were something that he cherished as he mentioned it several times throughout our interview process. The cultural part was also a key part that shaped Daryl because his grandma would pass on stories of the past, take him to powwows during the summer, and speak Hidatsa to him.

Most of our conversation continued uninterrupted as Daryl dove deep into his past being candid about his demons, i.e. alcohol and drugs, in his younger days.

I am just going to be straight and really honest with you Chad. I was, (a long pause—that moment where I felt that this was not an interview, but just a really

deep conversation) I drank a lot and I used drugs quite a bit in high school and even right after high school. I mean, it was every day, really. I grew up around alcoholism and I lived it and I didn't really have an adult figure to teach me. My grandma she taught me the cultural part of life, beading, language and the old stories and the value of hard work, but as I grew older I drifted away....

It was at that moment I felt a connection to Daryl and his story; it was coming from the heart and there was no bullshit or bravado. It was real.

As we peeled another layer off of his past he began to talk about his battle with alcohol and drugs, and how he had a few people in his life who really helped shape his life, believed in him and what he could do. The first person was his wife Jackie; she was the one who took him to the treatment center in Parshall, and according to Daryl, "She was the one who really believed in me and so she got me to start thinking about my future." The influence of his wife came up several times that night. I admired Daryl's conviction and high esteem for her, and came to understand the influence she had in his recovery as well as in present life. He withdrew from his dependency on drugs and was able to focus on different life goals. His wife gave him both the support system, and the faith and belief that led him to start thinking of the future.

Another part of his support system at the time of his recovery was his counselor in Parshall. His counselor helped change his life by asking Daryl questions about his future and what he wanted to do with his life. It was during this period that Daryl considered becoming a counselor. He said:

My counselor, he helped me, he helped me like nobody else did, I started thinking of my future, I wasn't a good student, I didn't have a trade, I didn't know too

much about anything, I wasn't a mechanic...a welder...nothing really so I was thinking I wanted to help somebody someday the way he (counselor) helped me...so that's how I got into the counseling field. When I called my counselor, I told him my situation and told him I needed help and he said, 'Come on down.' They had just opened up the treatment center and jeez, I was one of the first, the first clients there that they ever had!

We both started laughing at the thought of holding such an infamous title as the "FIRST CLIENT." This was a distinction that only a few can have.

**Education-"I was the first one..."**

During the interview, our talk turned to education and I asked Daryl about going to college and some of the obstacles that he overcame/managed. Daryl reflected for a moment and then sat back in his chair and responded:

I was, I was the first one. You see my family wasn't really big on the value of education. The value of education wasn't really something that was there for our family because whenever we had gatherings, whenever we had any kind of anything...with the family, drinking was always involved.

During this stage in the interview, I was reminded of my own past and the parallels between my life and his. Although I had my degree, when I was growing up there was never a push by the family to do so. The big celebration was when I graduated from high school. To go to college was something nobody talked about as I grew up. I also remembered a lot of family functions that centered on alcohol consumption. It appeared that the two of us, although we grew up in different locations, shared similar experiences that were common on our reservation.

Daryl shared with me that the journey he took to achieve a college degree was a challenge during which he had many moments of self-doubt. His wife would always seem to sense those times and knew what buttons to push to get him motivated to finish that degree.

One of the things that really kept me going was like three times while going to college Jackie would say, 'So and so said you're never going to get through school, you're never going to graduate, because you're just an alcoholic and drug addict, that's all.' Then when I heard that, I kinda tightened up [his throat], but then I thought about it and I was thinking, that's true, if I quit, then... You know I'm never gonna... I used that to keep me going, to motivate me to keep going, even though it was vindictive, harsh, and negative, I used it to keep me going.

We both start laughing again as he relived those words and I relived those words in my own head as I heard similar remarks growing up from people in the community. They were hard words to hear, but in a way they made both of us more motivated to finish. I even had people wonder today if I was going to finish this doctoral program, so I definitely could relate to his story.

We both paused for a few minutes as the moment was a deep, almost spiritual time in his life, and it hit me as I became more aware of the positive and negative battles he went through just to get that degree. Daryl continued:

Economically, we had it rough. We struggled big time; we didn't have no car, no money. Summertime I worked construction, but money went to bills and we had little left over. Those were the times I wanted to quit, tired of being broke.

He told me a story of one of his Christmas's while going to college when he had no money for gifts for his kids, much less food for Christmas supper, so he decided to hitchhike back to see if his mom could help him out.

Back then, we had no cell phones (We both bust out laughing having flashbacks of those good old days) so I told Jackie that I am going to hitchhike back to see if I can get some money from her leaser (a leaser was someone who leased tribal land) to get these kids some gifts. We were staying in downtown Bismarck and I walked, it was like 30 below out that day and I walked all the way north of town and it took me like five rides to get to Parshall (Parshall is 185 miles away from Bismarck). It took me all day, I started out early in the morning and I got there in the evening and I asked her. She asked the leaser and he couldn't give her any money. I stayed over night and the next morning I hitchhiked back and this time it took me 7 rides to get back! Jeez it was 30 below out and I was freezing. [We both laughed hard again. On the reservation, we sometimes joked about going from one place to another and instead of how many miles or how long, we judged the travel by how many rides it would take to get from one place to another place.] So anyways, I made it out and I walked through our little efficiency apartment, a little one bedroom apartment, with diapers, cloth diapers hanging on the line and I had to tell Jackie that I got no money...it was Christmas and I just got in the house and somebody walked by with a box and knocked on our door. I opened it and it was a White guy and he handed me a box and it had food with presents. I still don't know to this day who the person was that brought it. They



just gave it to me and that was our Christmas you know. We had food to eat and the boys got some gifts for Christmas.

When he was done with that story, we sat there in silence for a couple of minutes. “That was powerful!” was all that I could respond with. I could only think of how far he has come from a man who could not afford a Christmas to living in a beautiful house and being a man who has helped his family move up the social ladder through the one big lesson his grandma taught him—hard work. For me, his story seems familiar; many of my Native friends and I suffered economic hardships to earn our degrees. I remember working 16 hours straight at a psychiatric adolescent unit in Minot and then going to student teach the next day from morning until the evening rolled around. I had many days like that and I remember how tough it was, but you had to do what you had to do to pay the bills and fulfill your educational dream.

I prodded him some more about his educational journey and he told me a story about his senior year of college. He had accepted a placement at the State Industrial School in Mandan. His family was living near Bismarck State College so it was roughly seven miles one way. They did not have a car, so he would run back and forth each day for his practicum. Daryl proceeded to tell me the story of his gift:

I remember I was putting in like 14 miles a day [while] running back and forth, that was crazy. About half way through summer, my brother-in-law, Steve, stopped by to visit. While we were visiting he asked, ‘How do you get to work?’ and I told him I run. ‘REALLY?’ he answered.

Later on that day he stopped by Daryl’s apartment and dropped off a 10-speed bike for him to use for his journey to work.

I really loved running, so I would bike to work and run home and the next day I would run and bike home, I did that all summer. I didn't really think about going further with my degree program until my wife told me that I should really look at getting my Master's. I was kind of scared, I didn't think I could do it, but for 15 months straight I went to this acceleration management program through the University of Mary and I finished it. It was a game changer for my family and me, that degree.

These stories demonstrate persistence and resiliency in the face of huge obstacles. The first person in his family to earn his 4-year degree and then go further and obtain his Master's degree after a rough start shows how resilient the human spirit can be.

**Leadership-“I don't claim to be humble, but I strive to be humble.”**

As Daryl and I got into the conversation a little deeper, we started to talk about leadership and what it looked like through his eyes. He is the kind of guy who gives you all his attention when you are conversing; I found this to be comfortable as we went along with our talk on leadership. As I adjusted my seat on the leather sofa, I looked at the fireplace and around it and carefully placed throughout the room were pictures of his family. That theme of family kept recurring throughout the night. An NBA game was on the television as we moved on to the subject of leadership. Daryl put his hand on his forehead and was in deep thought and then he awakened from his thought and said:

Growing up, my grandmother, she taught me the value of hard work. She also taught me by doing the hard work herself. Because my mom and dad were divorced when I was real small, I didn't really get to know my dad until I was in high school. So we didn't really have a male role model in the house. But from my Mom, she taught me

how to love unconditionally, she didn't have much, she didn't have hardly anything at all, but she would give you anything that she had. I learned that from her. If you made a mistake, she would overlook it, I mean she would love you and that's what she taught me. My dad, I got to know him when I started high school, and as an adult I got to hang around him more. I got from him to be a peaceful man. He would never argue with anybody and he would avoid conflict. I just try to learn from everybody.

I asked Daryl about his influences on leadership and John Wooden came to mind for him as his biggest influence in the leadership area. Coach Wooden was also one of my favorite coaches of all time. Wooden did not talk a lot of basketball when he coached, but rather taught life lessons to his players. He would actually teach his college athletes how to tie their shoes on the first day of practice. This was important because it actually modeled behavior and gave the athletes coaching beyond basketball—life coaching.

One of the biggest accomplishments that Daryl is most proud of in his life is his education. That he has been able to instill that value of education to his family is also important to him.

Helping others, helping people feel good about themselves, I love to coach because you can have a big influence on young people and teach them values to help them succeed, to live a good life and try to build on that each day.

I asked Daryl what kind of leader he aspires to be as he takes these young people under his wing and he responded by simply saying, "being positive."

I pray every day, every day, all day long, I'm praying, I look to God for guidance and my strength. I try not to be too prideful. I try my best to stay humble, to have

integrity, to be honest with people and to lift people up to try to build them up and to just be good to people. I want to set the example of being hard working for those around me.

What I heard that night were recurring themes of faith, humility, integrity, honesty and social awareness for those in difficult positions. For me it was a humbling experience to sit with this man and listen to his stories as we both reflected on what we should strive for.

### **The Influencers-“Stay with me, Stay with me!”**

Daryl’s three brothers, Clyde, Bruce and Jr., are men that were positive role models for Daryl, and taught him lessons in life by the way they approached life and by Daryl being able to see them be successful at what they did. Daryl said about his brothers:

I [have] seen their mentality, their attitudes and just how they carried themselves, I think about them and it helps me. As far as how I do things and I think how the success that they had and the influence they had on me.

Bruce was a former Marine, a six-foot, chiseled, brown Native man. He had this forceful attitude about him that gave you confidence even though you did not know where it came from when you were around him. I, too, held Bruce in high esteem because he was one of the top runners at the time on the Fort Berthold Reservation and was a great guy to be around.

Bruce took me on this run one time, I really didn’t like running, but he said, ‘Come on, come on let’s go.’ Holy Cow, man, one day, we went on this run, like an eight mile run. He just took off and said, ‘Stay with me, stay with me!’ Cripes,

I was hurting, but I stayed with him and that's the way he made you train with him. I ended up running with him all the time. We both were on the first cross-country team at the University of Mary and he was our trainer. We had a coach, but he was more of a manager.

Daryl's brother, Junior Bearstail, was a legend on the powwow circuit. There are different competitions at powwows for dancing and Junior was a fancy dancer. Fancy dancing is a style of dancing that goes at a real fast pace with most of the dancers wearing bright clothing and doing lots of twirling. They glide throughout the arena as fast as they can go with each dancer having their own distinctive style. Daryl said about his brother, Junior:

Junior was one of the best fancy dancers I ever seen. One night we were drinking together and we started talking about running. He was a good runner too, jeez, we were kind of going back and raising heck with each other and we said, 'Let's go, let's go!' It was night time in Bismarck and we ended up running through town about four miles...we were both kind of buzzed up, but we just ran. That was just a crazy time, it was all out of fun, and that's what we did, had fun with life.

Clyde was Daryl's older brother by one year. Daryl described him as his mentor, father figure and best friend through high school.

Clyde was more serious with me... He had an intelligence about him that I really respected and gave me someone to look up to. All three of these men have passed on, but they were the ones that planted a lot of leadership learning into me in my time that I was with them.

As these role models in Daryl's life were not much older than Daryl, they gave him that father guidance as well as some lessons to live by that everyone needs.

### **Leadership Lessons-“No Excuses, Just Work!”**

Daryl's early lessons about leadership came directly from his grandmother. He described the stories she would share in their home.

We had this big wooden round table and she would be cooking for us and we would be sitting at the table and she would start to pray... She would pray and pray and pray, boy for a loooong time, she would be praying in Indian, Hidatsa, and every now and then she would mention Jesus's name. That's the main thing she taught me, that prayer is important, the spiritual part. She kept us together; she made no excuses, just work....

We closed our interview by discussing what leadership lessons were missing in today's generation. We both agreed that the “old ways” of our ancestors are being lost to this new generation. Daryl said:

The Bible taught me that we are supposed to honor our leaders, respect them and pray for them.... We don't do that anymore, instead we are putting them down and each other at the same time at every level. Right now it seems like there is no peace in the world, everything is segregated now, but leadership is being simple, having integrity, honest, sincerity, being a caring people and an honoring people to everyone. Everything is fast now so we need more time to ourselves, to take time to pray and leave some battles in God's hands.

I could feel the sincerity in his words and it was a welcome dialogue that I do not have everyday about life. Daryl opened up to me and it was these moments in the interview that I treasured.

### **Ethical Leaders-“Nobody teaches you to be Native”**

Daryl and I were discussing the significance of culture when I asked him what he thought of the idea of having tribal leaders take a competency test on their culture and language before being allowed to run for council. Daryl sat there and it appeared that he was putting some deep thought into his response. I knew it made him think and I was anticipating how he was going to answer that question, kind of like when you are opening a gift and you are trying to guess what is inside the box; I had that kind of anticipation and his answer was that gift to me. Daryl and said:

You know Chad, Nobody teaches you to be Native, we grew up that way, we grew up that way. And no one knows how to be Native more than I do, you know.... I don't know how to be Native more than anybody else. We all grew up in a home, in a culture and there are cultures within cultures. Language and culture is good..., but for my family, we know where we came from and who we are and we love our people. For every family its different and my priorities are in this order, God, family and education.

As we closed our interview, I asked Daryl to list his strengths as a leader and he opened up to me what he strives for as a leader; he came up with the following words that describe his strengths: a. non-judgmental, b. opinionated (as much as possible, he laughed), c. an educator, d. positive role model, e. spirituality, and f. faith. We also talked about what he values and he said, “ I like that I can HONOR people, I want to see people

do good; that inspires me and that's what I like to talk about—people that overcome obstacles.”

Daryl commented right away that he values his family, his kids and his grandkids, and that he values anybody he is around. He said one of the biggest things he valued about himself is his sincerity about wanting people to succeed.

Finally, as I thought about my time with Daryl, I realized I could have written a book on the quotes that he gave me—the humbleness that came naturally to him, and the leadership that this man is about. Daryl is building a legacy of love, a role model of being a father, husband, a friend, and as a teacher—a teacher who shows others to lead through examples, something he demonstrates every day.

### **Summary**

The two interviews conducted with Daryl proved fruitful in constructing his portrait as well as understanding his perceptions, history, and beliefs about leadership. In fact, his responses felt like reflections of how I felt during moments of disconnect with the world and moments of resolutions that helped sharpen my image of how his portrait would come together. I believed that once I incorporated his voice and combined it with mine that our history and associations of the past would be similar in many ways, yet distinctively different. Daryl's grace in describing his addictions and ultimate victories over them showed a humility that comes with leadership—sharing his intimate details made me humble. His unguarded candor, persistence and resiliency helped me to portray Daryl as someone who followed the Native American Leadership model to the core.

Daryl's storytelling about his past led me to better understand and empathize with the struggles that he went through and overcame to become the leader that he is today. I



perceived him to be a transformational leader. Not only had he transformed himself and his family into educational leaders, but the way he has led and continues to lead his girl's high school basketball team to a state championship and to one of the top teams in the state year after year is a testament to his leadership ability. Daryl's moral compass exemplified his belief that leaders must have integrity, faith and honesty. His oral abilities—a key trait for transformational leadership—as well as his self-described tenet of unconditional love for his fellow man, were displayed throughout the three interviews.

Daryl was the first in his family to graduate from college. He had no template on how to secure funding, register for classes, or what to expect from college. He had to rely on his cultural teachings to navigate his way through college and ultimately earn his degree. Daryl was the only participant in this study who admitted his family did not discuss the value of education—there was no other person to lead the way for him. This was different from the experiences of the other applicants who had people preaching to them about the importance of education. He did have, however, the generational teachings of his grandma, who taught him to learn from everybody and to work hard. Daryl broke the old cycle and started a new cycle of valuing education for his family by handing down his experiences and what he values to his kids. He modeled these values by literally running seven miles one way to attend college classes.

Daryl's focus on leadership development revealed traits of humbleness, humility, honesty, and using cultural ways to serve people in the best way possible. He believed in social awareness to effectively become a great leader; he believed knowing one's community was key to being a truly great leader.

During my final interview with Daryl, I felt the mutual reverence that we had for each other. The reciprocal dignity that we shared was tribute to a leader who knew how to build relationships and gain trust from others—Daryl did that for me.

### **Portrait 3: Jess Hall**



*Figure 7.* “Tribal Rebuilder.” Jess Hall at his home in Bismarck, North Dakota, September 2016. Photo by Chad Dahlen.

**“If I am going to go to college for something, it might as well be tough!” —Jess Hall**

#### **Context-Historical**

It was late September and Jess and I had missed a couple of appointments with each other because of other obligations that had come up. As I was driving to Bismarck, a 2-hour drive from my home, thoughts of visiting with Jess made me smile. I have known

Jess from when he went to school in Parshall and later on meeting him a few times at some mutual family gatherings. Jess is tall, about 6 feet 4 inches, and has a good thick traditional ponytail, unlike some of my other friends who try to grow their hair out and end up with the dreaded “anorexic” ponytail—this is when the hair thins out as we age and all that is left is a distant reminder of the hair that we once had. Native men take great pride in their hair, growing out their hair, and maintaining their hair. Jess is one of those Native guys who wears his hair long and with pride.

Upon arriving at Jess’s home, I was impressed that this young man in his early 30s had such a nice place, and even more impressed that he had been living there for a few years already. This definitely goes against my cultural construction and personal experience of many young Native men, who in their late 20s are either renting an apartment, living with their folks or buddy, or “shacking up” in low rent housing on the reservation. Even fewer young Native men are living off the reservation, much less owning a home.

Jess met me with a warm smile and that sense of “coolness” about him; we embraced. “What’s up Brother?” are the first words spoken as we took in the moment. Throughout Indian Country we are all related somehow. It could be that our grandfathers (grandmothers) or dads (moms) had some best friends, so they took each other as brothers (sisters) way back when. Growing up you had these uncles who were not blood relatives, but you treated and respected them as an uncle. I had many relatives growing up that I never even knew we were not actually related until I was older. You treated your uncle’s kids as brothers and sisters, and grew up with that type of understanding. In this

case, I married Jess's cousin, so instead of calling him a cousin, we addressed each other as brother.

Jess was wearing a white shirt, has long hair with it pulled back on this particular evening into a ponytail. With his towering size, broad shoulders, long ponytail and stoic expression, he looked like he came straight out of one of those Native superhero comic books. He is currently single and raising his son with the help of his son's mother, whom he still is on good terms with. His son, who looks to be about seven, is playing quietly on the couch with an iPad. The inside of the house is clean; the kitchen has custom countertops and cupboards with new appliances.

I had met Jess only a handful of times before this first formal meeting, but was always impressed with the way he carried himself. He came across as being well mannered in all aspects of life. When I walked in he offered me food (pizza), water and was cordial in showing me around his place. I heard about Jess's educational accomplishments through my friends and I was excited to hear his story this night.

Jess grew up in Parshall, North Dakota, but lived in various places growing up because his dad's work had the family moving from place to place. Jess earned his electrical engineering degree from the University of New Mexico. He then moved to Bismarck where he currently works for Montana Dakota Utilities as a protection engineer.

As we started to talk about his educational journey, Jess said:

Going to college, you know it's going to be tough, it's going to be a challenge. If I'm going to go to school for something, it's going to be something that I couldn't really teach myself. Engineering is one of the toughest fields to go into because of

the amount of time involved. I was prepared to put into the time; if you go to school it might as well be tough.

**Native Nation Rebuilding-“How can we make our tribe better?”**

As we started talking leadership at the kitchen table that night, I was surprised when he told me he had been selected to participate in the Native Nation Rebuilding Program through the Bush Foundation. This foundation provides competitive grants to cohorts of prospective Native leaders to further their capacity to look at tribal government and work to redesign tribal governments (“Native Nation,” n.d.). I was familiar with this foundation because my Aunt Alyce received a Bush Grant to attend Cornell University years ago. I was happy for him to be accepted into the cohort.

Jess stated he felt good with the program because they are looking at leadership roles, changes that need to be made in tribal government, and looking at model tribes with best practices and approaches to solve problems that each tribe may have. Jess described the program with deep passion:

It’s reassuring to see that we people in leadership positions have the same mindset. We have been pushed around for so long as Native people, it’s good we can do something about it now. Before, we were completely outclassed; we were not playing on the same playing field; we didn’t have the education we do now.

This is like a reawakening for our people, all Native people. This helps show us to be active in politics, be reflective thinkers; the climate is changing.

I asked Jess what motivated him to apply for this program and his response was that he liked the mindset of the program. He had to apply for the program that is targeted toward tribes in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota; the grant is based in

Minnesota. They interviewed the prospective candidates whom were required to write essays. Jess described what motivated him:

They asked questions that were motivating to me, like why do you want to help your community? How can we make our tribes better? And what do you see for your future? As Native people, we are always thinking of our communities and our tribe and how we want to make things better. I have always had that mindset that I am part of something bigger. I like that they are giving me the tools and information to help make changes; change is scary, but it has to be done to help sustain ourselves and our generations to come.

The program he described goes hand in hand with Brayboy's (2006) Tribal Critical Race Theory to decolonize, especially when you look at Brayboy's tenet of how concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an indigenous lens. Jess said:

I am learning this stuff for my tribe; it would be nice to develop our own utility company. Become more sovereign in that general sense. Why can't we do it? Why can't it be started from a Native perspective, you know? Native perspective is really important because we want our reservation to stay the way it is so we should be doing the building of our infrastructure.

Somewhere in Arizona I can hear Dr. Brayboy yelling "*AHO, AHO!*" celebrating that this young man is preaching his theory in real and practical terms.

### **Learning for my tribe-"I have an opportunity!"**

That statement was powerful when I heard it. We all have a calling and as I have visited with many Native people from my tribe going to college to earn their degrees, I

have heard that statement over and over. As we explored Jess's philosophy deeper I went back to the question of "Who made an impact on you and how?" Jess sat back in his chair and took a small drink of his water as he gathered his thoughts. On the ground near his feet his cat was roaming the floor, seemingly listening to our conversation and deciding whether it was worth his/her attention.

My grandpa was one of my role models. He took the opportunity to better himself through the G.I. Bill. He went to college, graduated and completely set himself up. But... (long pause) it all started with my Great, Great, Grandma Ina going to college, she was one of the first Natives to go to college. That completely set us up. I looked at those two as people who kind of set me up, you know? It's not as hard for me; I'm not the first generation. I have that opportunity (education) and I don't want to squander it. My dad and mom both have their degrees, so I come from parents with two degrees. But a degree is not everything, you still have to be a decent person; you still have to help out in some way.

Jess has a strong educational history within his family and he respects that history. He understands the importance of what an educational degree can do for a family as well as what are the responsibilities of having that education. He showed that he values his role models as well as how his journey was made easier because of the people before him.

**Leadership Foundations-"You have to be able to walk with the people..."**

By now we were one half of the way through the interview and I was excited knowing that I had gotten some really good interview data as I scribbled in my red journal the quotes that stood out from Jess. I leaned in to him across the table and asked, "What do you think is the most important foundations of a leader?" Each interview so far

has taken me in different directions. As I asked Jess, I wondered what we were going to come across as we ventured into this deep conversation. Jess said:

Leaders have to be able to walk with the people they want to lead. You can't lead from afar. If you build a building, you got to be out there breaking soil with the shovel. Leaders have to be the ones that almost can't mess up. They have to hold themselves to a high standard. Come in early, stay late, have high expectations for people, have integrity, honesty and be inspiring. You have to be able to paint that picture (your vision) of what it can be. An attitude of lets work together towards that, not you, but US works towards that.

As soon as Jess finished describing leadership, I again noted how impressed I was with his perception of leadership and application of leadership.

### **Strategies-“Basically its just perseverance”**

In navigating both worlds, the White world and the Native world, everyone uses strategies whether conscious or unconscious to figure ways to get through the obstacles simultaneously. As we moved to this part of the conversation, Jess admitted that he had a lot of obstacles on his educational journey. Even though he had trailblazers that went before him, it's still an individual journal and obstacles are part of that journey. Jess said:

There is definitely a lot of obstacles. What helped me is just going straight into it. If you're not dedicated to it and you're not going to put in the time to learn these subjects, then...there's been a lot of hard classes that I've had to take a couple of times just because the first time, this isn't happening, this sucker's tough, I might have to take this one again. Basically it's just perseverance. The only way to do it



is to just put in the time. There is no other way around it! I knew if I messed up again that I would be dropped, basically I they had to put that fear into you.

I laughed when he said this as I had a flashback of my current struggles of finishing this research. The quote he said, that you just have to put in the time, really struck home with me at this point. His educational journey had many starts and stops until he got the mindset of “hitting it hard!” Jess said while in college he took a variety of classes other than his engineering classes just to break things up and make himself more of a rounded person. Jess did not go the traditional four years route and be done with college. He went to a variety of colleges before he accomplished his goal of graduating from the University of New Mexico in electrical engineering.

#### **Leadership Lessons to his son-“Work to understand people first...”.**

As the cat circled the kitchen—sensing that I was there and wondering when I was going to leave its environment—Jess’s son walked in and listened to our conversation for awhile, got bored, and went back into the living room to continue watching a movie on his iPad. I asked Jess at this point what leadership lessons he tried to or will be trying to instill in his son. Jess said:

Definitely respect, show respect for people. You don’t have to like everyone I tell him, but you should respect everyone. Treating people decent is important; do not look down on anyone or things in nature. I tell him people just want to talk and be understood. That thing of finding common ground with people is important. I basically want him to grow up and be a decent person. My parents taught me to surround myself with successful people and that success breeds success and I think that is true in how I keep a good group of people around me.

I saw evidence that Jess took this role serious because the amount of his son's work is displayed throughout the house. Jess talked of his hopes for his son and emphasized that he wanted his son to grow up in a safe environment. He spoke glowingly of the impact his parents had on him and how he wanted to pass that on to his son.

**Future Visioning--“What can I do with what I know to help the people?”**

As the first interview came to a close, I asked Jess what he ultimately wants to do for his tribe. He mentioned helping the tribe several times in our interview, so I decided to seek some clarity about his role for the future. Jess smiled at the question, like he had been waiting patiently for me to ask it, then he put both of his hands down on the table like in a prayerful mode and began to talk to me about his vision.

Like I said, with this degree that I have is what I am best at. The job I chose is what I think can best help the tribe by developing our own utility. Having something robust like electricity, it's a very important thing. When you don't have it you know it. Once it's turned off, then people scramble. You can live without electricity, but it definitely helps. I would like to develop a more sustainable electrical utility like wind power, solar power, but they are both expensive right now. I want the tribe to prosper. What can I do with what I learned to make that happen? That is one of the main goals that I'm looking towards as I get more experience in what I'm doing.

We talked about visioning and how Jess used that to help him shape his thought process. Jess stated that he has his own place to go to and think, and get lost in his thoughts. He is trying to get to know himself, but admitted that he is not even close to knowing himself yet. He knows he is here on earth for a reason and things happen for a

reason, so when he visions he tries to talk through stuff with himself to improve that mindset he is striving for.

As we finished our first interview, I jotted down in my red journal how Jess was passionate about many tribal concerns; I found myself getting excited about the goals he shared and his sharing of his philosophy of leadership.

### **Ethics-“That thing when nobody is watching.”**

I conducted my last interview with Jess in the middle of November; the leaves were all gone from the trees in his yard and the cold blowing wind had that extra chill in the air. Jess met me at the door again, this time with his son. We made small talk, shared stories of our kids and did some informal talk about family. Jess was dressed up in a business shirt; he was sporting a little more of a beard this time and his mane was like a black thick rope all pulled back. He had been at the local Boys and Girls Club in Bismarck to tutor students in math. He mentioned that he does volunteer tutoring for the Three Affiliated Tribes Outreach Center that serves the Native American population in Bismarck and Mandan and is sponsored by the Three Affiliated Tribes.

We soon jumped into the interview and one of the first questions I asked him was “What does an ethical leader look like?” Jess did not hesitate or pause for words; he hopped right into the question responding:

My perceptive of ethical leadership is hard to answer; it comes from that time when nobody is watching kind of time. Like when you show up for work if you’re not on the clock, being somewhere when you say you’re going to be somewhere, being respectful of other people’s time. Leading by example, being honest by telling people if you do not know the answers, but you will get them figured out.

Not showing people one side of you and then being a completely different person when hard things happen. Being that positive role model when hardships happen. We talked about accountability and again the phrase of walking the walk and role modeling was what he talked about. He stated that leadership is not just putting in the work, but holding oneself accountable to a higher standard.

**Cultural knowledge and leadership-“To be a really great tribal leader you need to know your culture.”**

Jess and I talked about the importance of culture and the importance of it in our tribal leadership. Jess said:

What separates leadership from tribal leadership is that of culture. You can be a great leader and not know your culture in mainstream America, but to be a really great tribal leader you need to know your culture. You do not need to understand it the best, but you need to know to be able to help your tribe. Somehow you need to learn how to integrate that in with your leadership, in with your teachings and how people perceive you. We all are not exposed to the same cultural learning experiences, so I do not think that passing a cultural test should keep people from learning. People should strive to learn more about their culture, but because you know your culture it does not mean you know how to work with other governments either. You want the best of both worlds.

Jess addressed his points on the subject and seemed happy with his response as we shifted our attention to the football game that was on the television. The Patriots had just scored and we both made feeble attempts to be excited. The game was more of a talking point than the center of attention for both of us. We began to talk more about

leadership. During my question on Jess's strengths as a leader, he fidgeted in his seat a bit, put his hands together and spoke a little slower than previous responses. He said:

Communication—you have to be able to communicate with the people that you are leading in a clear and concise way. You have to be able to, no matter what kind of leadership you are in, communicate. You have to know what your limits are, what kind of restrictions you have and you have to know how to be able to make that position better and if in tribal politics, you need to know how to make the citizens under you, how to make their life better.

I nodded my head in agreement as he talked and he seemed confident in his answer as he put both hands together in a prayerful manner and arched his shoulders back. He continued in a humble manner by saying that he believes that he usually gets people and that he is open to their different opinions. He stated that he is a caring person and that usually helps bring down any barriers that may be up with the person he is dealing with. Finally we close the interview by talking about what a tribal leader should look like. Jess said:

He should be someone we should be able to depend on and that you can trust to make the right decisions when there is not a right answer. A tribal leader is someone who has the mindset of seeing not just his or her lifetime, but generations to come. We get caught up in our own world, but forget to see that we have generations that are counting on us. Before it was like we need to just survive and know it has grown, now we have a handle on stuff; now we should start setting ourselves up for the next generations to come. We need to be able to listen to people to become more effective. We want our people to have the

mindset of ‘I can do it’; that is the mindset that I want to instill in my son, that mindset of ‘I can do it;’ I CAN DO WHATEVER I PUT MY MINDSET TO!

We ended the interview on that last part, what a tribal leader should look like, and it felt powerful—like listening to Tony Robbins give a motivational speech. I noted that I felt pumped up after listening to Jess talk about leadership and the passion he showed when sharing his thoughts with me on the topic.

Jess is a young man who has dreams of someday helping the Three Affiliated Tribes reach new heights in the electrical utilities world. He is gathering information and continues to be a lifelong learner on his job because he wants to someday be able to transfer that learning to do some big things with the Three Affiliated Tribes. He also has a passion for the constitution of the Three Affiliated Tribes that he shares with his grandpa and is looking to help make changes in that direction in the future. Right now he is about the love he has for his son and how he wants to make a positive difference for his son going forward.

### **Summary**

Always a self-disciplined high achiever, Jess Hall was admitted to college and completed his education in one of the toughest academic disciplines—electrical engineering. He credited his success to a supportive home life, to the value of education that was instilled upon him by his parents, and to his impressive role models (his father, Pem, and his grandpa, Ed) who showed him the positive effects of education. Jess looked at leadership as being able to walk with the people in order to lead them. He mentioned multiple times of wanting his tribe to prosper, of making his tribe stronger, and of wanting to learn from his people.

Jess's leadership abilities fit into nearly every style of leadership model, but I perceived him to be an authentic leader—leaders who are confident, optimistic and resilient. Other characteristics of this type of leader, that Jess possessed, are to know oneself, have a positive mindset, and be a reflective thinker when working through issues and problems.

Jess traced his strong value of education to his grandma who paved the way for him to go to college. He valued the fact that she received her college degree and that knowledge opened doors for him. He accepted challenges, which was his mindset when starting college. "I knew it would be hard," he told me, "but I liked the challenge of learning something I could not learn at home."

He believed leadership should be progressive in nature. First get an education, next gain experience, and then bring that experience back to the tribe to best serve the people. His mindset about leadership was that it should be for a higher purpose other than for oneself, and that the leader should want to give back and make life better for the people. Jess was a leader who pushed himself, had high expectations of himself, and embraced the challenges that came his way.

## Portrait 4: Pem Hall



*Figure 8.* “Pem Hall.” Pem at his home in Parshall, North Dakota. Photo by Chad Dahlen, 2016.

### **Context- Historical**

September marks the beginning of the fall season, and the day I drove to Pem’s home, there was that cool, crisp feeling to the air. It was several months prior that I met with Pem at my wife’s college graduation and requested he participate in my research study. He and his wife had shown up for the graduation occasion, along with Jess [Pem’s son], and I was excited when they replied that they would participate. We had some informal talk at the hotel that day, but this would be the first time that I was going to sit down and have a one-on-one conversation with him. I looked forward to getting to know him better.

Pem is man in his late 50s; the black hair that he once had is now speckled with grey. Pem is a little over 6 feet tall and is in good shape; he has broad shoulders and a



lean frame. His short grey hair is well groomed; his face is gentle and it appears that he has a sense of inner calmness. He keeps seriousness on his face—that image of the stoic Native pops into my mind. I thought to myself that he would be a tough guy to play poker against because he keeps his emotions in check.

Pem is married and has three children. He began his career working in the oil field as a seismographer, but later went back to college and then after college he went right to work. He spent the majority of his career working with the Corps of Engineers where he commuted to work in Riverdale, North Dakota and lived with his family in Parshall, North Dakota. He now works with the Three Affiliated Tribes putting his civil engineering experience to work for the benefit of the tribe.

When I arrived at his house in Parshall, North Dakota, he met me outside on his newly cemented driveway. He had been doing some remodeling on his garage and he proudly showed me that work. There was plastic on the windows around the new sheet rock that he had installed and it smelled like fresh sawdust in the air; he had just gotten done cutting some wood for a frame that he had been building for one of the rooms. His home sits on the edge of Parshall, with a view of a little valley around it.

Pem was wearing a blue and white long sleeved, striped casual business shirt with a pocket. In his front pocket he had his pen and cell phone waiting to either draw up a new plan for his remodel or answer that next phone call. I saw his wife Tammy; we had worked together at the New Town school district several years ago. I was a social studies teacher and she was a business education teacher. Our rooms were adjacent to each other and we shared a door, so we got to know each other well from our time in education.

Pem took me through his house and showed the remodeling they had done and will be doing before we settled into the living room. He had two large sofa chairs with a couch; I took the couch and unpacked my interview tools. Inside his living room there was a family picture of him, his wife, their kids, and their grandkids. He instantly smiled as I gazed at the pictures and told me stories of where they were and what they did as a family the year before. His chest pumped up as he spoke glowingly of his kids and his grandkids. The walls were clean and neat, without a lot of clutter. A few pictures hung from the walls, but there was a sense of space that made the room feel larger than it was.

Pem was born in Garrison, N.D. while his dad was attending college in Fargo. After his father graduated, they moved to Oregon for a brief time. His dad then transferred to Mobridge where Pem spent the majority of his elementary and high school years growing up. His dad had a job with the government as a civil engineer.

Pem's college years were at few different places like South Dakota State University and George Washington University in Washington, D.C. When the oil boom hit in North Dakota in the early 80s, Pem worked in that area. When oil production declined and work was less certain, he decided to go back to college. In the meantime, his dad had moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, so Pem decided to go to a school that was close to his folks. He enrolled in the University of New Mexico to study civil engineering.

**Formal Education-“You got to develop relationships with other students and learn study patterns that will cause you to be able to be successful.”**

I took out my notebook and asked Pem to walk me through his college journey and discuss the reflections he had of college. Pem sat back in his sofa chair, comfortable,

and then he leaned in to me and said that civil engineering was what drew him into school. He liked the idea that you could be outside and not stuck behind a desk all day drawing up plans and designs. He liked the hands-on challenge. He said he and his cohorts would come up with ideas, debate the ideas, and work their way through the problems until they came to an understanding of what they were going to do. There was a lot of consensus within his group and a lot of tutoring that happened organically. Everyone in his group expected to contribute to the process. Teamwork, discipline, and accountability all came into play for them because they were constantly progress monitoring each other through their classes. Pem said:

My dad was the reason why I focused on the career that I did by observing the environment that he worked in. The work he did was civil nature type of work as well. I would go reach back to a lot of stuff he had or if I had questions or needed some guidance in those areas, it was definitely good to have someone who understood what you were going through in those areas. You understand the same language and understand how it is connected.

I asked Pem about his son and what advice he gave Jess when he was going to college. He did not speak right away; he paused and was seemingly searching or clarifying what he was going to say before he began to speak.

Jess chose electrical engineering and that is fine, but the underlying base part of this field is math. Math is the underlying base of engineering and going through it, I am glad that when he did go and struggle with learning the foundation side, that was the process part of him learning. You can grow from anything as long as you know your basics. My advice once he went back into it was just to encourage him.

As people go through their struggles in school, grounded into where you are at in the process, then you start to understand the process. If it does not cause you an effort to go there and get it done, then you should drop out. I challenged him with that at times, if it is too tough, then you should drop out, maybe you can move into something easy if you do not want to deal with these classes.

We started to talk about choices and Pem conveyed to me that if you want to struggle and achieve this electrical engineering degree then you will achieve it, but if you don't want to achieve it, there are easier paths; don't beat yourself up if it is not something you want to do bad enough. Pem then paused for a moment, knowing I was enjoying a philosophy lesson he was teaching me. He continued saying: "However, by doing it, you are getting there. You are not failing if you are struggling. The struggle is part of the process!"

This was a powerful statement for me. I marked it down in my reflection journal. I came back to that statement several times on my way home that night as I found truth in it. I reflected on my own educational struggles and I agreed with that statement. I could see how the struggles are what helped me the most in my life to want to overcome. Those points where you throw in the towel or you get back up and finish.

As I steered the interview back to Pem, we started to talk more about what education meant for him. Pem said:

Well, for me, I mean you need a degree to be in the field; you could be a technician, but to be recognized, you need that degree. You cannot have many positions in the workforce unless you have a degree. To become a professional, you not only have that base, which is the degree, but you also have to start to

building your experience base. Your experience base builds on your foundation of your educational base. The civil engineering degree is defined to give you a final specialized training; it gives you the underlying basics to understand numerous things. You now have that foundation to apply it; you will now have to learn how to apply it.

**Role Models-“My grandma was influential.”**

Pem talked passionately about his grandma and I could tell that she was influential in how he grew up by the excitement in his voice as he described her feats and her style.

My grandma was one of the first Native American ladies to graduate from college, I believe. It was a teacher’s college. She was involved in the community and started 4H clubs throughout the reservation. She was influential, especially for a woman at that time to be able to have that. She was the foundation that causes you to understand that you could achieve certain things and that you could go to college and that was actually an achievable goal. I went out knowing that graduating from college was an achievable goal because of her.

This has been a pattern for other respondents—the importance of early childhood relationships and experiences is striking as Pem shared his memories of his grandmother. For many on the Fort Berthold Reservation, Grandma is the central figure in the tribal members’ upbringing. She put Pem and his siblings to work; they were always doing something whether it was 4H or whatever, they were working when they were with her. When I asked him if he ever asked his grandma about her college experiences, Pem confided that it was not in his nature to ask personal questions or probe too much, so he

did not do that with his grandma as well. I found that self-awareness that he possesses to be refreshing. He said he does not like to be intrusive into other people's business and would rather let them divulge what they want to tell him.

He talked about his mom and described her as the one who not only encouraged him with his education, but who also kept him focused. She would ask him why he would do things and what was his reason to go to college; why was he going into that field? Looking back, Pem said this was encouraging because she helped him find a reason why he wanted to get his education. The women in his life seemed to challenge thoughtlessness by promoting an intentional approach to major life decisions. His response demonstrates an unusually wise focus on education for personal fulfillment.

Pem said:

The leadership that came about for me came from her. That position really strongly came from what value she put in place. She had some real direction that caused you to make decisions and understand directions and why those things established for getting there. Her goal that she establishes for understanding was not the goal base that normally you would see from people going to college. 'Well he can make this much money...' There never was a money piece to it. It was about what you want to do and how you would execute it. It is from the work related side.

I found myself pumped up listening to him talk about his mom; I said "NICE" out loud as Pem finished talking, even laughed at myself for getting caught up in the moment. Pem smiled at me when I said that, but gave me that look that told me he was not done. He continued:

That was the part then; you are doing it for that reason! You chose that career for that reason. You did not pick a board and say, ‘okay, what’s the highest paying or ranking career once you get through college?’ That has never driven the goals that I have achieved or the goals that I have worked for and I think a lot of that is because of my mom.

### **Leadership-“What is it?”**

Pem spent a majority of his career in the Corps of Engineers working in various parts of the United States until he moved to Parshall, North Dakota and started working for the Corps in Riverdale. The Corps of Engineers had started a leadership program that selected only 12 students for yearly training that met on a regular basis. The students would intermingle in a variety of disciplines to help grow the base. Pem talked about his time in the leadership training as eye opening. He described leadership as the basis of what you are doing and why you are doing it. I interpreted this statement as meaning that what ever career field you go into, you should want to make some kind of difference in that field. Pem liked the leadership program because it helped him to open up opportunities for him to grow. He served the Corp of Engineers in the tribal liaison role that worked on environmental issues. Pem said:

I have never done any tribal stuff and I did not want recognition as being a tribal person. I am a Native American, but I do not want recognition as an engineer versus—sometimes that is not a good association, especially within the corps. I took this position because I thought that was something I needed to do. Mom, who had passed by that time, drove it and I felt it was something I needed to do.

Pem got up and grabbed us each a glass of water; the dialogue that we were having was taking its toll on his voice. As we dug deeper into the leadership mine, I asked Pem what leadership looked like for him. He sat there and deliberately took his time on this question. He closed both of his eyes for a couple of seconds, took a deep breath, took another drink of his water and proceeded to deal with my question. He said:

A lot of the leadership traits, when you look at it, is that the people that look to you in that leadership role, have to respect you, and respect that you're making decisions that they feel they are being included in, and that you've got a sound basis for why you're doing things. If they're comfortable with what you are doing and why you are doing it and applying it fairly, that will come back to give you the respect as a leader.

Respect, inclusion, rationale, and fairness were the four traits that Pem described that he thought was important. His responses to my next question, I thought to myself, were the evidence. What examples would he be able to tell me how he exemplifies the type of leadership that he envisions? Pem started to talk about his position as an emergency management leader that he took on while serving with the Corps of Engineers.

A leadership side, I guess, is mostly from the leadership program I went through, but I also was part of an emergency management team. We deploy to support for natural disasters. We train for the missions then we come together and assign missions from hurricanes to other natural disasters for the people involved. You get all these people from all over the country that don't even know the role or mission and we have to train them to be effective at executing the mission. The last one was Hurricane Katrina where I got a commander's award for civilian



service, in part because of my leadership in helping with that program. Our challenge was to bring in people in large groups and go through a quick briefing for people that were really contractors and prepare them to help out in a organized and efficient manner. Our main job was to go into Katrina and get temporary roofing for all the buildings in place. I embrace challenges like this.

Pem, who was animated in sharing his stories, he told me story after story of the cleanup missions that he had gone on from Katrina to the Virgin Islands. He stated that he took on longer missions because he had a sense of pride in helping out the people as well as empathy for what they were going through. I did not get the sense that Pem was one who really bragged, but his stories and the things he accomplished with few resources showed the humility with which he conducts his life.

### **Leadership Styles-“The Solution Leader.”**

When looking at oneself in a reflective manner, what do you see as a leader? I posed that question to Pem because I wanted to see what his style was. He responded:

My leadership style is more on a coaching side. Part of when you practice leadership, it's not so much leadership, it's part of when you do management.

You want to make sure everyone knows what he or she is supposed to be doing and that he or she knows how he or she are going to achieve it. This process calls them to be prepared. That means you need to be prepared to achieve it.

Leadership is a back and forth kind of thing for me; I give the oversight, but I do not like to micromanage. I try to understand the problem and address it.

His comment about leadership and the way that it is back and forth is an interesting observation on the nature of relationships between leaders and their followers.

One of the biggest problems with leadership, according to Pem, is that leaders have a hard time admitting when they are wrong or that they messed up. According to Pem, that is the kind of leader that is not a leader. He said that as a leader, you are supposed to come up with solutions. However, the poor leaders come up with solutions to which there are no problems. He gave an example of this when one of the leaders tried to switch up members of a command post that had been working well together. The leader split the group up and this caused a set back of a week because of having to retrain new staff. He recalled his time in Puerto Rico when on a mission and that he had no resources, but he just make things work.

**Ethical Leadership-“Got to be able to connect the dots!”**

My second interview with Pem was on a cold day on the first day of December. The drive to Parshall took about two hours and the temperature that day was close to below zero. I had dressed accordingly for the road trip and had on my Under Armour below zero gear underneath several layers of clothes. Pem met me at the door again and I observed that he had accomplished a considerable amount of remodeling; the garage looked completely different from just the sheet rock that was up a couple months prior. Pem was wearing a solid blue denim shirt as I approached him from my truck. Pem is a naturally reserved guy so the cheerfulness was a good start to our conversation.

The Hall’s house was ornamented with Christmas decorations and a Christmas tree in the center. He had his two brown couches moved to the middle of the living room wall from the last time I was there. The big flat TV on the wall was silent, in anticipation of our conversation.

I was ready to hear Pem elaborate further on leadership and what it looked like to him. Recognizing that Pem had taken a leadership course, I was interested to hear him describe his perception on leadership. He said:

A leader is someone who acts in the interest of the people he is leading. Self-interest or conflicts for things should not come into play. Leaders sacrifice and step back from benefits to show their interest is primarily leadership. If they want to lead, they have to be credible to show their leadership. They have to be able to defend their decisions; these decisions should be in the best interest of the people. Never should a decision be a decision that personally benefits you in the end. If you are working with money and you are a leader, you need to be financially accountable by having transparent financial practices by openly reporting, showing the funding source, and have open audits for whomever to see it.

He elaborated on this with other examples; he said that leaders have to be careful when dealing with money, that they can have an open trail to account for all the funds. Leaders need to be able to admit when they are wrong, admit when they do not have an answer to a problem, and always stay away from conflicts of interest. All of these factors can easily lead to a lack of stability in the leadership you are trying to implement if you are not aware of the issues. We extended the conversation on leadership by talking about culture and the challenge of being a cultural leader. Pem said:

Culture is part of which you learn what you're taught, what you have seen, and what you know. You have lived it through your elders or by watching people and knowing why they do things and trying to put that all into perspective. You see that in Indian people—they share, they got good values, but are values carried

through? You can see the conflict of trying to be a cultural person, but living in a monetary world.

This comment made by Pem appeared to be a source of conflict for Native people. Because Pem had worked many years in the professional world of civil engineering and had held leadership positions throughout his professional career, I asked him to elaborate on his awareness of his strengths and capabilities as a leader. He shared the following:

Some of my strengths as a leader is I am able to connect the dots so to speak. I step on the side that I feel is right, I do not go with the crowd, but instead I look at an issue and look for discrepancies. As I look to connect the dots, if I see an issue does not connect, I question it even if it is not popular. By stepping up and speaking my mind on something that I have a unique knowledge of even though it might not benefit me, but it is for the good of the people, which is leadership. You try to make the best-educated decision that you can. When I do bring stuff forward, it's something that I have knowledge of and I am confident. I present my material to people in a manner that is accurate and honest. I do not just assume anything. I try to educate myself on the issue at hand, no matter what it is. By doing your groundwork then you have more weight and can contribute something, that is actually a valuable contribution.

I interpreted this statement as acting with integrity, a seemingly rational approach to problem solving. Pem was adamant about being a credible and accurate leader, as he believes that the more research you do, the more people will recognize that, respect you, and come to you for your advice or opinion on matters. Pem returned to the importance of another important distinction, but trying to connect the dots of an issue. He challenged

leaders to be able to connect the dots even when they went against their own assumptions. Sometimes you have the wrong preconceived idea and as a leader, he said, you have to connect the dots to what is right even if by doing that you admit you were wrong. People will respect you more by doing that, he said.

From this idea of leadership, we looked at the expectations of a tribal leader, i.e. what the ideal tribal leader would look like. Pem described this ideal tribal leader as a person who looks for the needs of the people he is serving. The leader tries to understand the environment that he is dealing with and looks to support and encourage growth. He followed the Servant Leadership model of leadership with his descriptions. This part of our discussion was obviously important to Pem—his body posture leaned into me, he started using his hands a little more when he talked, and his facial expressions were more intense. He talked further about leadership being a shared commodity within the reservation, and how you really have to work on buy in from the people whom you are working with. The support structure of tribal leadership is the most important area to help contribute to the buy in.

**Legacy-“Values—I want to carry them on with my grandkids.”**

As you get older, people start talking about legacies and people have different interpretations about what that should be. Because I have grandkids, it becomes more of a focus for them. I have an obligation to make sure that my grandkids, you know, have that future. I think whatever I can do, I’m hoping that there will be some positive benefit for their future, but at the same time for all the kids.

This opening quote of Pem’s demonstrates a more holistic concern for the good of all, an optimistic look at how one person views his responsibility to his community. Pem

concentrated as we talked about his legacy. He elaborated on this point by discussing how building a legacy for him is a growth thing. He wants to grow the capacity of the people in his community. By him having an effect on the environment in which his grandkids live and grow trying to make it better, he believes he is not only affecting his grandkids, but he is having an effect on the whole community. Pem believes that as a tribe, we need to recognize and value education more; it needs to happen at a young age because of how fast learning happens at that age. He believes that you have to push them away from the television and video gaming, and have them be involved in things to stimulate their minds and to have them start asking questions.

We talked about the similarities that I had seen in the course of my interviews with his dad and his son, Jess, regarding comments that they made and how closely the three of them were. Pem laughed and told me that they never really sat down and discussed those things. He told me he probably puts his own spin on the values he tries to instill in his kids. According to Pem, the values change over time because the world is changing. If you can instill this value into your kids and grandkids and help them understand the reasoning of having good values, then it becomes a learning curve for the kids. I interpreted his beliefs as meaning that some of the core values are timeless. Pem said:

As tribal people, we need to step up and get back and represent our cultural values. Do not let other things take over because then we start to erode away our cultural base, and that is where it should reflect in what we do. That way it stays, because we have an inherent cultural value tied to the benefits that we derive as being Indians.

Pem sees the world from an engineering perspective; he sees an issue or problem, looks at the context of the issue, does the research and tries to figure out the best course of action to help improve the issue. A rational man...but...with spiritual understanding is what I wondered as that theme had not come up in our interview. He has his Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering and self identifies as a Native American, but does not like to be labeled because he believes it pigeon holes a person without doing them true justice.

### **Summary**

Pem Hall grew up watching his dad work with and in the environment as a civil engineer. He grew up seeing his grandma become one of the most respected women in his community—not only because she was one of the first Native American women to graduate from college, but also because she used her education to give back to the reservation. She started 4H clubs, taught school, gave gardening lessons and encouraged her people to go to school. Pem learned to study, work with groups, and to collaborate on projects while in college.

He described his college years as challenging. He admitted to sacrificing family time to get his education, yet embraced the college struggle as part of the process. His advice to future generations was to embrace the struggle. He said if it does not force an effort to complete your degree, then do not continue. He told me, “It does not mean you’re failing if you are struggling; it is all part of the process.” He described his mentality of getting his degree as a “NEED.” He needed a degree in order to be recognized and move up the career ladder. He credited his parents, his grandma, his wife

and children as giving him the support, encouragement and understanding needed to meet the challenges of college.

Pem viewed leadership as the basis of what you do to serve an organization. To get to the level of leadership, he believed you first should earn an education, and then add experience in order to apply that knowledge and understanding to a leadership position. He viewed some of the traits of leadership as involvement in community, evolving viewpoints of issues, valuing people you work with, and being able to give guidance to people you work with.

My observations and interviews with Pem lead me to perceive him as someone who embraced challenges, who analyzed issues to better understand the problems, who questioned the process, and then who looked for solutions. He was a humble man; Pem did not boast about his accomplishments. He carried himself during the interviews as a confident person who showed humility. Pem's responses to my interview questions were consistent—he believed in encouraging education, guiding through culture, and to make the environment, which was a significant part of his life and profession as a civil engineer, better for his grandkids.



## Portrait 5: Ed Hall



*Figure 9.* “Ed Hall.” Ed at his home in Parshall, North Dakota, September 2016. Photo by Chad Dahlen.

### **Context-Historical**

Ed Hall’s journey began in the present day Atlantis City of the Fort Berthold Reservation called Elbowoods. It was there that he was born in 1933. He grew up just north of Elbowoods and spent his early years of life chopping wood, mining coal, cutting fence posts, and working for area farmers. He was one of nine children in his family. He had three older sisters, three brothers, and two younger sisters. His mother was one of the first Native women to graduate from college with a teaching certificate. Ed and his family were victims of the 1953 Garrison Dam flooding where the government encroached on the Three Affiliated Tribes land and forced the residents, both Native and non-Natives, off of their land for purposes of flood control down river, navigation, irrigation, electricity and recreation. It also served as a way to split the Three Affiliated Tribal people into segments rather than one large community. Elbowoods had served as the hub

of the reservation with a main hospital, school, and businesses for a thriving tribe. It is now located underwater in the center of Lake Sakakawea.

Ed started his schooling at Elbowoods then attended a boarding school in Beacon, Oklahoma. Upon graduating from high school in Oklahoma, he attended Dickinson State University until he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and served for three years. Once he got out of the military, he married the love of his life and went to the North Dakota State University in Fargo. He described his college educational journey as follows:

I knew I had to have an education to survive and I had the G.I. Bill, so I went down to Fargo where my brother, my big brother (he was actually his first cousin) Pete Burgh was a senior. When I showed up he said, 'I'll get you enrolled.' He laughed when he said it. He then took me over to the school of engineering. He got me in there, and I did not know anything about engineering school. I thought, 'Geez this is crazy!' However, I tried it; I struggled through it and I graduated in 1960. I lived off the G.I. Bill (The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the G.I. Bill, was a law that provided a range of benefits for returning World War II veterans).

As we talked and Ed mixed in stories of his military and college days, I was taken aback by his comment that he had no idea what engineering school was about when he enrolled. He just went along with his big brother because he wanted to get an education.

Ed is a tall man, about 6 feet 1 inch and in his 80s. He lives in a large home that he bought upon returning to Parshall, North Dakota after college. He was cordial to me as I entered his house and he offered me some coffee and water; I accepted the coffee as its warmth was in stark contrast to the cold autumn air that hit me when I walked to his

house. He showed me his “office,” which was in the basement of his house. It was a nice size room about 12 feet by 12 feet filled with Native American pictures, Kachina dolls, buffalo pictures and prints, and a full size buffalo bullhead mount hung on the middle of his office wall with a cowboy hat hanging on one of the horns. The southwest art and the Kachina dolls were from his late wife’s collection. The big beautiful buffalo mount was a gift given to him from a supervisor who he worked with in Montana. The art that filled his office and home came from Native artists who gave the works to him when he journeyed across the country. He was proud of the artwork that filled his office and had detailed memories of every piece that was collected and from whom he received the art.

I believe the possessions he is most proud of are located in his office—the filing cabinets, copy machine, file folders all marked neatly by topic, easel with topics or writing that looked like Venn diagrams. He knew exactly where all the projects that he had worked on were such as serving as tribal liaison on the planning, design and construction of the 4-Bears bridge across Lake Sakakawea near New Town, ND. He is currently working as the Director of the MHA Nation Tomorrow project, which will assist the tribe to reduce poverty and to rebuild it’s government through constitutional reform. These are all stored like treasures throughout his office. He pulled out a written curriculum he had developed to show me a computerized curriculum for teaching the MHA Nation’s constitution in high schools. He said that he started this curriculum from scratch; I could tell he was proud of the work that he put into it as he held it with a smile on his face. He had an old, brown leather office chair and a desk that had papers and folders scattered in clutter, but an organized clutter that Mr. Hall seemed to be able to

navigate around rather efficiently. He had a table in his office as well, with folders stacked up on each other according to topic.

Ed was wearing a striped brown business shirt with a button collar and a pocket on the front. His shirt was similar to shirts that his son and his grandson wore when I interviewed them. Ed is a handsome, older gentleman who is intellectually sharp as he displayed when rattling off different tribal zoning codes and amendments off the top of his head. His office had a picture of his family hanging on the wall along with another photograph of a group of people taken during the early 1950s, I guess, because it was black and white. The office downstairs did not have the musty smell that most basements have, but rather it had that coffee scent that I was familiar with living in a coffee drinking household.

Despite Ed's initial challenges of not knowing what to study in college, his older brother must have had a good instinct about what drove Ed, because he spent the next part of his life working for the government as a civil engineer moving around the country as different opportunities arose. He spent several years in Mobridge, but also worked with other reservations doing road design and construction jobs, and he served on the board of directors for a Standing Rock enterprise. The Bureau of Indian Affairs was his main employer and they serve to carry out the trust responsibilities to Native American tribes throughout the United States.

Ed worked in all kinds of positions within the Bureau from designing roads in Belcourt, N.D. to being the Director of Policy and Planning for the assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Interior. Once he completed that job, he worked in Albuquerque, N.M. where he finished out his career with the government. Then, after retiring, he

founded a consulting company that he owned for another 10 years. His wife wanted to move home, so they came back to North Dakota in 2000 and bought a home in Parshall. It was then that he started working as a consultant for the tribe to complete a new bridge project. Now at the young age of 83, he is working for the community college teaching classes on tribal sovereignty and working on grants. His wife passed away a year after they returned home, but his kids and several grandchildren are in the area, so he has decided to stay in his home and keep moving along.

### **Lessons Learned-“These Indians won’t work, they won’t work”**

I had a hard time imagining living in all of the areas that Ed had worked. I jotted down notes as he reflected on his history and smiled to myself thinking what a life this man has lived. I asked Ed what he learned from all of his travels. He sat there and paused for a minute or two repeating the question to himself as if he was trying to narrow down all of his learning, and then he said:

I had to meet a lot of tribes and tribal members and I found they all treat you good, they all show respect and treat you nice. I was able to network and through this, I met many good people. You have to learn what other tribes are doing, especially when I worked out at D.C., I have to travel and do reviews and so forth.... We are all common, I mean in many ways, we all have different constitutions, which is our governing body, but what we call our cultural values, or core values, and they are similar. Universal, one of the reasons we were able to get along with the Christians when they first came was that our core values are very similar to the Ten Commandments when you stop and think about it. One of the things I did when I first started working on reservations was to put crews

together from that reservation to do the work. People told me ‘These Indians won’t work, they won’t work!’ [Ed laughed as that memory came back to him; he told me that he never did contracts unlike his White counterparts who always had contracts in place.] I always had my roads built by the members of that tribe and all that was because I was able to relate with them in their way and that really helped because I didn’t grow up there. I respected them, we trained them, and everybody got a fair treatment. We did everything, we had a gravel crusher, and a big grading crew and we even put together an asphalt plant out of surplus equipment.

Ed attributed his success to working with other tribal members as the ability to respect and understand each other. His goal of building capacity among other tribal members was evident when he discussed the asphalt plant that he helped them build. He was quite proud that one of the Native crewmembers started a successful asphalt company in North Dakota because of the experience gained from working on one of his projects.

**Role models-“He grew up to respect people and to treat people right.”**

When Ed considered whom he had as role models growing up, he stated that he was lucky to have his dad and mom in his life. He worked a lot together with his dad who would talk to him quite a bit about life. He never scolded him or hit him; they just had a great relationship. His dad would tell him things without being pushy and modeled the hard work that he did without having Ed doing all the work. His dad died at an early age when Ed was only 18 years old. He talked about his dad and still has his dad’s obituary,

which he recited a quote from memory. He said, “Whoever did my dad’s obituary did it right; they wrote ‘He grew up to respect people and to treat people right.’”

That simple quote was something that had a big impact on Ed because he could recite it from memory and he aspired to be like his father in those ways. Again, the quote was from 60 years ago and it was still fresh in his mind as he talked glowingly about his father.

Ed’s mother was educated and was a teacher. She got a prestigious award from the state of North Dakota as mother of the year. Ed and his mother flew to New York for the award ceremony at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York; the speaker was J.C. Penney. When he told me the story he got up and grabbed a big picture that showed he and his mom in attendance with the other mother-of-the-year winners. Although the year was 1966, it could have been yesterday the way Ed talked excitedly about seeing J.C. Penney in person and the rich detail he gave about how fancy the Waldorf Astoria was with the fancy chandeliers and all the people dressed up in fancy clothes.

### **Foundations of Leadership-“A handshake is a handshake.”**

When considering themes for this research project, I wondered what type of themes would emerge given these strong people and their perceptions of leadership; Ed was one of the “old school cowboys” who did not hesitate when I asked him what his foundation of leadership was all about. He looked at me as if he had responded to that question a million times and said:

You respect everyone, you treat him or her good, and they will treat you good, too. You have many Aunties who took care of you, they took good care of you, and a handshake is a handshake. Back in my day, you did not worry about

somebody trying to take advantage of you to put you under the bus to get a couple of bucks. The way we grew up back then, nobody had money so everybody thought tribal.

As he talked about aunties, I told him the story of my Auntie Alyce Spotted Bear who once was the chairperson of the Three Affiliated Tribes. I told him that she had once been at the North Dakota state capitol meeting with the two state senators, the governor, and some other government officials. When she was done with the meeting, she and her best friend walked out to her car. This small car did not have a good starter, so you had to push start the car and let off on the clutch to get it started. She told her friend to get into the car and said to let off on the clutch once she got it rolling. My Aunt started pushing the car just as all those state dignitaries walked out of the capitol building. My Aunt's friend was mortified that the tribal leader was push starting her car; she was trying to get my auntie to be more dignified. Aunt Alyce's response was just a chuckle; maybe, she said, maybe the government will see how hard it is for us Indians and help us out like they are suppose to. She said they definitely knew that she was not taking anything from the tribe.

Ed recognized the assimilation of Western concepts that has been happening to our tribe and stated that as people, we have gotten away from the tribal concept and gone to more of an individualistic type of world where people are looking out more for themselves then they for the community; they are leaving behind what made us who we were as a people. He talked about how the tribe should educate themselves further and develop a stronger tax code, improve our sovereignty, and improve our visioning for the oil and gas development that is on our reservation. "The horses are out of the corrals!" he



said. "It is almost too late," he admitted with a frown, and said, "these things should have been done back 10 to 15 years ago, but you have to keep working towards it."

The importance of education for Ed was always there. He stated that education was just something he was going to do. The thought of not getting an education never even entered his mind. Once he got his education, he did not come home until 2000. He was always working and although he had friends and family back home, he was putting his education to work wherever the jobs took him.

Ed remembered the informal education that he received was from the old guys who were his dad's age. He said:

They would come by to visit, as they were gathering cattle. They had a cattle program in Shell Creek where they would put all their bulls there in the winter and in the spring they would come get the bulls. The guys back then used to ride together and gather bulls. As they hit their destinations, they would drop off at their home place and the rest would keep going until they hit their destinations. They had two groups, the Shell Creek bunch and the Lucky Mound bunch. The Shell Creek bunch would stop at my mom's and let the bulls graze and she would feed them as we all listened to their stories. You have to know many people like that back then. The round ups, everyone worked together to bring the cattle in and round up the bulls and brand the calves. He said he still doesn't know how they knew whose calf was whose, but they'd drag them up and us little guys would have to wrestle them down and hold them till they got branded.

Ed did not have any regrets about living off of the reservation. He told me it was difficult to come home and work; he did not know why; he said it might even be that way in other places as well. Ed said:

We had 12 of our tribal members that left and became doctors, who came back to work here. They all came back and tried it and because of politics, they left. That is a prime example of our reputation. How do we overcome these things? You see, I worked down at Standing Rock and those guys treated me very good, the same way with the Cheyenne River, I got along real good with them. However, here (Three Tribes) you come home and you cannot even get on the council to make a report (laughing). I do not know what it is. If you are going to waste your doctor's degree, you had better think twice. Take it where you can get your best experience. That's another thing. I am thankful that they did not bring me home, if I had come home, I would have missed all that experience. It is the people you meet and learn from and you can do a lot of observing. Life is all just a learning process. You are always a student here, you are listening, the better listener you are, the better you will get on.

The second interview took me to Ed's classroom space where he was preparing to teach a college class on tribal sovereignty for the local community college. Ed stated that this class really made him think and go back to being a student himself. He had a lot of learning to do before he started the class. He had been working with the community college to help them with reports that they were working on together regarding the state of the reservation, visioning, and the effects of the 1953 Garrison Dam flooding. He was concerned about the "intergenerational trauma" and how it was still affecting our people

today. He also was looking at ways to get over that trauma through education and some of the material in his pamphlet.

The classroom was located in the basement below the post office. Classrooms can be found anywhere on community college campuses, so it did not surprise me that this classroom was in the basement of the post office building. These colleges just make do with the limited resources they have. The rooms have not been updated in awhile; this classroom included a brown banquet table with regular folding chairs placed around it. He had a coffee maker sitting on a little table with several of white cups placed close by. When I showed up, there were three ladies sitting at the table with him; I immediately recognized all three of the women, and we gave hugs and exchanged pleasantries. There had a cake on the table, which was part of an honoring of Ed and celebration for him being a speaker at an upcoming event on the reservation. I sat down, ate cake with the group, and had coffee and conversation before the women headed their separate ways. With just Ed and I left in the room, we began to discuss his perceptions about leadership.

**Solutions-“Don’t talk about your problems.”**

Ed talked about planning and improving tribes, and one of the bits of wisdom he shared was the process of Appreciative Inquiry Planning, which is a model that seeks to engage stakeholders in self-determined change (McKenna, 2007). It is a different way of looking at the reservation and approaching how to change the reservation. He shared:

This process is a planning process where you do not talk about your problems.

Instead, we say what are we most proud about the issue that we are studying. Hey, you are from Twin Buttes, what are you proud about over there? What do you like about it? Think about it- think hard! The next thing we do is we ask what is

everybody's vision. Where do you want to go? That is how we go about the process with everyone contributing.

Ed shared he has always believed that collaborative leadership was the best form of leadership. From the days when he recruited local tribal men to help build roads, to his time on the bridge project where he sought help from communities to get their input on how to design the bridge. He looked at leadership as an ethical one first, then as a leader second. I asked him in to talk about leadership a little more and his response was:

A leader is one with ethics that will look you straight in the eye and he will mean what he says. A handshake, you can depend on that. It is just acting naturally; you have to have it here (He points to his chest) and do not ever try to cheat. When you are in leadership positions, you watch people and see what they are producing and how they are justifying what they are producing to keep them accountable. If you are going to be a tribal leader, then you darn well better know your tribal culture. You should enjoy your work or your position in which you are a leader. If you love your work then that will be your strength as a leader. I hate to judge myself, but you have to be upfront with people when you are in leadership positions. You have to be able to communicate and work with different people.

**Legacy-“Empowerment of our people.”**

Ed's theory of tribal leadership further extended to simple truths: to be a common person, be yourself, make people feel comfortable, and to be respectful; to help people live the kind of life that they want to live. He further said that a couple of leadership lessons he learned were from when he was in the military. Ed shared that this was where you had to learn to get along with other people and learn to take orders. Ed was from the

old school where he mentioned several times that a handshake was all that a person should need; he almost is saddened by the way things have changed over the years. Ed engaged in multimillion-dollar government contracts with nothing more than a handshake and some local talent whom he recruited.

Although Ed is now in his 80s, he has not slowed down in his pursuit of using his engineering skills to help solve social problems and to find solutions to the issues that are out there. His relationships with the people around him show him to be a man of kindness and gentleness. I observed how he treated the men and women who came through his office when I last visited with him. His efforts to empower the people around him, as well as to be able to understand and work with people through dialogue and participation in their world, is his way of leading. He is a man who literally came from a strong home, with a strong mother and an impactful father who used his education to help him lead the type of life that he wanted to live.

### **Summary**

Each participant interviewed had a different background or historical context. Ed Hall was the one participant whom I did not have any prior connection to. I had only heard stories about him, i.e. his famous nickname of “Albuquerque Ed.” The story goes that Ed was given his nickname because there were two Ed Halls on the reservation and the people had to keep straight which Ed they were talking about. Most people referred to him as “Albuquerque Ed” because he spent a significant part of his life in Albuquerque, N.M. The stories I heard of Ed were always positive; people talked about his intelligence and his straight forwardness.

Each participant interviewed revealed a different angle on leadership; Ed illuminated me about the topic of leadership from another generation. His early military experiences, how he was able to use the G.I. Bill, and his historical perspective of the old settlement of Elbowoods echoed throughout our interviews and added another significant dimension to this study.

Ed brought his mature voice together with his son's and grandson's, both in melody and discord, to hone the understanding of leadership. When Ed talked, he took me back in time looking through his eyes and getting glimpses of his life story. His journey through college was difficult—getting second chances to pass a course, meeting with cohorts to study late into the night—but significant because he felt this primal instinct that he needed an education to survive. Ed grew up in difficult economic times where he learned from his dad and mom to be frugal, and to value what an education can do for your life. He was a boarding school student in Oklahoma during his junior and senior years in high school, and was determined to create a strong foundation for his future through a college degree.

Ed's parents shaped his views about leadership, which he carried with him today. He viewed trust as sacred and believed that a "handshake" was as good as a contract. Ed shared that a person's word was good enough for him as he maneuvered his way through one construction project after another. His gems of advice on leadership were simple—be honest, listen, be respectful, and treat people right. He mentioned treating people right and being respectful from start to finish throughout our time together. Ed even suggested that I use my new doctoral degree to go somewhere where I can get the best experience

possible. He told me, “Life is just a learning process.” I interpreted this “learning process” to mean that we should be lifelong learners on our journeys.

When I asked Ed what was one of his most valued leadership traits, he replied that he was satisfied in his work and he enjoyed his work—he tried to live an ethical life; he looked people in the eyes and meant what he said. I perceived Ed’s ability to use visioning and building capacity in the process of working with others, explained what his true leadership was all about.

### **Portrait 6: Marcus Levings**



*Figure 10.* “The Chairman.” Marcus Levings at the Tribal Administration Building in New Town, North Dakota, September 2016. Photo by Chad Dahlen.

*“I think the beginning of my leadership journey was my calling, but without prayer, I don’t think I would have done anything. A prayer for today is a prayer for tomorrow.”*

*—Marcus Levings*

**Context-Historical**

Marcus Levings is a former Three Affiliated Tribes Chairman, former Four Bears Councilman, New Town Public School Board Chairman, and Four Bears Community Board President. He has served in the military, holding leadership positions as a chaplain. Marcus and I worked together in different settings, i.e. when I was a teacher at the New Town school and he served on the school board. I knew him before that as we both played basketball with and against each other in various local basketball tournaments around the reservation. He also has ties to my reservation segment—he has relations in Twin Buttes and his wife is from Twin Buttes. He was an involved parent and was always looking for the best from his kids.

I later worked with Marcus when I became superintendent at the Twin Buttes School and he became chairman of the Three Affiliated Tribes. He was instrumental in helping Twin Buttes obtain funding from the Bureau of Indian Education. He is an educational advocate who places a high value on the young people of the Three Affiliated Tribes.

When I was driving to New Town for the interview, it was a beautiful fall day and I was excited to meet up with my old friend to conduct this interview. I arrived at the tribal building and since I knew my way around I was easily able to find his office. It was different seeing Marcus working for the councilman of his reservation segment because I had grown accustomed to seeing him work in the tribal chairman's office.

His office was filled with old family photos, running medals, and plaques of appreciation for work that he had done. He had an old style typewriter on his desk along with an older computer that was playing some of my favorite Dwight Yoakam country hits as I came in. Marcus was wearing a silk dress shirt that was pressed neatly along with



black dress pants and a belt. He is in his early 50s and in great physical shape still running 5K and 10K road races. He is just a shade less than 6 feet tall with a muscular frame. He wore wire-rimmed glasses that had a slight tint to them. He wore his hair short most of the time, like a military type style of haircut. His office was neat and tidy with some paperwork in folders or stacked in an organized manner. What stood out to me when I first met him was his soft voice that matched the respectful manner that he carried himself with. He was articulate and did not rush to say something for the sake of talking.

While the two of us had a long history that dated back to when I was in high school, it was not until I got older that we connected on another level. Personally, people do not surprise me too often, but when Marcus became Chairman, I was surprised. I had seen many people change when they got into positions of power, but Marcus was one of those who became even more humble when he took office. He was a soft-spoken, reflective type of leader and did not make many decisions without thinking them through.

When I worked at the Twin Buttes School and our grant school was in danger of losing funding for the new school project, I enlisted Marcus on the first day he took office as tribal Chairman to help me figure out a way to regain our funding from the federal government. After a couple of trips to Washington, D.C. together, our funding was fully secured and our new school in Twin Buttes was back on track. It was then that I was able to witness first hand his leadership—working with the federal government, setting up meetings with our congressional delegation of Senators Byron Dorgan and Kent Conrad, and Representative Earl Pomeroy as well as with the heads of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, to get our school's money secured. Marcus did his homework those three days while we were in Washington, D.C. as we weaved in and out of the various offices.

He made his plea/demands in such a manner that the deal was all but sealed by the time we got on the plane for home. What I witnessed was a leader who spoke with eloquence, passion and gentleness, which gained the attention of those around him. We received the assurance of the major players in Washington, D.C. that the Twin Buttes grant school would be built.

**Early Education-“If you ever miss the bus, you have to get to school on your own.”**

Marcus grew up in the Drags Wolf Village of the Four Bears segment on the Fort Berthold Reservation. His educational values were instilled early on by both of his parents who pushed their kids to work hard and get educated. When his parents later moved to the country, those kids were the first ones on the bus in the mornings and the last ones to get off in the evenings. His dad and mom both attended boarding schools and because of their experiences they knew the importance of getting an education. Marcus observed how their education helped them in their jobs and work fields, and the importance of the three “R’s” was emphasized on a daily basis. His parents were bilingual; his mom was fluent in Hidatsa and English and his dad was fluent in Mandan and English. They did not stress that their children learn the languages, however, because they were more concerned that they get their educations and be able to work in the job market. Marcus told me that his folks were his first role models:

My dad and mom were very strong on our responsibility to get to bed early, bath daily, and to get to the bus in the morning. Throughout grade school and high school it was ingrained in us that we had to get to class—that was number one.

My dad would say that if ever you miss the bus, you have to get to school on your own. If we overslept, it was our job to go to grandma’s house or uncle’s house to

get a ride to school. If we did not find a ride, we had to do chores outside; we had to clean the house and we learned and it didn't go away. My brothers and sister [we] were all determined all the way through school. When we finished high school we all were expected to go to college and graduate. I used to see my dad go to work for the BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs], and my first role model was a worker with a white shirt and a black tie. I remember that was always my thought. My mom worked for the tribe in finance, she was the one paying people; payroll, accounts payable and I used to come over and see her. I'd tell them, 'I'm going to be like you guys. I'm going to go to work every day.'

**College—"It was really a struggle, but we made it!"**

Marcus and I discussed the hardships of college, not so much the classwork, but the financial struggles that many people go through while trying to figure out chemistry homework AND how we were going to eat the next week on \$5.00. The motivation to keep going to college all the while knowing that the job market was limited without a college degree is what kept him in school. While Marcus attended college he was married and had two young kids. His wife, his niece and he went to college together and all worked together to get through college by sharing duties like watching the kids and working part time to make ends meet. Marcus shared:

Football actually helped me with structure. I played football at Dickinson State College while also having a young family, and a full load of classes. Football pretty much mapped out your day for you. Your classes were set up, meetings with advisors, and practices in the afternoons and game day on the weekends. Playing collegiately was one of the highlights of my college experience. But

college was real hard, especially when you have a young family. I remember going week to week with the thought, ‘Hopefully, we have enough to feed the kids. Hopefully we get enough to keep ourselves going with our day-to-day needs.’ But I did not let that stop me. The three of us would always sit down and plan our classes so that someone was always home with the kids. We also had support of our parents financially and through their advice to keep going. It was really a struggle, but we made it. We all graduated in 1988 and 1989.

This conversation seemed to speak to the importance of family as an economic unit whom also functioned to support the emotional well being of its members. The theme of persistence regardless of hardship was clear. Marcus talked more about the hard times after graduation as he rattled off the statistics of the unemployment rate on the reservation at being about 50%. Even though he had his college degree, it was tough finding work. The Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance (TERO) eventually hired Marcus and he worked with the tribe and businesses on the reservation. He helped create several of the original TERO manuals that helped benefit the tribal members with employment opportunities. Although Marcus was determined to obtain his college degree, he was even more determined to get a job and to start taking care of his family.

**Cultural Teachings-“I was able to see both worlds.”**

Marcus and I discussed culture and how it related to leadership on the reservation. He described his experience with culture as follows:

I was unique in my upbringing, fortunate to have a father who is a Christian with his upbringing and a mother who belonged to the Native American Church. I was able to see both worlds. The Native American Church worldview and the

Christian world view helped shape me and taught me to respect all of our relatives in my mom's family tree and my dad's family tree. I just tried to mold them both together and have an open mind. I would go to rodeos with my dad and then attend powwows with my mom. I'd go to Shell Creek with my mom and go to Mandaree with my dad. I would go and celebrate Christmas down in Twin Buttes and then go hit a Native American Church ceremony with my mom.

The other part of culture that I have not discussed in this research is the importance of the younger generation listening when around their elders. I was told several times while growing up that I should be seen and not heard when adults are having conversations. Marcus described his environment much the same way.

I was shy when I grew up. I had a stigma about my teeth and used to have dental appointments quite regularly. There was something wrong with this tooth or that tooth and I just really was embarrassed about my teeth. I was shy, but what I did to overcompensate was to listen and listen and listen some more. Because I didn't speak as much, I used my other senses more, reading and listening. It helped me because I was observant of my dad's-mom's conversations. They'd be having coffee at the kitchen table, I'd be in the living room listening to every word, every syllable. I was able to absorb a lot. It brought me understanding of the tribe at a young age.

This listening skill is another major theme that came up over and over as I interviewed the participants. Marcus recognized that listening to his parents' conversations with each and other people helped him shape his understanding of politics, the tribe and culture. Using his other senses, as he described it, of reading and listening

rather than talking, helped accelerate his perspective of his tribe and what the tribal needs and resources were.

**Foundations of Leadership-“You know what Nephew? You run, but you win.” —**

**Malcolm Wolf**

Marcus admitted that he was fortunate to hear his dad, mom and their friends speak about tribal government. When he went to college, he confided that his thoughts were to be like them, to go back and work for the tribe. His first thoughts of running for any kind of leadership position were when he was discussing with a friend all the trash that was in his community. His friend encouraged him to run for a community board position so that he could make some changes. This sparked Marcus’s curiosity, so he spoke about it to his wife who also encouraged him by saying, “Go ahead, you’re always looking at things and how they can get better.” With that little bit of encouragement he ran and became president of the community board, which led to him running for a school board position. He lost on his initial attempt, but ran again and ended up getting on the school board. He eventually became the first Native American school board president for the New Town public schools. A few years later, Marcus contemplated running for tribal council. In our custom, it is proper to seek out an elder’s blessing to run for tribal council or chairman. Marcus described his interaction with a well-respected elder of our tribe, Malcom Wolf:

When I first contemplated running for council, I went to Malcom Wolf; we were in the village in Four Bears. His wife invited me in and I said, ‘Uncle, I am looking at running for a council seat, but I want some elder male to give me permission.’ He says, ‘You know what nephew? You run, but you win! Serious

business, it's not a school board, this is a community, this is serious!' He gave me a rude awakening and I could feel my spine stiffen up, I had like a cold shiver in my spine and my whole body for that part. He made me feel fear, that's what happened, I got a rude awakening and it made me come to my senses on how important these positions are. I ended up running and I tied with my opponent, then they held a special election and I ended up losing, but the special election ended up being tossed out. So, I sat in limbo without being able to take a seat my first time. I ended up winning the second time around and got re-elected in a majority vote.

A majority vote on the Three Affiliated Tribes is when a candidate is able to receive more than 50 % of the threshold of all the residents in that segment. In this particular election Marcus won with 75% of the voters' support. That election, when Marcus won the second time by a majority vote, was probably his best memory. He told me that he believed it was a victory where the people of Four Bears were united at this time. He said he felt the confidence that the people had in him; it was so strong it could help him move mountains. Marcus said there was no animosity in the community and that his platform was focused on the perspective of basics, meaning getting the basic infrastructure systems, like sewer, water, roads and housing, to his people. He said many times during the interview that before you build a house you need water, before you build a house you have to have a sewer. The infrastructure needed to be built up at that time so they could start planning for the future. His platform, as he moved from council to tribal chairman, was to respect the people and respect the tribe. Again, he got called to run by

several members of his fellow tribal council members. They all wanted Marcus to take them in a certain direction, so he ran for tribal chairman and he won. He said:

I won the election for chairman, but my celebration was not anything grandiose, it wasn't. My dad and my uncles and my aunts and my mom had a prayer session that night. We prayed and laid hands on the Bible, and went home. The next day I got sworn in and had our first meeting that week. The finance officer came in right away that day and gave us a report of our situation; we had \$6,700 dollars to our name as a tribe. We were told that we needed a million dollars to keep functioning and to keep making payroll. That was my first day on the job. We were open; there were no closed meetings. The door was wide open. Once all the people that were there heard our financial report, they all started to leave. I heard one guy say, 'Let's go. These guys can't help us, they're broke.' The council chambers were so quiet you could hear a pin drop. I looked around and I said real loud, 'Praise the Lord!' Someone said, 'Did you just say praise the Lord?' I answered, 'Yes!' I told the council that what they need, I need. You guys are going to decide your committees. I don't want any real drama. I wanted teamwork from day one and I never stopped. I never thought that one person should decide everything for our tribe. That was my humble approach; I just wanted to work as a team.

Marcus, in his various leadership roles, stressed a teamwork approach and a policy first approach. He often told of his reputation where people were hesitant to talk with him because he always went by the book. He said he would ask them if they followed the policy, the resolution made by the tribe, or the minutes of the tribal meeting.



He also liked to lead by example; one of the things that he likes to be known for is someone who is always at his office; he seldom traveled and he went by the book. He strived to be humble—a trait that he talked about often. His discussions about role modeling and leading by example permeated his narrative throughout the interviews.

### **Leadership Examples-“I want you to give this war bonnet to Obama!”**

Marcus said his goal from day one of his administration was to be humble. In his position as tribal chairman he got to know the North Dakota Senators well. Senator Dorgan and Marcus established a close relationship where the Senator would routinely request Marcus to travel to Washington, D.C. to testify on a bill that would be of interest to Indian country. Senator Dorgan was the chairman of the Indian Affairs Commission at the time. One of Marcus’s coolest moments during his job as chairman was when President Obama invited him to the White House to talk about tribal interest. Marcus’s mom asked him to bring a war bonnet for the President. He was skeptical about being able to have an audience with President Obama because there was going to be several tribal leaders from across the United States there to meet with the president. He said:

When my mom sent along a war bonnet for the president, she said, ‘Son, take this for him.’ I told her I did not think I would have the opportunity to visit with him one-on-one. She told me that she knew I would get it done. I thought to myself that I really do not want to let her down. I took two war bonnets and I got up in the morning around 5:30 because when you go to the White House, you’ve got to go through all the security things and I knew it was going to be challenging to get there and go through all of that. Plus, I had two war bonnets with me and I thought they were going to take it from me, but they didn’t. I was allowed to go

through and was told everything was going to be scripted with sessions that we were going through. When the President [Obama] came out and spoke impromptu, we were all shocked and kind of thrown off. I just put my war bonnet on and said to myself, he might see us, see me and let me speak. Sure enough, he let me stand up and speak on behalf of the Native veterans and our Native elders. I told him our stories of our Native veteran guys receiving services at a snails pace and they were dying as we spoke. I then gave him the war bonnet that my mom had wanted me to give him. The next day I was in the USA Today newspaper and I even made the front page of the Bismarck Tribune. All those pictures in the paper set off a firestorm for me to make more trips to Washington, D.C. to meet with President Obama again and to meet with Senator Dorgan again.

As we discussed Marcus's time as tribal chairman, he remarked about how much energy it took being the Chairman. He stated he had no regrets on how everything turned out, but he was ready to be done with politics. When the next term came up, he decided to retire, but was approached by the elders and veterans in his community, so he ran again, but lost. He was only 44 years old at the time he finished his stint as chairman and said he enjoyed every moment of being the tribal leader. What got him through his administration was the spiritual base that he had. Marcus said:

I think the beginning of the leadership was my calling, but without prayer, I don't think I would have done anything. Every trip, every meeting, every council meeting, every occasion, good, bad or different, we prayed. We prayed so much I think people even got perturbed at me for praying so much. But the prayers were how we started and I thought prayers are how we're going to conclude my

administration. We're in a different world. I look at a prayer for today is a prayer for tomorrow. Prayers that I refer to are for all those who came before us. All that continues with us and all those prayers that came before us helped us so that this would be real. Today we're doing a lot better than we were before. We have a lot of modern day leaders, but we cannot forget the chiefs that we don't have paintings of, their names might be forgotten and lost, but to me they are still real. Our unrecognized ancestors that we have to remind ourselves that without them we wouldn't be here. As I was leaving office for the last time, the financial officer gave me my last report on the status of our tribe. He asked me, 'Do you want to know how much the tribe has in its bank account?' I just kind of chuckled; it was the day after the election and I had just lost. I told him sure, not knowing the exact amount, but figuring it was pretty good. 'We have over \$100 million!' So, the day I left office we had over \$100 million; I just said praise the Lord; that was my whole intent—to leave the tribe in a better place than I started—going from \$6,702 to over \$100 million.

My last interview with Marcus was in December 2016. I traveled again to New Town, which is about an hour and one half drive from my place. The day I went was really cold and we had been hit with a snowstorm a couple of days before. When I arrived, Marcus was sitting in the councilman's main office visiting with the current councilman of Four Bears, Councilman Grady, and several other local guys that I had known for years. They were talking about deer hunting, sharing stories and teasing each other about who got the smallest buck during the past hunting season or who missed the easy shot. It is tough to act like you are something on the reservation; all of our brothers,

cousins and friends have a built-in mechanism to keep everyone's egos in check and keep you humble—it is called teasing. I had dressed up in a black dress shirt and wore a long black dress trench coat when I arrived. My friends right away started calling me Johnny Cash, the man in black, and then they started asking me if I switched professions and was now working at the local funeral home. Teasing like that is common, as is giving nicknames. Teasing is something you just have to take; it keeps you from thinking you are too cool; it keeps you in check.

**Ethics and Modeling of Leadership-“Your freedom is going to be education, no one can take that away from you!”**

Marcus and I got settled in his office and we started discussing ethical leadership and examples of what he viewed as ethical leadership. Marcus talked about growing up with conservative parents, grandparents and elders who had impacted him. He said:

They volunteered, never expecting anything in return for their contributions to neighbors or their community and even doing a lot of volunteer work within their jobs. His dad and his Grandpa Bill put everything ahead of their own schedules. They would do whatever they could to help—fixing a car, helping a neighbor with food or groceries, co-signing for a loan or even fixing up someone's house. His dad never took any excuses or the easy way out. If his car didn't start, he would walk to work. My dad was by the book; he never gave the impression that something was not done properly.

One of the achievements that Marcus was most proud of was passing a code of ethics for the tribe that he worked on with the late Councilman Nathan Hale. The goal of this code of ethics was to try to keep the council members free from any conflict of

interest when dealing with tribal business. Another source of pride was his work ethic—he stated several times during the interview that there was an expectation that the boss needs to be at work from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. every day and to show up for work every day. He took pride in leading by example and informing employees that they represent not only his office, but also the tribe, so they had to serve community members with a smile. What he valued most about his leadership style was that he prays. I saw this first hand when I was with Marcus in Washington, D.C. We got together before we began our meetings each day and said a prayer as a group that our meetings would go well. He told me, with a laugh, that there was not a day that he did not feel like a reverend with all the prayers that were being said.

Marcus displayed thoughtfulness and reflection when we were doing our interviews about his time in and out of office. The perception he had about leadership and the people in his life that shaped and pushed him into leadership positions were unique yet common in many Natives' lives on the reservation. He has kept a low profile since leaving office, yet is still humble enough to help out the councilman of his local reservation segment serving as his top assistant offering advice and direction when needed. He leads with humility, prayer and a genuine love for the people whom he is serving. The last speech he gave a couple of weeks prior to our interview was to a group of high school students at a leadership conference on the reservation right before Donald Trump was elected as president. Marcus shared:

I went to talk to these students about election leadership and what to look for. I knew I wanted to say something positive, but truthful, so I fell back on teachings that I was told many times by my folks. Your freedom is going to be education;

no one can ever take that away from you. You don't like having no TV, no car, no money, clothes, boots, shoes, and food? Then get your education, keep learning and then you can help yourself and hopefully the tribe.

## **Summary**

When I took on the responsibility of exploring leadership, my hope was to share a new view of leadership. That new view was delivered from Marcus Levings, a former Three Affiliated Tribes chairman and a man who experienced leadership on many different levels. The tribal chairman position of our tribe is the highest-ranking office that can be held in our tribal nation. It is not a position that is inherited; the chairman is chosen by enrolled members of our tribe to serve them. The number of traits required to serve as a successful chairman are many, but according to Marcus, it boils down to what your vision is for the people of the Three Affiliated Tribes. The responsibilities of being a tribal chairman are huge. That person not only represents the tribal nation locally, but also represents them nationally. The connections the chairman makes on the national level with Senators, Representatives and even the Office of the President goes a long way in determining tribal funding. Marcus was elected to serve as the tribal chairman when he was in his early 40s and was immediately thrust into a position where the tribe faced a shortfall of more than one million dollars. He came into office with roughly \$6,500, which was not near enough to meet a big payroll and even bigger debt.

Growing up, Marcus's parents taught him and his siblings to be responsible—go to bed early, take baths, get ready and meet the bus on school days—that was the sentiment they preached daily. They impressed the importance of education early in life. Marcus's parents were of the boarding school era; they recognized the value of education

as a way to open doors, as a way to survive on a reservation that had a 50% unemployment rate.

Marcus attended and graduated from college, but described his experience as “hard” and “economically difficult.” The financial burdens that he and his wife faced while in college were dire. They lived week to week on a limited budget—Marcus called it “budgeting to survive.” However, the lessons learned from his college years served him well when he was the tribal chairman. Marcus knew he wanted to be like his parents and have a job and work in an office setting, and he credited them for being his support system that helped him earn his college degree and move on to the next chapter of his life.

Marcus’s view of leadership equates to the contemporary style of shared leadership. He preached teamwork when discussing his style and the responsibility that comes with being a leader. He noted that leadership was “serious business” and saw leadership as a calling. Marcus underwent a sort of training ground of experiences that honed his leadership skills. He started by being elected to the school board, then to the tribal council, next he attained the top position on the council, and finally became the tribal chairman who served the enrolled members and community leaders.

His advice to future generations started with knowing the freedom that you get from an education. He believed in forward thinking and that education is a life long process. Marcus conveyed that to become a leader you must learn how to listen, have a tribal understanding, respect the people, and have the courage to pray. At the end of Marcus’s last day as tribal chairman, a tribal officer gave him the final financial report of his tenure. Under Marcus’s leadership the tribe officially had more than \$100 million in

their account, largely because of the deals and the royalties from oil production that his administration had made with the oil companies. Marcus described that moment as truly humbling—he smiled as we ended the interview.

**Portrait 7: Marcus Wells, Sr.**



*Figure 11.* “Marcus Wells, Sr.” Marcus, Sr. at his office in New Town, North Dakota, September 2016. Photo by Chad Dahlen.

**Context-Historical**

As I drove to New Town to visit with Marcus, Sr., I thought of one of the first times I talked with him was when I was in high school and he was a recruiter for the University of Mary. He had called me and told me about the programs that Mary had to offer and said if I needed any help that I was to call him. I got to know him when I lived in New Town and was teaching there. He came to the school for basketball games or to check on his relatives. He always treated me really well, and he was a genuine pleasure to be around. I saw him as a man who was always teasing people in a good, playful manner and had a little kid spirit in him to this day.



When I met with Marcus, Sr. he was wearing a purple t-shirt, wore glasses, and his hair had more grey than black in it. Marcus was in his early 70s, but he carried his age well and looked 10 years younger than what he was. He was about 5 feet 10 inches tall and medium built. He was in good physical shape and moved fluidly across his office as he greeted me.

His office was in the back of New Town's famous Better B's Café. The Café is a breakfast, lunch and supper spot for local patrons and out-of-town visitors. It is known for its great omelets and huge pancakes, as well as for being a quick lunch and meeting place for people doing business in downtown New Town.

Marcus was a long-time friend of my Grandma Ollie and would stop in Twin Buttes and visit with her when he was doing business or meeting relatives. Twin Buttes is isolated from any major towns and back in the day—the early 1970s and 1980s—it did not have a gas station, restaurant or any kind of store. Back then when people traveled to Twin Buttes, they would stop at my grandma's house, and grab a cup of coffee and visit. My grandma loved company and would make sure whomever came would sit down and eat as well. She loved being hospitable and was known for that in all the other segments on the reservation. Marcus, Sr. told me that she once found out he had been in Twin Buttes and did not stop and visit. He said, "Boy did she chew me out; she told me next time I better stop and not be overlooking her! I made sure I stopped the next time I came through."

Marcus, Sr. earned his education in the business world. He attended a business college where he received training in accounting and business. He grew up in the Lucky

Mound area, but later moved to Elbowoods before being forced to move to Twin Buttes because of the Garrison Dam flooding. Marcus, Sr. said:

I actually got to watch the flooding of the lands because I'd water my grandpa's team horses. I'd ride them over to the spring on another horse and watch it come over the rise and watched the river gradually come up. Every day I watched it flood out our lands. Then I [saw] the dorm that housed many of our Native students for years empty and watched as the floodwaters rose over it. I used to stay in those dorms and to watch the school go under, the tree lines, the road lines.... it was really something. The Elbowoods School was good. They taught us the basics things and we learned them well. Learned to read, write, and do math. Mrs. Case was the teacher when I got to Twin Buttes and she really pushed us to read. I read like 200-300 books per year in my early years. I was in the third grade when they flooded the lands, breaking up our families; forcing us all to relocate. I ended up getting held back because of the flooding because I missed too many days of school. I ended up going to a boarding school in Wahpeton where I graduated from school.

Unlike many of the boarding school stories that I have heard from my relatives, Marcus, Sr. actually enjoyed his time at Wahpeton and said that it was actually fun being there. All the people he had known growing up around Elbowoods were also going to school there. His memories of his teachers, friends and time at the boarding school were all good memories.

**Formal Education-“Where do you want to go to college at Marcus? Far away from here...”.**

Marcus, Sr. talked about his time when he felt ready for college. He attended Wahpeton Science College for a semester before returning to the reservation and working different jobs. He did accounting work for one of the government programs and really enjoyed it, and reflected how he was able to get some programs under tribal control instead of federal control. He believed that during his time there he had supervisors that were not in it for the right reasons, “just collecting a paycheck,” as he put it, and he said they started taking advantage of his acquired skills. He believed that if he was going to be doing all this work he should get paid like a supervisor, but realized an education was what was going to help him in the long run. He knew he had to get experience and education outside of the reservation to be able to come back and help the tribe, so he decided to go and finish his degree. Marcus, Sr. shared:

My friends asked me where I wanted to go to school at and I told them as far away from here as possible. I wanted to learn accounting because I knew I had to do accounting because of all the two, three short years of experience that I went through working for the government would help me. I found a place in Dallas, Texas that trained accountants so that is where I went. It was a straight accounting school that was suppose to take me three years to finish with my credits that I had from Wahpeton. I studied day and night, day and night, pretty soon I was so far ahead of everybody that different ones from different accountants had to come and correct my paper work. They told me my paperwork was the best and that opened doors for me later on when I finished to get some really good job offers.

Marcus later went on to work for a tax company, then a railroad company doing accounting-type of work where he also received training. He had another job lined up in

Texas, but he decided to go home for a while to see friends and relatives. After returning home he got another job offer with the tribe to help straighten out the government office. That is when he made the move home and has been there ever since. He turned down some really good jobs outside of the reservation because he believed he was needed at home. Once he came home, he stated that, "life was hard again." He said he got caught up in the middle of some politics and lost his job, twice. His wife told him that is what he got for trying to help his people. The University of Mary finally hired him as a student recruiter. He told me with a big smile as he leaned back in his chair, "This was one of the best jobs I had and I got to work with a lot of kids." He told me that he liked giving advice to kids starting off on their life journey. He said:

I would tell them that it's your choice, take your choice. Whatever you want to do, don't make it about anybody. Do it because you want to do it! Once I got done working for the University of Mary I went back to work for the tribe in different roles, mostly to get their books organized and back in working order. I decided to retire and look after my wife in 2010 to take care of her.

Marcus, Sr. liked his challenges and he liked to make a difference in the world of tribal business. He saw the potential that many of the federal programs have to improve the lives of his fellow tribal members and although the tribe may not have had the best bookkeepers for some of its programs, he liked to take on the leadership role of being the accountant and improving the way business was handled. One of the last jobs he had working for the tribe was as the chief financial officer who took care of their multimillion dollar budget and made sure the funds were being spent where they were supposed to be spent.

**Traits of leadership-“Speak up and know what you are talking about. Educate yourself before you say anything.”**

While we talked about leadership, Marcus, Sr. was adamant that when people take on a position that they know what their responsibilities are. He stated sternly that you are representing your tribe and the people that you are working for, and for that reason you should do your best to represent everyone. To be a good leader, he said, you should learn your job and learn it better than anyone else. Marcus, Sr. told me people should take so much pride in their job that they should know it from all different angles. His Grandfather Ralph Wells told him, “Get an education, educate yourself, and learn what these White men are doing. Learn what they are doing to us. Learn, learn, and learn.”

Marcus, Sr. also grew up praying every day. He said he got that from his Grandma Fanny Benson. She told him to pray. He watched as his Grandfather Ralph Wells modeled that behavior as well as seeing him pray in the morning, during the day and before he went to bed at night.

**Intergenerational Differences-“I was blessed because of how I grew up.”**

Marcus, Sr. shared that, “Long ago you had Uncles that would chase you down and kick you in the behind when they caught you doing something. You had to go back home when they told you to.” He sat back in his chair and rubbed his eyes at this point. The thoughts of his Uncles chasing him down must have brought the smile to his face. He looked up and admitted that he was a wild one when he was younger. He said he messed up, but that he was grateful that his Uncles cared enough to keep him on track. Marcus, Sr. recalled:

We listened to our Uncles. One day when an Uncle would show up, we would all go and hide, we were scared that he was going to put us in our place. That was one way that they controlled the youth back then. Right now it seems the youth are out of hand on our reservation and to say anything to anybody, the parents come and take you to court. It wasn't that way in my day. It's a whole different world now, when I was growing up you worked. I grew up learning to work, my mother had five gardens, and she made me plant every damn one of them. I marked them and I cultivated them with a team of horses. I also broke horse for my Grandpa George Fox in the summertime. They had like 30-40 mares that I would take care of. But as I did this, I learned everything that I could from the old stories to the clan ways. I was blessed because of how I grew up. I have no regrets of how I grew up. My brothers and me, we grew up the hard way, but guess what, we learned how to work.

Marcus, Sr. did not have that accountant personality that you see with people who work with numbers all the time. He was charismatic in his gestures using his hands and his facial expressions were animated as he told one story after another. In portraiture sometimes you have to listen to the story over time to get the overarching theme. As I listened to Marcus, Sr. I saw some of the parts that were missing in my own narrative that he was able to fill in. I lost my Grandpa Larry when my mom was only two years old. I wonder what stories I missed by not having him in my life; I wonder what lessons of life, leadership, and friendship I could have gleaned from him as he got older. The stories of Marcus, Sr.'s past did not seem like that long ago as I listened to him tell me his life long journey. I felt a sense of bonding as he opened up and shared with me the struggles and

obstacles that he overcame. The positivity that he still carries about life was infectious and he is one who is still looking for the good in everything.

**Core Beliefs--“An ethical person is something you can’t see, you have to look into his heart and see what he feels for his people.”**

I approached this second meeting with Marcus, Sr. with anticipation over where our conversation would lead us. We had to cancel the interview earlier in the week because of the amount of snow that had fallen in the area. It was a December day and it was two days after a wicked snowstorm arrived and dumped huge piles of snow on the reservation. I had spent the previous day in my tractor pushing snow out of our driveway so that my kids could go to school. The wind had picked up and it was like a cruel Charlie Brown moment when he was about to kick the football and Lucy pulled it from him when he started his kicking motion. By the time I pushed the snow out of the way, the path was blown in again.

I arrived at Better B’s Café with a message that Marcus, Sr. was running late, so I ordered lunch while I waited for him. He showed up soon after, so I took my meal and we walked slowly to his office. Marcus, Sr. was wearing in a big parka type of jacket with fur framing his face. He looked as though he had come straight from visiting our Eskimo relatives. “I was pushing snow out for some of my neighbors; they had not been able to get out for three days now. My little tractor and I were working some overtime!” he told me with a chuckle. He looked as though he was working overtime because his glasses were frosted up and you could still see his rosy red cheeks that were not warmed up yet.

We began this portion of the interview talking about values and ethical leadership. Marcus, Sr. seemed to like the direction of this conversation; he took a quick drink of his

coffee and began to tell me how many people think they can look at someone and tell if they are ethical or not. Ethical people, he explained, do not have a certain look, they have a certain heart. This is a similar theme that I have heard in previous interviews describing ethical leadership. He went on to say:

It's what is in his heart; how he feels for his people that he is serving. Everybody that works on a job, you still have to look out for people even if you are working on a job, its how you look out for your people. I had a friend from another tribe who was a chairman of the tribe. This was a guy had that look of a chief and he had the ability to watch out for his children. Really took good care of his people, he did not even have to run for reelection, the people just kept putting him in there he was so popular. Another guy that comes to mind is Kevin Grover; he is the head of the American Indian Museum in [Washington] D.C. I got to know him and he has a genuine love for his people, all people. He really felt for Native people. It seems like the older generation of leaders were more people oriented, because of our hard times, our hard life. Just like the recent snowstorm, everybody shoveling snow and trying to get out. Years ago, everybody just went out and helped each other. That was always stuck in my mind. Another good example was your grandpa Larry Spotted Bear. I was at my Grandpa Franks and I was standing outside. Larry came up to the house on a team of horses with a harness on his horse dragging a deer. He came and he dropped it off and he went right on. 'Tell your grandpa I brought this for them.' To me, that's the type of leader you look up to and I always had a lot of respect for him. My dad, I think of my dad's dad, old man Ralph Wells, who was the leader of the Arikara—people



looked up to them. People came to visit him from all reservations. They came, he put them up, and he didn't care who they were. Twenty people came, he would put 20 people up and they sought his advice and he gave it freely and he didn't ask for nothing in return. My dad, he was a mechanic, people would bring their cars to him, and nobody had any money to get their vehicles fixed years ago. So he would just put them up at his house and work on their brakes or their generators, whatever it was. Whenever he was done, they'd go and he would never charge them. So a leader, to me, is someone who makes themselves available for the people.

Marcus, Sr. and I went on to discuss different aspects of leadership and he showed that he is grounded in his beliefs of what it takes to be a leader. He told me what he looks for in leadership and what he tries to emulate himself: having pride in your work, building relationships with the people you are working with, and having respect for your position. Examples of pride in your work could be the little things like showing up early or on time for work, doing the little things that no one sees, and building relationships with the people you are around. Getting to know the people you work with on a deeper level is more important than just treating them like employees. I interpret this as the need for intimacy and deep understanding of people. The easy way to build these relationships, Marcus said, is through respect; treat the people with respect and that makes your leadership easier. He talked about the importance of honesty in working with people and said, "When you deal with people directly and honestly, they will respect you a lot more even if you are telling them something that they do not want to hear." Based on his

experiences observing people in leadership and employing the practices that he believed in, Marcus said this would lead to a more trusting environment.

He models these beliefs by making sure he is always there for the people. He stated that he likes to go out of his way to help people. He described himself as having a deep love of people and wants to do whatever he can to help people out. Marcus, Sr. said:

My faith is in Jesus Christ and that's what kept me married for 50 years, kept me together. I know what befalls marriages, teenagers today, but I also know that education is important. I wanted my children to have an education because I didn't want them to live the life that we had to go through. I made them go to school. Even way back when, Ralph Wells told me, 'Go to school, go to school, go to school!' Even as I sat and slept next to him at the edge of his bed, I would be thinking, "I don't like school, I don't like school," but I still went.

Some of Marcus, Sr.'s biggest goals that he accomplished were getting the tribal building modernized in 1991. He said that when he got there, they had only two computers in the whole tribal building, which hosted all the segments, finance, TERO, small loans, and several other tribal entities. He told the staff that he was going to put new computers on everyone's desks and get new furniture for everybody. The whole office staff started laughing at him. He said:

I asked the staff, does anybody know what I am talking about by getting all this despite the circumstances? Years ago before the bridge was put up, they used a boat, a bullboat or whatever, and they went and got crossed. Those Indians did it, I don't know how they did it, probably never will know how, but I know they could do anything they wanted to, cross land and water, anything. So, how many

of you think we are going to get to the other side? Only one person out of the large group raised his hand and that was Frank Henry. I asked him, ‘Why do you think we can do it?’ He answered me, ‘I don’t know, but you just made me believe that we can do it!’ Two years later, everybody had computers on their desks, everybody had new furniture... and you can mark that down!

**Tribal Leadership-“A leader looks out for the interest of everyone.”**

As we closed our interview, Marcus, Sr. reflected again on characteristics of leaders:

Leaders are prayerful guys like my Grandpa Ralph Wells, a man that everyone looks up to like my dad, Bill Wells. A leader should be somebody that’s more humble as they were to really watch out for other people, Larry Spotted Bear, somebody like him that people really, really respected. We have leaders who were not really elected to anything, but they are naturally born leaders like my wife was. She was not the oldest in her family, but everyone looked to her for leadership. This leadership goes back to everyone helping each other out.

At the end of my interview with Marcus, Sr., I am struck by the role women played in the development of male leadership qualities. I think back to one of the last stories he told me and how it revealed a lot about leadership perceptions without really spelling it out. It was a hunting story and a story of shared community pride. He said:

Well, you know when we were growing up, my mother made us hunt all the time. Well, we liked to hunt anyway, but she would say, ‘When you guys bring your meat back. Make sure everybody in the community gets it. The whole community, there are a lot of elders and people and not only hunting, but also

fishing and we would go right over there and take stuff to them. It was a lot of the old ways of respecting each other, getting along with each other and everything.

A good example is your Grandma Ollie; she would always invite me to eat.

‘When you are here, make sure you come and eat,’ she would say.

Again, as with all of my interviewees, I treasured the time I spent with Marcus, Sr. appreciated how he opened up to me regarding his perceptions. He was a great storyteller who was able to go “old school” on me and used stories to convey his answers. This was challenging for me, but as I dissected his stories I found the truths that he had laid out for me; that was what this whole task of portraiture was about.

Marcus, Sr. was a grounded man who had seen a lot in his lifetime on and off the reservation. He had a deep connection to the land and the people of the Three Affiliated Tribes. His background knowledge of the people of the Three Affiliated Tribes was amazing and his memory of events was second to none. Marcus, Sr. had a quiet confidence about the work that he had done and was consistent about his message of being a good worker. He was a servant leader and I could see he practiced that through the combination of stories that he told and the values that he declared throughout our interviews.

### **Summary**

As a researcher, I looked for the appropriate lens to shed more light on the subjects. Portraiture uses storytelling to draw out codes and themes that are hidden in plain sight. Marcus, Sr. challenged me to find these hidden codes and themes as he told his life stories about the internal motivation to push himself to learn, to become educated and to grow as a person, father, husband and now as a grandfather. His stories about the

past were filled with laughter as he revisited memories and shared his journey with me like a guided hike through the Badlands—pointing out places of interest, people that weaved in and out of his life, and lessons learned along the trail.

Marcus, Sr. grew up in multiple areas across the reservation because of the U.S. government's mandate to flood our ancient homelands. He ended up going to boarding school as a youngster and surprised me by sharing that it was an enjoyable experience for him. Marcus explained that his educational journey was self-motivated, but that his parents also pushed him and his grandpa Ralph Wells told him to learn, learn and learn.

From his perspective, leadership meant having tribal loyalty, being responsible, representing your people, and being respectful to others. Marcus's ability to deal with people and his honesty were two qualities that he liked the most about himself. He believed that in order to transfer leadership into being a tribal leader you must seek an understanding of the Three Affiliated Tribes' cultural ways. Marcus shared that tribal leaders should look out for the people, volunteer to help others, and promote education.

Marcus struck me as a caring and compassionate person. He helped people out during the snowstorm that occurred prior to my visit. He also helped his horse out of the corral because it got "hung up" on the fence. His pride in helping family, friends, neighbors and strangers along with helping the horse in its time of need was evidence of his belief that we should do what we can to look out for not only people, but also animals. Marcus loved to work and embraced the challenges that confronted him. The pride in took in his work and the support he gave to his family and tribal members were two of his most enduring qualities.

## **Lesson Learned**

As I finished interviewing these seven men of the Three Affiliated Tribes, I was struck by the humility that each of them possessed as we took a walk down their life's path. I found extreme insight in not only the older men, but the younger men as well. They made me feel hopeful for the future as they talked about how they wanted to influence the youth, make a difference in their own ways for the tribe and how deeply thoughtful they were for their own families and kids that are coming up. The elderly men gave me a rare look into Elbowoods and how the flooding of the Garrison Dam impacted them in different yet similar ways. The middle generation talked a lot about their personal standards about the importance of family and providing for your family through whatever means possible. I was encouraged by powerful comments about leadership and their views of how it has affected each of the participants.

Finally, I felt strong emotions as each of the participants talked about the impact that the women in their lives had on them. I felt a tug of reflection with each of their stories about their wives, mothers and grandmothers and the influence that these strong women had in shaping the lives of these men. I related to their stories because I have had strong grandma's who loved unconditionally, a mother who I knew would be at all my track meets and basketball games, and a wife who pushed me to be the best that I could be. As I listened to their stories, I felt that familiarity in each of the themes that were flushed out and I was able to learn through these reflections the sources of my being as the man that I am today and the women who helped shape me.

## **CHAPTER KIXÖ (CHAPTER V)**

### **INTERGENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES**

#### **Introduction**

**“No love is greater than that of a father for his son.” —Dan Brown**

This chapter captures the essence of fathers and sons together in an intimate setting discussing their perceptions of each other. All of the interviews were completed in December 2016. I extracted the differences and similarities that the father-son (grandfather) participants had of each other. At the same time I checked for patterns to see if there were repeated phrases, statements and descriptions that were present in the earlier interviews. I allowed the participants to set the time and place for the interviews; it was important to hold the interviews in places and at times where the participants felt the most comfortable to keep the discussions authentic.

## Intergenerational Portrait: Daryl and Wylee Bearstail



*Figure 12.* “The Bearstails.” Daryl and Wylee Bearstail at Daryl’s home in Bismarck, North Dakota, December 2016. Photo by Chad Dahlen.

### **Intergenerational Interview-“Wow, these guys must be pretty important; how were YOU able to talk to them Dad?” —Jekori Dahlen**

I conducted the intergeneration interview at the Daryl Bearstail home on December 3, 2016. Wylee was working in White Shield at the time and he said he would be in Bismarck that weekend. My daughter’s basketball team, the Killdeer Cowboys, took on Daryl’s team, the Shiloh Skyhawks, the night before so the meeting day was great timing for all of us.

There were Christmas decorations all over the house, which made it resemble a model home where everything is decorated perfectly. If you were not in the Christmas mood before entering the house, you sure were after you left. It had snowmen on the mantle above the fireplace and Christmas trees in various shapes and sizes throughout the house. While I was looking around Daryl said, “This is Jackie’s [Daryl’s wife] thing. She



loves this time of year.” It made you feel the Christmas spirit with the decorations dancing throughout the house; in fact, they made the house feel like it had a life of its own. The glowing lights and smiling snowmen greeted you as you walked from room to room. As the Christmas tree stood tall and proud, it reminded me of Daryl when he sat with me in previous interviews talking glowingly of his family.

Daryl was dressed in a red t-shirt and comfortable black sweatpants while Wylee wore his trademark North Carolina cap, White Shield Basketball t-shirt and casual jeans. The Christmas bug had bit both of them because they were joking with each other and me, and the air just had that good feeling about it. I believe this interaction, which prompted the feeling that I was accepted and that their behavior was authentic, was one of the strengths of this research process. I wondered if another researcher would have the same feeling of inclusion in this setting.

I told Wylee and Daryl about the conversation I had with my twins as I was driving over from the hotel. My sons asked me, “Hey dad, are the twins going to be there? What are you doing this interview for Dad?” I explained to them what the interview was about and one of my sons said, “Wow, those guys must be pretty important; that one guy got a big medal [Coach of the Year Award for the State of North Dakota in Girl’s Basketball] at the game last night, huh?” I said, “Yeah he did, he did.” My son Jekori, who always likes to ask questions, asked, “Does everybody know him?” I explained that both Wylee and Daryl were well known throughout the state of North Dakota and throughout Indian country. I shared that they are both held in high esteem; I lifted my hands in the air to show I was pretending to put them on a pedestal. My son then asked in a teasing manner and with a big grin on his face, “Oooooo! How did YOU

ever get to talk to them then?” I laughed and told the Bearstails, “It shows where they hold me.” Then my other boy, Nekori, said, “Wouldn’t it be funny if we played basketball with his twins? Having two sets of twins on the same team?” I told them, “Some day, some day.”

**Working together-“He kind of humbled me when I was working with him, with his knowledge of the game” —Daryl Bearstail**

I wanted to understand Daryl’s and Wylee’s perceptions of working together, what each other thought about the other’s leadership perspectives, and to bring together some of their perceptions of each other as leaders. I talked to both men about the questions I intended to use as a guide and my desire to keep the interview as informal as possible. Daryl began by talking about the time he took a coaching position in White Shield and asked Wylee to join him. If Daryl was the Christmas tree in this interview, Wylee was definitely the star at the top of the tree when he discussed Wylee’s leadership traits:

Wylee was my assistant over there for a couple of years. He knows a lot about the game, he’s got a good mind, so just working with him he taught ME TOO!” I was learning from him, too, the way he was working and the things that he brought up and the things from his perspective as far as basketball goes. This was important because he showed me a lot of things and kind of humbled me when I was working with him. His stories that he related to the kids about his college basketball experience, traveling all over the country, it just gave me a different perspective on things. He taught me more than he knows.

Daryl explained that traditionally many people have a view that learning happens when a parent teaches the child. He described his process of working with Wylee as a shared learning process, and that he used the opportunity working with Wylee to learn from him as well as to teach his son some of his coaching techniques.

Wylee talked about his observations of his dad:

We have always been a basketball family. We are always talking basketball and who is doing what and who does what during the season. We know when dad's mad out there [laughing] when he is coaching. We always say, jeez, he didn't do that to us when us guys were younger, we would have gotten an earful, he would holler at us and now he's barely saying anything to these girls. These girl's just have it made now [laughing some more]. As a leader, he understands that you have to treat different people differently.

When we discussed leadership stories, Daryl talked about his time working with Wylee and how he saw his son having "a good head on his shoulders." He talked about his strengths as a teacher and how he did things differently in the classroom from what Daryl had seen before. The traits he saw in Wylee's style were that he had positive discipline, strong classroom management, discussed the culture and allowed shared leadership within the classroom. His students were holding each other accountable as 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders.

Wylee described his style as coming from lessons he learned from his personal life. He expressed the belief that instructional strategies were learned or were consistent with personal experiences growing up in a family setting. Wylee said, "It always comes back to experience." He discussed the importance of teaching students that they have

choices, both good and bad, and about the process you have to go through to achieve your goals. One of the things that stuck out to me was when he told me that none of his students lived in a two-parent household. He had four students who did not even have a parent living anymore. That is why he believed it was necessary to drive those points home to his students. Wylee told me, “I must be here for a reason.”

As I visited with these two men to discuss their values and perceptions of leadership, I jotted down what I thought were their key points as they progressed through the interview. I struggled to keep writing in my journal because I often got caught up in their life narratives. Daryl talked about how he went about problem solving. He narrowed it down to two things—priorities and setting standards for oneself. He liked to motivate people, give them a reason to see hope in their lives. When you have standards, he explained, you help yourself to get where you want to be. Daryl told me when you have standards you are being a person of character who has integrity, humility, and peace within yourself; all of these are characteristic of effective leaders. He believes that when these are all in place there is no reason for excuses. The priority part is to decide priorities in life. Daryl argued that when deciding priorities in life, it helps you to know who you are. Priorities like God first, family second, and your education third, and then you have to look at what other details about your life that you hold dear. As I talked with Daryl and Wylee, I observed the behaviors that validated their claims; they not only expressed them, but also modeled them—humility, peace, putting people ahead of themselves and having no excuses. I observed them as they interacted with students in the classroom and young people on the basketball courts. They showed respect to these young people as I heard them encourage them when they did something right on the court, congratulate

them on the effort they put into a homework assignment, and listen to their students as they either asked questions or told a story that happened to them.

I asked this father and son to share the favorite memories they had of each other. Wylee talked openly about all the different things they did together from running to basketball to powwows. He remembered his dad talking to him about life and rehashing stories of the past. Wylee's best memories are just the little talks that they shared on a frequent basis. Daryl liked using stories of Wylee when he coaches. Daryl said,

I always say that Wylee, he's got that, he has always been a champion. When I tell stories, they are stories to help motivate, to inspire and to give them hope and to show them that they can go somewhere.

His favorite story was when Wylee was a senior playing in the regional championship game. Daryl said when he was going after a loose ball, Wylee and a big 6 foot 7 inch guy from the other team collided and Wylee ended up hyperextending his elbow. Even so, they won the game and went on to the State Class B Tournament. It was there that Wylee set the state tourney scoring record at 109 points—with a hyperextended elbow.

Overcoming adversity is the theme that Daryl likes to portray of his son. However, after taking a closer look at Daryl's story that same overarching theme plays out in his life as well. Wylee told me, regarding those injuries:

I never complained about injuries, I was just happy to start; heck my dad played in a game in high school and broke his ankle and finished the game so...

[laughing] I'm not going to say anything about a hyperextended elbow.

**Generational Differences—"Social media has put a damper on our local leadership."**

**—Wylee Bearstail**

When we talk about leadership and what has changed from generation to generation, Daryl talked about it as part of the change process. The way people carry themselves and the way they behave, he said, was just natural and nothing ever stays the same. According to Daryl, it is the culture we are all living in today. He said,

People buy into that culture like the baggy pants, fancy cell phones, gaming... the way we talk and respect each other. I do not see that today. We should honor our mother and father more. One of my more interesting beliefs that I got from reading a John Wooden book was that there is nothing that you don't know that you haven't learned. So, everything from generation to generation, even now, this generation these people have learned, they behaved what they learned, they do things the way they learned things.

Wylee chimed in by saying when he was growing up that everybody looked up to their mom, dad, uncle, grandpa; they looked up to whomever was in high school and their older brothers or older sisters. He believes it has gotten away from that because of social media, the Internet, TV, and commercials. He said celebrities on social media have kind of taken on that role of being role models who kids look up to. Stars have become role models and the number of likes on Facebook measures approval. Local community members are therefore less likely to be emulated because of the influence of media that exposes young people to a wider range of influencers. I interpreted Wylee's perception that media is undermining the cultural learning that ensures the transmission of values from one generation to the next.

**Strategies Going Forward-“Walking in Both Worlds.”**

As we moved on to talk about advice or strategies for overcoming educational obstacles and getting into positions of leadership where one has to be able to navigate in Native and non-Native worlds, they agreed that getting an education was the most important strategy for achieving this goal. Wylee credited his parents for pushing him to get his degree and for advising him that a college degree was necessary. Wylee stated, “He [Daryl] did not have to tell me, I seen it, I seen the before and the after, how he lived before he had his degree and how my family lived after he got his degree.” He explained that all his desires and dreams depended on getting a degree. He said he wanted to be a teacher, a college coach, and he knew he had to have a degree.

Wylee talked about when he grew up in Bismarck that racism was normal for the other kids in his school. He was the only Indian in his classes of about 20 kids, but admitted that he had it easier because he was good at basketball and the other kids seemed to respect that. As he got older, he knew he wanted to give a “voice” to the minorities in the classroom, a “voice” to those students who were left out whether they were White, Black, Native or Hispanic. Wylee has that “looking out for the underdog” mentality. He wanted to give them hope by going back to the reservation and showing them that they can do something with their lives.

Without knowing Brayboy’s (2006) Critical Race Theory, Wylee subscribed to Brayboy’s tenets. When he described his school experience in Bismarck as “Being out on an island by myself,” that goes directly to Brayboy’s tenet that as Indigenous people we occupy a liminal space that accounts for our identities. The term liminal space means that as Native people we are treated as if we do not exist or are treated as insignificant in the Western world. When Wylee said he believed that racism was just something that was

normal and he had a desire to change the narrative once he went back to college, he was again applying Brayboy's theory that racism is endemic to society and that scholars must work for social change. Wylee said, "I know both sides and it felt like I was against everybody growing up. I thought that was just the way it was, so I never really talked about it until now." So, yes, Wylee struggled walking in both worlds, but resiliency and support from his family along with a strong desire to get his education and show everybody he could achieve his goals, heightened his ability to get through.

Daryl believed that he was at rock bottom and did not really have the confidence needed to go to college. Once he got some encouragement, he realized that it was possible to go to college, and even go further and earn his Master's degree in Social Work. Daryl stated, "I knew that I wanted to help people and the only way I could do that was to get myself a degree so that I could help others." Daryl also confided that living in poverty, with no car, no money and getting a job in construction where he slung a 70-pound jackhammer all day does wonders for your motivation to get an education. His advice for walking in both worlds, so to speak, was to stay focused on priorities and goals, and pray for those who get in your way. He told a story about when he was in college at the University of Mary and took a class for four hours a day, did all the homework and earned B's and C's, but when it came down to the final grade he got an F. The instructor, he believed, was prejudiced toward him because of the way he treated him and ignored him throughout the class. The teacher made negative comments based on racial stereotypes that Daryl knew was meant to make him feel inferior. The worse part was that he said he was in that class for four hours a day and did not have one single student talk to him. He said he handled being informally ostracized by both the teacher



and his fellow students by just focusing on getting his work done. Daryl said that they tried their best to ignore him; he said he could not believe he could go through an intense class like that and not have a single person say hello to him or simply acknowledge him. His strategy to handle the problem was to appeal to the registrar's office and show his work assignments. The grade changed after the teacher could not explain why he gave Daryl an F in the course.

I could relate to some of Daryl's story because I had this happen to me in different forms growing up. Even as he told the story, my mind wandered back to instances when a high school principal would tell me not to be dating a certain girl in the school because I was Indian and she was White, and that he did not believe in interracial dating. As a high school student, it was tough to understand the mentality that people have. For Daryl to persevere through the emotional brutality of what his instructor and fellow students inflicted on him showed his perseverance and resiliency in the face of racism and discrimination.

### **Leadership Qualities-“He Just Leads.” —Daryl Bearstail**

The final part of the interview involved the respondents' perceptions that they had of each other about their leadership styles. This was interesting for me because I wanted to see how it intertwined with the previous interviews, and how I had come to see each of the men and their approaches to leadership. Wylee talked about how his dad was down to earth when he dealt with people. He described his favorite qualities about his dad as humble, real with people, has integrity, and is reflective and professional. When he talked about his dad's leadership, he described him as always being prepared, having a plan, and doing his homework on whatever the issue was that he faces. These are the same qualities

that I heard Daryl say in an earlier interview that he strives for. Being accountable to the people that you work for, and working and getting along with everybody are the final traits that Wylee used to describe his dad.

Daryl described Wylee as a really positive person whom people like to have around. He said that Wylee was a people person and that people seem to be drawn to him, not only because of his personality, but also because of the accomplishments that Wylee had achieved. Daryl said that when he goes to powwows Wylee is like a magnet; he knows everybody. “He knows more people than I do,” Daryl admitted. He said Wylee has a personality as someone who leads by example; when he sees his son at powwows, he is shaking little kids’ hands after they get done dancing, talking to them and encouraging them. Daryl said, “He never preaches to anybody; never tells anybody—he just leads.”

**Final Thoughts-“It was always that Whistle.” —Wylee Bearstail “My wife is the backbone of the family.” —Daryl Bearstail**

As I went through the process of looking at leadership, one of the themes that came up repeatedly by Daryl and Wylee was that of strong leadership at home. More specifically, they paid homage to Jackie as a mom, a wife, and as the support system that got both men through the toughest times of their lives as well as celebrated them in the best times of their lives. When I asked them about leadership in the five combined interviews, they referred to Jackie as the “glue” and one of the reasons for their accomplishments as leaders. Daryl described her as the backbone of the family; Wylee described her as the glue of the family. Daryl said:

She is like this [pointing to the Christmas decorations in the house]. She does this for all the holidays, she decorates for the kids, and she does it for the families. She wants to give to her family what we could not in our younger years. She wants to make a better life you know. She is an honorable woman, always put me ahead as the leader of the home. That's the way she has it. She has put her own touch on everything in this family. She is always doing things for the family and people out of the blue because that is just how she is.

Wylee said:

She keeps us together; she was always at home for us growing up. My mom and I have that special connection; there could be 5,000 people in the gym and she would whistle and I would instantly know right where she was. It was always that whistle. She is like our cultural history book. She has helped me with all my cultural questions and instructing us on how to do this properly, clanship ways, who we are related to. My mom, she showed me how to get along with people and she is always there for me.

The two men were appreciative of the role that Jackie played in their lives—as a wife and as a mother. An unexpected portrait of her came from the stories that they shared and from the actions that she led in order for them to become the men they are today. This portraiture would have been incomplete without mentioning her leadership qualities of encouragement, persistence, honor, loyalty, and being the rock that Daryl and Wylee relied upon all these years.

**Summary—"I might not do it [coaching] totally like him, but I will take the best parts out of it from him and apply it to what I am doing and then try and be the best I can**

**at that. Because what he is doing with his teams is not going to work for me with my team.” —Wylee Bearstail**

As I deciphered the data looking at codes and themes it came easy for me to decode and illustrate several of the codes that emerged. Some represented the traits of leaders and leadership, but the intergenerational perspectives of both of these men seemed grounded in the teachings that were passed down from generation to generation. The idea of respect for everyone is what Daryl described as the charismatic trait that stands out for Wylee, his son. Wylee reciprocated by discussing how his siblings respect where his dad came from and what he has accomplished as a father.

Daryl described generational differences much like the quote I started this summary with, in that every generation has learned from the previous generation and they do things the way they learned to do things. Each generation takes that learning and applies it in a manner that will work the best for them. One of the biggest changes that this father-son pair saw in generational differences is the shift from family and extended family within the community as role models to the Internet’s social media stars who are deemed important because of the number of likes they may have received on Facebook or Instagram or Snapchat. The Bearstails believe that the almost personal access that those celebrities give their followers has made the younger generation feel like they are closer to the celebrities than their families, extended families, and communities.

Daryl and Wylee shared the same awareness of leadership as being reflective. Wylee talked about how his dad was always reflecting on what could be done different or better. Wylee noted how he recognized his own strengths and limitations in his coaching, which is also self-reflection.

The final main theme I discovered during the intergenerational interview was that both men said it was important to be humble, and have integrity and humility. Wylee used these terms on numerous occasions when describing his father and their significance in all generations. Daryl talked about how he strived to live a life that followed those three tenets; that is how he judged himself on a daily basis.

In closing, Daryl shared that he sees the intergenerational change as something that is natural and inevitable, a way of evolving. He was careful not to judge the change by the way he chose his words. He paused for a few seconds and then said, “Change is always there and it’s coming and it continues that way.” Wylee viewed this change mostly because of the Internet bringing people together; this has caused the world to shrink. Although Daryl and Wylee saw change in slightly different ways, the intergenerational differences between the two is insignificant given they hold similar views of the world and about leadership. The two admitted during the interviews that their relationship was tested from time to time, but that was just part of being a family. Most of their falling outs happened to be basketball related as Wylee and the boys knew their dad had high expectations for them and sometimes they did not meet those expectations. Once the games were over and the cooling down period happened, life went back to normal.

### **Intergenerational Portrait: Pem, Ed and Jess Hall**



*Figure 13.* “The Halls.” Pem, Ed and Jess at Ed Hall’s home in Parshall, North Dakota, December 2016. Photo by Chad Dahlen.

#### **Intergenerational Interview**

This was my third and final interview with each of the Halls. It was different because I was able to meet with all of them at the same time at Ed Hall’s home in Parshall, N.D. I was fascinated to be able to interview the three men together and to observe their interactions with each other. The dynamics of grandfather-father-son piqued my interest.

Jess, the youngest of the three generations, met me at the door with his usual calm and chipper demeanor. He was wearing a Ralph Lauren blue zip-up cardigan type of sweater with grey slacks, a black belt and a dress shirt underneath his sweater. His goatee had turned into a poor man’s beard from the last time I saw him; there was more growth around the goatee that went up both sides of his face to create the thin outline of a beard forming.

Ed came around the corner and he, too, was in a casual solid blue dress shirt with a cowboy type of belt and buckle that held up his denim Wrangler jeans. He looked good

and was expressive as he asked me if I wanted some coffee. I am not one to turn down coffee, especially when you can smell the fresh aroma swirling through the room. With the coffee aroma teasing my senses, I had already decided that it was going to be good.

As we made our way to the living room, I saw Pem, gave him a handshake and thanked all three of the gentlemen for meeting with me this last time to conduct the final interview. Pem was wearing a blue pinstriped dress shirt with a front pocket that held his customary pen and cell phone. Pem, too, was wearing blue jeans with a regular dress belt wrapped around his pants. There was a good spirit in the air and the men seemed to be in good moods as we discussed the weather, coffee, kids and other small talk that generally precedes an interview. Even the dynamics of the four of us together, for the first time, had a sense of familiarity for me—friends having coffee and conversation around the kitchen table was something I grew up with.

Ed's living room was spacious and connected to the dining and kitchen areas. I noticed he had a highchair in the kitchen and Ed noticed me observing it. "That high chair is for the great grandkids who come and visit. It's good to have one of those around," Ed told me. The living room had a fireplace with a big mantle guarding the pictures of family members; a picture of his wife placed at the top, center overlooked the family—and us—with a smile. The rest of the living room was inspired by a Southwest interior design (Ed's wife's lasting touch in their home) including a fancy rug that stretched out on a wooden rack. We all gathered and sat for the interview on a couple of sofa chairs and a matching brown leather couch.

**Togetherness—"Finding solutions."**

As we sat down for this final interview I asked if they had ever worked together on any kind of projects and if so, what type of memories did they have of that time together. It was hard not to assume that these fathers and sons did not ever do any projects together because I work with my dad on almost a daily basis on some kind of project—from chasing cows and fixing fences to work like repairing machinery—that tests our relationship. Pem answered first and said one of the things that they had all worked on together dealt with technology. Jess is good with technology, so he came and helped Ed and him (Pem) out from time to time. Pem explained that he had experience working with technology in his previous job, but it is one of those things that transferred to all three generations because technology evolves. Pem said:

As we worked together or on different projects we bounced ideas off of each other. My dad always told me to know my audience; if it is a technical audience then you have to be prepared for the questions and how to prepare your discussion. When I do not have experience in something like that I like to reach back to him to guide me. I like to be prepared and I like to watch out for blind spots.

Then Ed said:

It started off [the transfer of learning and working together] when they were in high school. They had to put up with me leaving early and getting home late from work. I talked about work with them and got them doing their own jobs like traffic control on a bridge. They had to hire 16 of their friends and maintain it for 24 hours a day while a bridge was being put up. I did the bid work and got them



the job, but I left it up to them to manage the process. They learned supervision of their own employees on their own; I left that to them to figure out.

Jess said:

Working with my dad and grandpa, having a really good work ethic was instilled in me. Middle school, high school, it seems like I always had a job. My dad got me a contract [like his dad did for him] in high school mowing the Deep Water Bay recreation area for the summer.

While we discussed leadership, we explored the topic of problem solving and how they went about solving problems. Jess stated that the first thing he wants to know is what the problem is, thus making sure he has a good idea of what is going wrong or what type of problem he is dealing with. He then likes to for solutions, best practices to solve the problem, and if he needs to bring in people to help solve the problem. If he does need to bring other people in, then he starts asking who has the background knowledge that can help. This type of thinking shows a structural systematic way of problem solving.

This conversation definitely piqued Ed's interest. He jumped in and said:

What Jess is talking about is basic engineering; you figure out what the heck you're dealing with first. That's the main thing to understand, what you're dealing with, then you take it from there. Identify your project and what you have to accomplish and steps...."

I observed Pem sitting back and nodding his head in approval as he was listening to his son and dad discuss their problem solving techniques. Then he smoothly slid into the conversation by telling me that this is what engineering is all about, problem solving. He stated that it is truly a structured way of problem solving that you learn during your

first days of engineering classes. Pem explained that you write out what information you have, what your problem is, define it, and then you decide how you are going to find the puzzle pieces to solve the problem. I wondered as I listened to them talk if this should be emphasized more in regular secondary education. Pem explained that this makes it more efficient in problem solving because there is a time element to coming up with solutions. Pem said:

You got to know how quickly you take the information that you have and decide what the critical pieces of it are. Then you rank your solutions and then proceed with fixing the problem. If you are reaching out and just grabbing something that you cannot defend to try to solve the problem, then you have no place to start over. If you have a base to start from then you can go back and check what you did wrong and then you can go in another direction.

I laughed and told them they should start putting on educational seminars for teachers. As I listened to their stories, I recognized that this is a good teaching structure for children with behavioral issues. One example I told them is that inexperienced teachers often, when dealing with a kid who is not behaving, just send the kid out of the classroom. They expect the principal to take care of the problem instead of taking this type of approach. This approach, I interpreted, could take many forms in both the leadership and education worlds.

My take on their perceptions of problem solving was to look at them in a systematic way, find out as much about the problem and then begin to solve it. What stood out was that all three men said that if they could not figure it out, they looked for someone who had background knowledge. They all had that characteristic of not being

afraid to seek out someone with more knowledge. This was interesting because they are all highly trained in problem solving yet do not let their egos interfere if they cannot resolve the problem. Instead, they reach out, admitting that they cannot figure out the problem.

**Perceptions-“My favorite memory is the respect he shows for other people.” —Pem Hall**

We talked about favorite memories that the men had of each other. Ed started the conversation and said:

I just enjoyed seeing my boys always busy and being impressed with their work ethic. The work experience just kind of creates them. Jess has always been around us and into discussions on some of these talks. I think their mothers deserve a big role in how they turned out, too; they were always at home and raising them; they deserve a lot of recognition for how they turned out.

Then Pem said:

A lot of that experience that you had growing up was the interactions that helped you learn. I reflect positively on the responsibilities that my dad taught us, making us confident through hands on teaching. He would step up and work with us and that taught me to lead by example. I try to pass those teachings on to my son's, Jess and P.J. I do not gauge anybody by what they accomplish through sports or awards, so with Jess, my favorite memory is the respect he shows to other people. How he carries himself and approaches things in life. When I see that reflected, that's a good thing and I feel I did pass something on and he took it to a different level.

Jess added:

The greatest time I had with my dad and grandpa is when we were all under the same roof. I always tell them that I had the greatest childhood because I was surrounded by family; they kind of shaped me to be who I am today. I would run to my grandpa when I got into trouble and just being around my dad meant a lot to me growing up.

As we continued the interview I probed the leadership question more by asking them to name a leadership lesson that they have learned from each other. Jess did not hesitate and went back to that persistent theme of his dad teaching him to lead by example. Jess said his dad was always the guy who not only told you how to do something, but also jumped in and showed you how to do it. Jess's Grandpa Ed was always there to support him in what he learned. I recognized that in leadership you needed to support and encourage those whom you are working with. For example, Ed told Jess when he was confiding to him the difficulties of engineering school, "Do not let it beat you!" and that stuck with Jess as he went through school.

Ed's perception of his son, Pem, and his grandson, Jess, was the way they carried themselves. He said he was proud of the leadership they had taken on within their families as being able to take care of themselves, and having gone to and graduated from school. He liked the fact that they are both successful in getting good jobs and working. Ed told me he was happy to see them working and providing for their families.

Pem spoke with eloquence when he discussed his dad, Ed, and his son, Pem. He said the leadership lessons he gained from those two men were the underlying theme of respect for their perspectives. He said he falls back on both of them when he is trying to

understand a situation. It is like he is standing in the middle of an island and he has a bridge to the past and a bridge to the future that he can access at any time. He goes back to his dad when he looks for creativity and decision-making on a subject and goes forward to Jess when he needs more details about the issues. His dad has the background knowledge that he needs and his son is current on contemporary issues, so they are shortcuts for when he needs to figure something out fast.

**Generational Thoughts-“When you go through here [Fort Berthold] what do you see?” —Ed Hall**

Having three generations of Hall men sitting in the living room, I begged the question as to what they saw as generational issues in today’s society. Ed responded:

The environment that I grew up in is much different than it is today. I do not know if it is just the federal government’s plan for the Indians, but it seems to be working. They [federal government] always had the attitude to civilize us and get rid of us. To protect our sovereignty on the reservation, it takes awareness of our rights [As Native people]; you have to study it and digest it.

Ed expressed his hope that the younger generation will step up and take more of an interest in our tribal government and the issues the tribe faces. He said he has a different perspective of his tribe from when he grew up there and from when Pem and Jess both lived there and then came back. It is different for him because he lived during Elbowood’s flooding and felt the sting of the government’s policies firsthand.

The biggest difference that Pem has seen is the oil boom and that has caused a cultural shift. He believes people were more community based before the oil boom; they relied on the community and the tribal members to support different things. Now he sees

more independence with individuals who have access to oil revenue—wealth—and that has caused a major shift. Pem believes that people do not have as much investment in tribal politics because of this new wealth. Pem continued by saying:

The previous generations all had to rely on each other, but the tribal political side has not shifted much. They still rely on the Bureau of Indian Affairs for their guidance on engineering projects, oil issues and not using education like they should. Education is one piece, but experience is another piece. People go out and get their education and come back and want to be department heads without any experience. We should be getting our people placed in these companies so they can bring that experience back to our tribe. They can take what they learned and modify their approach, but they can take what they learn and try to incorporate it into our structure to benefit the tribe. Let those people [with the new education] continue to grow and cause that learning to be broadened as a benefit to the tribe.

Jess viewed the generational gap between him and his grandpa as huge. He understands that his Grandpa Ed has seen a lot more, i.e. the transformation of the reservation after the building of the Garrison Dam. He saw his grandpa's generation as being more in survival mode. "The United States government," he contended, "always wanted to do what is best for us, but they did not ask us what we needed or even tried to seek our [Native People] input." He is, however, optimistic about the future of the Three Affiliated Tribes and said:

I think now we are finally at that point where we can say what is best for us and we have the people in place; the people with the education that know what's best for us. We have to change from the top; we have to have a better checks and

balances system so we can have all these other programs in place that are able to hire the best people and keep the best people in those positions. I think in my generation we have a different mindset where we kind of have an understanding of the problem and we know things have to change. We have to make a government that is made by us not given to us. We have to create our own government, our own constitution that works for everybody in the tribe.

These three men all have different perceptions about the generational gap. Grandpa Ed wonders if it is too late to get things turned around to be able to help the tribe. His son, Pem, views this generation as not caring enough because of the influx of wealth from the oil boom that has caused the loss of a time when there was a shared community of people looking after each other. He longs for the time when people were more tribal and took care of each other and fostered growth among the youth. Jess, the youngest of the three men, believes that as a tribal nation the tribe has turned the corner and has a “we are ready to start making changes” mindset. He is doggedly determined that his generation is going to make a difference in changing tribal government to one that is created by the people to better serve the people. His optimism and unflinching mindset allows him to think of the possibilities that the Three Affiliated Tribal people can produce together.

### **Strategies-“It’s a mindset for me.” —Jess Hall**

A common word that Jess used in all his interviews was the term mindset. For Jess, I saw it as representing a way of thinking that was his dominant way of thinking. He liked to surround himself with the same positive mentality to help him keep pushing forward toward wanting change and wanting something better—not only for himself, but

also the group he is working with. His strategy to get more involved in tribal leadership did not mean becoming a tribal politician, but seeing how he could position himself in the best way to produce meaningful change on the reservation. He was looking to get that experience in the outside world to go along with his education so that he can be the agent of change when the time comes.

His Grandpa Ed looked back at the shadow he cast in his previous jobs and found that he had no strategy, but he had opportunities presented through his formal school preparation. He established his reputation as a hard-working, ethical person who got the community of people involved in the projects that he worked on. The stakeholders of his job sites were the very people that he enlisted to build capacity around the various reservation job sites. He employed local Tribal workers and worked with them showing them the craft of construction. He took satisfaction in finding that many of those whom he worked with went out and found their calling in construction. He is too humble to admit that it was because of, in part, his engagement in the pursuit of using local Tribal people to help him complete his missions.

Pem took his knowledge about engineering and went to work for the Corps of Engineers, an organization that has historically been at war with Native American tribes since its inception. The Corps has worked with Tribes on land rights, land use, as well as Tribal water issues. Pem was in a state of “No man’s land” undergoing crossfire from both the Corps and the Tribes he had to negotiate and interact with. The Corps of Engineers was, never the less, an opportunity for Pem to hone his skills in engineering and to give a voice about tribal perspectives when the Corps was resistant to allowing that open interaction with tribes to take place. His strategy to use his education,



experience and voice to produce leadership was communication and resilience. He kept finding ways to communicate on issues where there was common ground. He took the disconnect of Native perspectives from the Corps and tried to build understanding to help Natives and his work organization better achieve its foundational goals and missions of creating a better environment for everyone. His style of leadership can be summed up best by this quote where he said, “I was attempting to lead through knowledge and communication.”

**Summary-“Undertake leadership roles not to benefit yourself.” —Pem Hall**

In summary, the overarching themes that I discovered during this compelling and delightful intergenerational interview with Ed, Pem, and Jess Hall was the understanding that education is not enough to be able to help your tribe effectively. All three men had at one point in the interview stated that education is but the first step; experience from the outside world is just as important. They all perceived that the experience they had or were currently receiving from working off the reservation with big companies helped them form a template on how they could best serve their tribe.

The theme of mentorship went along with that thought process, as all three men talked about it. Grandpa Ed talked about helping local Tribal people construct their own asphalt paving companies. His son, Pem, encouraged mentorship programs for Native students getting out of college. Jess talked about volunteering to tutor math at a local urban community center for Native American elementary and high school students. They all believed this consultancy practice contributed to having more qualified people making better decisions that impacted the Tribe positively in the long run.

The unified strategy of solving problems was an example that acknowledged the beauty of an engineer's training. They all subscribed to the same theory of defining the problem, engaging in gathering as much information as possible about the problem, then laying out possible solutions to solving the problem. The one finding that I took from this was that all three men stated that they recognized their own limitations. They concurred that sometimes you cannot find the solution to the problem, so you must seek out those who are distinguished in that area for their advice in solving the problem.

These three men exemplified and preached about the philosophy of leading by example. Ed, Pem and Jess described each other by using that phrase at one point and they gave examples during the interview of how they had seen each other lead by example. They showed respect to each other and to me, the researcher, during the entire process and stated on numerous occasions the importance of respect when talking about leadership. The last thing that struck me was that none of the participants acknowledged any racial discrimination during their experiences of going through college or in their work environment. I perceived that to be because when they worked they did not see race; they saw fellow engineers and other people trying to accomplish the common mission. Grandpa Ed explained this to me:

We just never discussed differences like that; you just worked together. Both respected each other; that's the main thing. You don't carry a prejudice. I looked at people for what they are. I think when it is like that it is because they just do not have any understanding.

His son, Pem, echoed his grandfather's statement by saying that is why education is important. He said that tribal people needed to keep working on educating people about the tribe's issues and its place in this society.

**Intergenerational Portrait: Marcus Wells, Sr. and Marcus Levings**



*Figure 14.* “Wells and Levings.” Marcus, Sr. and Marcus, Jr. at Marcus, Sr.’s Office in New Town, North Dakota, December 2016. Photo by Chad Dahlen.

**Intergenerational Interview-“His mother was always proud of him that he set out to not exactly be a councilman or tribal chairman, but set out to help his people and do what was good by the people and in his mother’s eyes, that is what he did.” —**

**Marcus Wells, Sr.**

As 2016 was breathing her last gasps of air for the year on December 28, it seemed metaphorically appropriate that this was my 17<sup>th</sup> and final interview of the research process. I had just arrived at the Better B’s Café and headed to Marcus, Sr.’s office. I was happy to be able to move on to the next stage of the research process, but with the interviews ending I had a sense of sadness. As the snow fell yet again on my way to New Town, I thought of all the stories that Marcus, Sr. had shared with me on our

last visit. I recalled the clarity of his stories along with the expressions that he brought back from the unconscious and the experiences that he shared as a kid, young adult, and finally as a man in his 70s who relished the opportunity to share his wisdom with me. I was an eager student of his and he had my full attention every time we met.

With his son, Marcus, I was mindful of his prior position as tribal chairman when I interviewed him. Just as in the Western world when we formally address past Presidents, Senators and Congressmen, we too, as tribal people, are taught to show reverence for tribal people in those types of positions and treat them accordingly. As with all the past tribal chairman and councilman, I hold respect for the office that they were elected to by the people as well as respect for the work that they did for the people of our tribe. I treated Marcus with the respect due to a former tribal councilman and chairman. I was inquisitive about the insight that he provided regarding his time in those positions in tribal politics, and he did not disappoint me in our interviews.

When I got to the office, both father and son were already there and talking about the weather. Both men were dressed in blue jeans. Marcus, Sr. had an Under Armour black t-shirt on; he was vibrant and smiling as I walked in the door. He shook my hand and patted me on the shoulder while he teased me about being a Twin Buttes guy. Marcus approached me, smiled and shook my hand as well. He was dressed in a green polo t-shirt with blue jeans and wore dress shoes. The office of Marcus, Sr. had maps of the reservation on one wall, with little decorations everywhere else. He told me he was working on another project and the maps helped him locate some of the main areas that were involved in the project.

Marcus saw his dad as a professional. He told me that when he worked with his father he learned about the history of the tribe and how it got to where it is today. I interpreted that history as being more about tribal organizational history. The practice of bookkeeping, managing the money, and enacting policies was the history that his dad possessed. Marcus said that when his dad came into the tribal council meetings, everybody listened and tried to absorb all that they could from him, because his father was always prepared. Marcus stated:

Heck, he even had his staff prepared if he was not able to make a meeting. We could always count on him if he was not able to make a meeting due to other meetings, his staff would be right on point to talk about any issue that we had in regards to finance. That was a professional.

Marcus, Sr. had a sense of delight as I inquired about his favorite memory of working with his son. He leaned in toward me from the other side of the table with a smile on his face as he began to speak:

I liked his willingness to continue his education and the effort he put forth when we went to school. We told all the boys to go to school as my Grandpa Ralph Wells used to say, 'Education, education, education...' I always told my boys this story to emphasize education, 'You have two men working, one is going to be digging the ditch and the other is going to be the boss, which one do you guys want to be?' They always told me that they wanted to be the boss, so the only way you can do that is you got to go to school.

Marcus spoke up about his favorite memory of his dad; he said that his was different from his dad's:

I liked the tradition that he raised me to in respect animals, whether it was pets or horses, always respect the animals because they took care of us. First thing in the morning you feed them, water them and look after them. Our ancestors survived because of them. He taught me the grassroots of hunting that has never left my mind. Respect the deer, which we harvest and shoot. Respect them by not wasting anything, Dad was always teaching me life lessons. Dad always told me to do my best, do not do your job half way, [and] do the best job you can.

Marcus, Sr. talked in further detail and told me that his mom and his aunts always told him to do the best job and when you go to work for someone you should finish the job. He said that all he did his whole life was work. He never applied for any of the jobs he did for the tribe; he was called upon to do them. Marcus, Sr.'s mom and aunts all worked their entire lives, so he assimilated their values and followed in their footsteps by continuing to work.

**Generational Differences-“The biggest [difference] is the respect for people that are in attendance at meetings.” —Marcus Wells**

As we shifted to generational perceptions, Marcus, Sr. explained that in the earlier tribal council meetings the older generation would look after the people who were there and try to accommodate them. He gave examples of old people, people who traveled a long way, or ranchers and they would recognize that person and try to take care of his or her business right away so they could get home sooner. That respect that older people had for everybody when Marcus, Sr. was young left an impression on him. He compared that respect he witnessed to the lack of respect that he sees in today's society:

When council chamber meetings are held now, when you have people up front presenting or talking, other people are talking throughout the tribal chambers.

There should only be one person talking. So, I guess the biggest thing is the loss of respect for elderly people or anybody that's in there.

His son, Marcus, then recalled how when he first got on the tribal council he saw a lot of people who would come in and disrespect the council. He believed there was no respect for the council. This finding went against what I conveyed earlier that WE [tribal people] were brought up to honor the positions of the council and tribal chairperson. I jotted this down in my red journal—I have not attended many council meetings, so this was a surprise. Marcus went on to say that this was normal behavior for many of our tribal people. He stated that some believe that they are allowed to talk and behave however they want, and they have that right. He reflected on some of his previous visits to other tribes saying how they are real strict in how they conduct their meetings.

**Leadership Callings—"I didn't have a plan to take on leadership positions, it just happened." —Marcus Levings**

Marcus Levings talked about his journey into leadership by saying it happened little by little. He was motivated to get on the school board at New Town because the board, at the time, was not willing to work with the tribal entity that he was employed by. It was suggested that he run for school board, he did and eventually got elected. The same was suggested about running for tribal council and for tribal chairman; he recalled these as callings. They were not positions that he sought, but rather situations where leadership was needed.

Marcus, Sr. had the same path to leadership positions. He said that he would just stand up and speak up when he believed something was not right. Marcus, Sr. said:

I always stood by what I knew and what I thought was right. So if that made me some type of leader, I never spoke over or under anybody. You know, it's just standing by what you believe and I think it does kind of elevate you to a leadership role whether you want it or not. I got fired three times for standing up for what I believe [laughing].

**Navigating Two Worlds—"Wherever you are, you have to represent yourself well."**

**—Marcus Wells, Sr.**

As we continued our conversation, the topic of weaving between the Native world and the non-Indian world was discussed. We talked about the struggles of identity in both worlds and what it means to be Native when you are in the non-Native world. Marcus, Sr. responded that he looks at it as representation. He said that wherever you go, you have to understand that you are representing your people from your reservation. He went on to say that we have people working abroad and serving in the military; they are representing our people. Marcus, Sr. recalled that when his dad, Bill Wells, was in school they taught him reading, writing and arithmetic. Everybody from that generation had real neat handwriting. Marcus, Sr. said:

When he got in the service, he would take a lead pencil and file it flat and would make two grooves in it. He would use that to address envelopes for guys that were writing home that couldn't even write letters, He would write letters for them. So he would always tell me that when he was over there, he was representing his people. He would tell me to do my best in representing our people. When I



worked for Boeing, I made supervisor in two months and they never heard of that before; usually it takes 6 to 12 months, but all I did was teach these young guys how to do their jobs. Some of these guys were older than me, but I got promoted. When I worked at Southern Pacific Railway, I knew seven different jobs there and my wife was the one that reminded me, you're representing your people good. I never thought about it while I was working. I always think that wherever you are at, you got to represent yourself well. If you say you're from North Dakota, you're going to represent even North Dakota. Put your best foot forward to represent yourself the best you can whenever you are representing your people.

When it was Marcus's turn to answer the same question, I found him caught up in his dad's story, smiling in approval of his Dad's wisdom, I assumed. Marcus expressed a memory of his time spent in Washington, D.C. when he served as tribal chairman:

I just was very apprehensive; I was nervous about it because I had to actually walk the halls that normally non-Indians are above you as far as turning out bills and legislation in law and all the testimony. As a councilman, community leader and school board member, I was not responsible for much, just had to be there. But now the spotlight is on you and you're speaking and everyone's listening to every syllable and that was the toughest part to cross over from being Native and to speak to these non-Indians, Hispanics and African Americans. It was challenging, that was my biggest wake up call; it was unique. But with prayer, like my dad said, I made it through the experience.

It is clear in my examination of both of these men that the theme of not only representing their state and tribe is important to them, but also that both men have

referred to representing their families. Recognizing their family members that have made a difference in their lives shows the high regard that they have for fellow family members and ancestors. What representing looks like to each of these men is similar to what I identify when I transcribed the interviews: they are hard working, articulate and serve the tribe. This “walk” that they have made between two worlds involves pressure that they put on themselves because they do not want to disappoint their tribe or their families.

**Leadership Qualities-“He is committed to helping people. He goes out of his way to make sure they are taken care of.” —Marcus Levings**

As we closed the interview I inquired as to what aspect of leadership they admired the most about each other. They smiled and glanced at each other. This innocent non-verbal interaction revealed and exposed their strong father-son relationship. Marcus talked about how his dad has always put people first. He appreciated his dad’s love of the tribe and the people and that he demonstrated it every day. He gave examples of his dad giving money to those in need, helping push snow for the neighbors, and the personal blanket of love that his dad gave him and his family. Marcus, Sr. was equal in his appreciation of his son’s leadership traits. He said his son’s ability to instill confidence in whomever he is dealing with, establishing rapport with other tribes and congressional leaders, and his communication with people are his strongest traits. Marcus, Sr. saw his son communicate at the local, tribal, state and federal level and he said that is his strength.

### **Summary**

This intergenerational interview was significant in that I was able to compare and contrast one last time between their generational viewpoints of leadership. Marcus, Sr.

portrayed a sense of servant leadership as he gave indications that he worked for the people and believed we should all serve each other. They shared their viewpoints on education as being vital to growing as a person and as a leader. Marcus, Sr. quoted his grandpa, Ralph Wells, and the importance of education. Marcus echoed those statements telling me the impact that his parents made on him regarding his educational journey. Both men said not getting an education was not an option.

During the interviews I found that both men talked about working their way up through the ranks to attain positions of leadership. This common theme echoed the Hall's (Ed, Pem, and Jess) recommendations of mentoring, using the education you have to build on experience and better serve your tribe.

Both father and son described their concern about the lack of respect for the older generation, which seemed to be an indication of eroding cultural values or an emerging cultural norm as Three Tribe people in general became more individualistic. They shared examples eroding values as talking over people at council meetings, not recognizing the elders or taking care of visitors during this interview. Marcus, Sr. talked about the hospitality that the previous generation had for their people and shared how he was always invited for lunch or coffee at other's homes in the "Old Days." He sees a shift in that people are more cautious about inviting people into their homes and that hospitality is not there anymore.

Both men have served their tribe in various ways. Marcus, Sr. served in the capacity of bookkeeping, money management, and financial advisement, while his son served as director of TERO [Tribal Employment Rights Organization], school board chairman, community leader, councilman, chairman and as a consultant to the tribe. They

communicated a deep love for their families and their tribe through the many statements they made during our time together.

Finally, I appreciated the candid comments that both of these men shared with me about the nature, perception and advice that was extended to me regarding leadership. I felt accepted into their tight knit group and I was humbled to be in their presence and to be treated like family. They shared not only perceptions, but also history with me. That history is valuable as I continue my life journey knowing more about my tribe.

In the next chapter I will tie the previous chapters together and provide a conclusion of the findings, discussion of assertions, and recommendations for further study in order to push the scholarly research even further about my people: the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara people.

## **CHAPTER KÍIMA (CHAPTER VI)**

### **STORYTELLING**

#### **(DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, DISSONANCE, AND RECOMMENDATIONS)**

##### **Introduction**

The moment you get close to the end of a journey is the VERY moment that you realize that you need more time. More time because of selfish reasons—you do not want the journey to end, there are things left unattended, or you just enjoyed the moment so much that you want to hold on to it as long as you can. I relished the time I had with the study participants—their stories still chattering in my head—the similar, yet different perspectives that each man shared, as well as the laughter and fellowship that we enjoyed in our intimate time together. So, as I close with this last chapter, I will “pull everything together” as my advisor prepared me to do with her warm suggestions.

##### **Discussion**

Although I started this journey about exploring leadership in generic terms, my research was narrowed to a particular tribe—the Three Affiliated Tribe. Within that tribe I focused on a portraiture study of leadership. The participants in this study included seven men, all from the Three Affiliated Tribes. I used the Tribal Critical Race Theory as its framework, and focused on the participants’ perceptions of leadership and education. The research questions were:

1. What traits do men from the Three Affiliated Tribes believe to be characteristics of effective leaders?
2. What are the generational differences /similarities between the leadership experience and beliefs of fathers and sons from the Three Affiliated Tribes?
3. What do men from the Three Affiliated Tribes believe, promote and challenge education and leadership?

The following discussion will answer the research questions in each of the construct areas. It is based on the data collected through a series of qualitative interviews with the participants who shared their stories, their similarities and their differences.

The notion of capturing the meaning, character, and spirit of the participants was an agonizing responsibility because of the risky nature of creating authentic portraits. Quantitative methods of research do not have a way to extrapolate or test hidden meanings or the character or spirit of a person. That method is best used to capture hard data and numbers. Although sample sizes, data, validation, and numbers are important, I believed that this study needed to reveal the true and authentic voices of the people of the Three Affiliated Tribes.

In Brayboy's (2005) research, he discussed the liminal space that the majority of research on Native Americans produces from non-Natives. This liminal space referred to the majority of Native Americans in any kind of research project as being statistically insignificant. As a Native American researcher, I did not want to consider my people as being statistically insignificant; I wanted to give them a voice that showed we are still here, we have our own theories, we have something to contribute, and that we are significant.

After the transcriptions, coding and data analysis was completed, three theoretical themes emerged—mindset, support system, and leadership. Those themes served to address the research questions about the participants’ perceptions of leadership.

**Theme 1-We become leaders through our mindsets.**

*“It is reassuring to see that we have people in leadership positions that have the same mindset. It is a reawakening; whole nations are involved and the climate is changing—a change for the better.” —Jess Hall*

Table 3.  
*Codes, Categories and the Emergence of the “Mindset” Theme*

Codes	Categories	Theme
Experience	Leadership	Mindset
Embrace the struggle	Resilience	Mindset
Learn, learn, learn	Education	Mindset
Ability to live in both worlds	Beliefs	Mindset

This first theme emerged as I engaged in data mining. It was clear that all of the participants believed in the concept of “mindset,” albeit it in various ways. The word itself is impactful and speaks to a worldview that all of the participants shared. Statements such as “I strive to be humble,” or “I try to be positive,” were conveyed in many of the interviews. All of the participants were aware of this “mindset” as they described their educational journeys. Examples of this are revealed in statements such as “something I just had to obtain,” or “I needed to learn.” To be a leader, you need a different mindset to take care of the community. Codes of moral compass, strong work

ethic, passion, and high expectations also fell into the theme of mindset while analyzing the data.

Brayboy (2005) mentioned mindset when he discussed his mother telling him that the stories of the tribal people were their own theories. The mindset of a researcher then, that the stories are theories, is rigorous and theoretically sound.

In reviewing the literature, mindset was something that Henderson, Carjuzaa, & Ruff (2015) described as a state of being without looking at the result. I interpreted this thought process as a mentality that you are in constantly. This leadership theory is rounded and evolves according to your situation.

The theme of mindset answers one of the main questions about the traits of effective leaders. It is intergenerational—all seven of the men in this study described this type of attitude that they had when they crossed into the Western world and survived. They did not look at race, economic status, or any other excuse for not earning their college degrees; instead they all had strong beliefs that they had to get an education in order to survive. This theory helped to further promote leadership and suggests that creating a mindset is central to any leadership program.

**Theme 2-A strong support system enhances our chances.**

*“She [his wife] was the one that really supported me; she was the one that really believed in me.” —Daryl Bearstail*

Table 4.  
*Codes, Categories and the Emergence of the “Support System” Theme*

Codes	Categories	Theme
I knew I had to learn	Survival	Support System
Opportunities	Recognition	Support System



Pray, pray, pray	Beliefs	Support System
My wife encouraged me	Encouragement	Support System

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An overarching theme that emerged during the data analysis process was the participants' shared experience of growing up with a strong support system. Cross-gendered figures provided stability and guidance to all of the participants and played a significant role in their core being. The female figures were the mothers, grandmothers, or wives of the men who provided the key encouragement, support, and generational teachings that the men acknowledged throughout the interviews.

Tippeconnic Fox, Luna-Firebaugh, & Williams (2015) pointed out that American Indian women on a whole valued education, stressed to finding one's voice and were nurturers of the soul. This could possibly be a reason that these men were grounded in their beliefs about leadership and were successful on their educational journeys. They had the support and encouragement to find their voices; they received important and valuable teachings from the women involved in their lives.

Another part of the support system theme was that of spirituality. Not all of the participants raised the issue of spirituality, but the majority of the men interviewed subscribed to devoutness. For those participants who did discuss spirituality, prayer and a belief in God was the main force that guided them during their individual tough times. "I believe that God was the one that got me out of the life I was in," said Daryl during one of our interviews. Several of the men confided that they prayed several times a day and that prayer helped them know their place in the world.

Additional data that created the picture of a strong support system for the participants were phrases such as “teachings of opportunities through education,” and “the use of storytelling within the family to teach cultural values,” fit into the characteristics of effective leaders. I found no differences in regard to if the support system theme was different across generations. All of the men in this study regarded this theme as something that was vital to keeping the tribal cultural ways intact. They all praised the values of education as a foundational structure that helped them reach success in their lives.

**Theme 3-A collective view of tribal leadership provides a portrait of leadership.**

*“I believe that one of my strengths as a leader is that I am not afraid to step on the side that I feel is right.” —Pem Hall*

Table 5.  
*Codes, Categories and the Emergence of the “Leadership” Theme*

Codes	Categories	Theme
To be an effective tribal leader, you should try to understand culture	Beliefs	Leadership
You need to help all people of the reservation	Expectations	Leadership
Being able to walk in both worlds	Beliefs	Leadership
I like challenges	Pride	Leadership

Pem Hall’s belief that one of his strengths as a leader is that he stands up for what he believes in signifies the importance of a strong belief system, something that the other participants agreed with. Their collective views of leadership revealed the

importance of teamwork, leading by example, and coaching as parts of a successful leadership model. Two skills that they all believed were necessary to be an effective leader were being able to communicate and being able to listen to people. One of participants emphasized that he believed that he understood people. He strived to be able to have a deep connection with people so that he could better recognize what they were trying to communicate.

Additional overarching phrases that the participants' believed positively impacted leadership were "a tribal leader makes the effort to understand the culture," and "being able to walk in both worlds is important." They all believed that setting goals and portraying a sense of respect were high on their lists of what an effective tribal leader should look like.

Brayboy's (2005) Tribal Critical Race Theory supports the participants' perspectives about leadership. He conveyed that concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when being described by Native Americans. He went further and stated that knowledge has multiple forms and that these multiple forms need to be converged to better be able to serve our tribal nations. His TRIBCRIT theory supported the participants' concepts of leadership and gave credence to the themes that emerged during this study.

### **Generational Analysis**

While reviewing my reflection notes, I found significant differences in generational perceptions, but only in a few areas. One area was how they perceived the current generation. The responses differed in that the older generation men stated that the current generation of people had lost their respect for others. "There was a time when we

honored our elders, our visitors, and people who came to our area; now it is not there anymore.” Another participant stated that the young people were out of control and that the current generation of uncles is not able to discipline the younger generation of kids. He stated that uncles in previous generations were able to discipline the younger ones and that kept everyone in line. In Three Affiliated Tribes clanship rules, this is unique in that uncles were the primary disciplinarians and that if kids were acting up, it was up to the uncles to take care of the discipline in the family. This came back on the uncles if the kids were misbehaving; making them look bad would mean harsher discipline for the kids if they refused to comply.

A couple of participants stated that they believed there was a reawakening of the current generation, and that more and more people were attaining their educations and were excited about the future. One participant conveyed that his son would be in a much better place as he grows older with the advances in thinking and people trying to positively impact change.

The majority of the data supports agreements in how the participants viewed leadership, role models, and having a moral compass in life. There were several instances when I questioned them about support systems and the father and son had almost exact same quotes. One common agreement among all of the participants was that college was a struggle, whether it was because of finances or the academically demanding classes. However, they all found strategies to survive and succeed.

This study unintentionally became a study of masculinity as well as a study of leadership and education. I learned that each of their lives as men were shaped in part by strong women in their lives. As men, they all believed they had a duty to provide for their

families, be role models for their children, and provide leadership for their families as well as leadership for those in their communities. As men, they all had strong, positive, resilient mindsets that did not allow for them to be distracted from their goals. They all understood that life is a struggle and for some, that struggle was something to be relished and they were, therefore, proud of telling their stories about the struggles they endured.

Unintentional lessons I learned about being a man from these men was that of having family values, family sacrifices, and family tightness. They have all established their own family cultures and expectations that were transmitted intergenerationally. The unique brand of spirituality the men bring in to the family and to their personal lives was powerful and it is what brought their passionate, positive voice to the process that we went through together. As men, they all believed they had a need to lead by example, give back to their tribe, and create a strong personal foundation through education and having a strong moral compass. The final lessons I learned about their sense of masculinity was that they all had a strong work ethic, a strong sense of the power of education and humility that could not be measured in words. I hope that I can share these lessons not only with my twin boys, but with my daughters as well. Their stories have shown the power of having a strong woman/women within the family.

### **Recommendations**

This was an extraordinary deep study of men from the Three Affiliated Tribal. However, I also understand that you can learn from anybody. This section provides a brief description of recommendations that I believe others might benefit from.

The notion of being in a position of tribal leadership should be a process. One of the participants stated, “Once we get our education, we should then get experience,

preferably off the reservation, and then bring that education and experience back to the tribe to be more effective.” Native people are judged for leaving the reservation, but all of the participants argued that getting experience off the reservation was the best way to gain experience and then come back to the reservation to help their people. They did not care if they were judged; they wanted to be judged by how they were able to best contribute to their communities.

A commonality that I found among all of the participants was that they had worked off the reservation before returning to the reservation. One participant stated upon leaving to get his education, “I wanted to get as far away as possible from the reservation.” Upon further probing I learned that he believed that he needed to be able to get an education and experience the real world so that he could learn correctly.

Based on the data analysis, one of my recommendations is that the tribe should help with mentorship off the reservation. The responses from the participants is that if the tribe would collaborate with big companies, it would be beneficial for the tribe, the student coming out of college, and for the company and tribe to strengthen their cultural understanding of each other. Many believed that you should pay your dues before taking on positions of leadership.

The idea of networking came up during all of the interviews. The actual term did not come up, but as the participants shared their stories it was clear that networking with other people in their fields, especially political leaders, engineers and basketball coaches, was common.

The participants agreed that the Western idea of getting an education to get a job to provide for your family was important. Native ideas of giving back to the Tribe, the

sense of understanding the relationships between your relatives and getting along with each other, were revealed and fit nicely with Cajete's (2015) discussion about tribal values.

Recommendations for further research based on the data:

- A. Keep pushing forward Indigenous Research
- B. Have similar studies with different cultures
- C. Further studies of Three Affiliated Tribes women and their perceptions of leadership
- D. Research roles of masculinity within Native American Tribes
- E. Develop theories of leadership through research about the Northern Plains Tribes

### **Moments of Dissonance**

Throughout the participant interviews I noted they forced me to reflect on topics that I challenged and assumptions that I carried blindly. One of the challenges was when two of the participants stated that they actually liked their boarding school experiences. One felt a sense of familiarity because several of his friends also attended the boarding school, and the other participant told me he felt a counter culture shock when he returned to the reservation after living at the boarding school. This moment of dissonance made me realize that coming "home" to the reservation was not always pleasant at first. Although the people were nice and the community was good, the number of kids at the reservation school was much smaller than the number of kids at the boarding school. This meant it was difficult to adapt to the smaller school settings.

Several of the participants stated that education was favored over traditional language and culture. Their parents believed that the kids benefited more with a Western education than learning their Native language because they had experienced the effects of racism and poverty without an education. This challenged my assumption that all parents wanted their kids to learn their culture and language. However, after reflection, I could see the net gain of achieving a Western education and the impact that education would have on families.



*Figure 15.* “The Dahlen Family.” Jekori, Tyra, Michelle(wife and Mom), Chad, Rylee, Kooper, Baylee and Nekori Dahlen in Mandan, North Dakota, September 2016. Photo by Debra Kate with permission to be reprinted.

## **Conclusion**



I can relate to the pure exhaustion that my Uncle Marty felt as he pushed himself to a place that not too many people go to when he finished the mile race and won first place. I am exhausted, yet excited while I write this concluding piece of my dissertation; I contemplate and ponder my final thoughts.

I started this doctoral adventure in search of a new path regarding leadership. This journey helped me to grow in ways that I did not see coming. I went from being a school superintendent on my hometown's small reservation to a cattle operator on my ranch. I saw my personal leadership skills develop in different areas when called to serve on three board of director positions in my community. I serve as a Community Housing Assistance board member assisting the community with low rent housing. I work with area farmers and ranchers as the Dunn County Soil Conservation Director to promote best practices in soil management, tree plantings, and watershed practices. I also serve as chairman of a non-profit group called the Indigenous Media Freedom Alliance, which serves as a platform for Native American journalism. These three positions are vastly different in nature, but ultimately they give me a different perspective on rural, community and Native issues. These opportunities allow me to give back to my community some of the teaching and learning that I have been blessed with.

I put my doctoral education to work within a local school district where I serve as an elementary school boys' basketball coach, (my boys happen to be on the team). I also serve as the head girls' basketball coach (my daughter is on that team) where I am doing what I love. I have had the great privilege to serve as a substitute teacher at the local school; I have taught everything from kindergarten classes to high school home

economics. This experience has given me greater perspective about the education field as well as keeping me grounded in the education environment.

These many opportunities to serve in leadership and educational roles would not have been possible without the persistence of my committee chair, Dr. Stonehouse, my committee members, and the incredible professors who assisted me to see what was not easily seen and to hear the voices of those who were muted.

I took great delight in conducting this study. The participants taught me lessons ranging from tribal history and problem solving to the common aspects we share being and living as Native men. I was able to better understand leadership through their personal narratives and how they use their understanding of leadership to give back to our people. These men all talked about the people who were their role models—parents, grandparents, wives, and close relatives—and who pushed them past the finish line by supporting, encouraging, and modeling. They taught me much more than leadership; they taught me how to raise my children to help them become successful.

During the past seven years of my walkabout, my twin boys are now almost teenagers and eagerly await me to take them deer hunting, hiking in the hills, and playing “Fortnite” together. They have asked for the past three years how my book is coming along and proudly tell their friends that their dad is going to be a “doctor.” Their interest in my work and wanting me to explain what this all means to them has a deeper meaning for me. I believe I am their “trailblazer” and hope that by sharing my personal journey it helps them to value education in a way that consumes them as much as it has me.

My daughters are in middle and high school now and have grown to be beautiful young women. Their growth as individuals over the past years has been a pleasure to

witness. They check in on me from time to time as I am writing and are equally enthusiastic for the doctoral process to be completed.

My wife is the most excited of us all. She has had to sacrifice her personal time and goals to help me achieve a dream. She, too, works in the primary grades and has a love of education. She has inspired me daily to keep working and not to give up on my goal. For that I am eternally grateful.

## **APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**  
Letter of Introduction to Participants

470 89 M Ave SW  
Halliday, ND 58636

May 15, 2016

Dear Participant;

I am following up on my email regarding your participation in a research study that I will conduct under the direction of Dr. Pauline Stonehouse, Advisor, of the University of North Dakota. This will be a study of success and leadership through the eyes of intergenerational, Father-Son Three Affiliated Tribal members. You have been identified as a person of interest through your current and past activities in leadership and the success you have had in the past or presently having. Upon completion of the study, you will receive a bound copy of the research study.

I am requesting to make two separate interviews with you at your place of work or at a place of your choosing. The third interview I would like to meet with you, your Father-Son, and your family in an informal place to eat and share stories. This study is being done through the portraiture method, meaning I would be seeking your permission to not only interview you but to take pictures that would be included in my final dissertation study. Throughout the research process, I will provide copies of my data, analyses, photographs, and interpretations for you to check the accuracy and credibility.

Please return a letter indicating your understanding of your involvement with the study, a description of what you are agreeing to let me do, and an agreement to participate in the study. I have enclosed a template for you to use in writing your letter of agreement as well as copies of the introductory letter and interview questions that I will be using in the study. You may return the letter of agreement and signed consent form to me in the enclosed stamped, addressed envelope.

If you have any questions regarding this research project, please contact my advisor, Dr. Pauline Stonehouse, or me at the phone numbers or email addresses listed below. This research project has been approved on, #XXX, within the guidelines for use of human subjects established by the University of North Dakota. Please note the University of North Dakota International Review Board requirements are included in the consent form. If you have any other questions or concerns regarding this research, please call the Research Development and Compliance office at 701-777-4279.

Thank you for your time and cooperation with my study.

Sincerely,

Chad Dahlen  
Doctoral Student  
University of North Dakota  
701-421-6452  
[Chad.B.Dahlen@ndus.edu](mailto:Chad.B.Dahlen@ndus.edu)

Pauline Stonehouse, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
University of North Dakota  
701-777-4163  
[Pauline.Stonehouse@email.und.edu](mailto:Pauline.Stonehouse@email.und.edu)

**APPENDIX B**  
Template for Approval Letter

Chad Dahlen  
470 89M Ave SW  
Halliday, ND 58636

Dear Mr. Dahlen;

As a perspective selection of your research topic, I give you permission to conduct your research on leadership and success through intergenerational viewpoints. The nature of your research has been explained to me. I understand that you will make three visits to a site of my choosing for the purposes of collecting data by (a) interviewing, (b) photographing, (c) observing and (d) videotaping our conversations. I also understand that you will interview family members in our last session just to gather some more insights into our previous conversations.

I agree to make a room or meeting place available for the interviews. I agree to being photographed, videotaped and audiotaped during our interview sessions. I understand that the data collected will be used to do a portraiture study of leadership and success. I understand that participating in this study my image, words and thoughts will be a part of this research project and I agree to that

I understand that the data collected will be used to help in nation building for our particular tribe and for all tribes and I agree to be a part of this project. I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time without any repercussions from the researcher, the advisor and the University of North Dakota.

I understand that I will receive a bound copy of the research study following its completion.

I have signed and dated the consent form and enclosed it with this letter.

Sincerely,

Participant

**APPENDIX C**  
Consent Letter

*“Intergenerational Perspectives on Leadership by Men of the Three Affiliated Tribes”*

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Chad Dahlen in the Educational Leadership Department under the supervision of his advisor, Dr. Pauline Stonehouse of the University of North Dakota. This research study will provide a portraiture and a voice for select members of the Three Tribes to share their stories of success and leadership as well as helping to define what these terms mean from a Three Affiliated Tribal stance. The study will be completed over a six-week period beginning around May 15, 2016 and ending by July 15, 2016. This research study will involve three interviews lasting 45 to 60 minutes that will be audio and videotaped for later transcription, photographed for the final manuscript, along with observations and document review.

No foreseeable risks have been identified to the participants for this study. The possible benefit that may result from this study is the development of a success and leadership model for the Three Affiliated Tribes. However, I cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this study besides the recognition that you provided valuable insight to this project. If you choose to participate, there will be no compensation for your participation.

As part of this unique study, your interviews will be recorded, video- taped and I will be photographing you at various times during the interview process. You will be agreeing to allow your images (photographs) to be part of my final manuscript. Any information from this study, the data and consent forms will be kept in a separate locked file cabinet for a minimum of three years after the completion of this study. Only the research, the advisor, and people who audit Institutional Review Board procedures will have access to the data. After three years, the researcher will shred the paper data, delete the word –processed data from the stored jump drives, and erase the audio, videotapes and photographs used in the interviews.

Participation is voluntary, and your decision whether or not to participate will not change your future relations with the Department of Educational Leadership or the University of North Dakota. If you decide to participate, you are free to leave the study at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about the research, you may call Chad Dahlen at 701-421-6452 or Dr. Pauline Stonehouse at 701 777-4163. If you have any other questions or concerns, please call the Research Development and Compliance office at 701-777-4279. You will be given a copy of this consent form for future reference.

All of my questions have been answered and I am encouraged to ask any questions that I may have concerning this study in the future.

I agree to participate in this study. Please check the appropriate box.

Yes       No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

(Please sign and return this consent form in the enclosed stamped, addressed envelope.)

## **APPENDIX D**

### Interview Protocol

Interview Time: 45-60 minutes  
Interviewer: Chad Dahlen

Consent: Review signed consent form and ask if there are any questions. Inform the participant that they are under no obligation to participate in the project and may end the interview at any time. Inform the participant that the interview will take about 45-60 minutes.

#### Questions

1. In your own words, how would you define leadership and success?
2. How do you think your definitions of leadership and success differ, if at all, from a non-Native viewpoint?
3. What strategies did you use to get where you are at today?
4. What tools do you think other Three Tribes members used to become successful?
5. What tools do you think other Three Tribes members used to become leaders?
6. What is the criteria you use to define if someone else is either successful or a leader?
7. What are the criteria you use to tell if you are being successful or being a leader?
8. How do you think the older and younger generations hold a person as being successful or being a leader?
9. Tell me a story of one of your memories of being successful, of being a leader?
10. Do you consider yourself a success or a leader?
11. How have you used your success /leadership to help other people?
12. How can we provide more leadership/success training for our youth?

Thank you for your time. Within 10 working days, you will receive a copy of my notes from this interview. In order to ensure that I accurately recorded your thoughts, please review those notes and correct any inaccuracies in the report. Please return the interview notes with your corrections in the enclosed addressed, stamped envelope.



## APPENDIX E

### Letter to Participants Explaining Interview Process

Invitation to participate in the research project titled: *“Intergenerational Perspectives on Leadership by Men of the Three Affiliated Tribes”*

Dear Potential Participant,

I will be conducting interviews as part of a research study to increase our understanding of reflections and recollections regarding education and leadership. As a Three Affiliated Tribal Member, you are in an ideal position to give us valuable first hand information from your own perspective. I will be doing Father /Sons that are enrolled members of the Three Affiliated Tribes that have at least a 4 year college degree. This group of Father/Sons has shown to be exclusive and I am excited to see the results of this research study.

The interview takes around one hour and is very informal. I will be simply trying to capture your thoughts and perspectives on being a leader and what stories you have that have shaped your leadership style. This study is intended to provide future generations a view of life perspectives as Three Tribes males and your modern views and stories on leadership. I will be audio recording and taking pictures as the interview process goes along.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to our research and findings could lead to greater public understanding of computer science and the people in the field.

If you are willing to participate please respond back to my letter of invitation by email, text or phone at your earliest convenience. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

Thanks!

Chad Dahlen

Email: [chad.dahlen@gmail.com](mailto:chad.dahlen@gmail.com)

Cell phone: 701-421-6452

## APPENDIX F

Approval for Study by UND's Institutional Review Board

### THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**TITLE:** *“Intergenerational Perspectives on Leadership by Men of the Three Affiliated Tribes”*

**PROJECT DIRECTOR:** *Chad Dahlen (EDL Graduate Student)*

**PHONE #** *701-421-6452*

**DEPARTMENT:** *EDL*

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by ***Chad Dahlen of the University of North Dakota's Department of Education and Leadership***. The purpose of this project is to ***gather reflections and recollections regarding leadership and education. Particularly looking at what strategies you used to become successful and how has your education put you in positions of leadership. It will be a father/ son study of your stories.***

***This study is intended to provide future generations a view of life as a Three Affiliated tribal male and a modern day look at viewpoints on education, leadership styles and success stories that can be shared for future generations. In particular, the plan is to gather reflections of social life, religious ceremonies and celebrations, cultural experiences and community activities as centered on your life that helped you become the person that you are.***

Approximately ***3 interviews*** will be conducted over the duration of this project. Each interview will last approximately ***1 hour***. Individuals from the Three Tribes community may utilize the audiotapes collected, as well as the abstracts and transcriptions derived from them, as may future researchers. The tapes, abstracts and transcripts will be deposited in the ***Nueta, Hidatsa and Sahnish College*** in New Town, North Dakota and will be available to Three Tribes members and qualified researchers during normal business hours. No guarantee can be made as to the ultimate use of the tapes once deposited. However, it is anticipated that the tapes, abstracts or transcripts might be used ***to examine life as a Three Affiliated Tribal Member, particularly with regard to social life, educational and community activities.*** Copyright of the interview will transfer to the University of North Dakota.

If you choose to participate, there will be no monetary compensation. The only benefit to accrue to you will be ***the personal satisfaction of sharing your story about your success, education and leadership as a Three Affiliated Tribal member.*** Risks associated with this project are considered minimal. ***You may have some emotional discomfort in the reflection upon by-gone days, tragic events, or lost loved ones. If so, you may discontinue the process at any time.***

Due to the nature of this study, you will be identifiable as the narrator of your particular history. No confidentiality can be expected, nor is any offered if you choose to participate in this project.

Participation in this project is entirely voluntary, and your decision whether or not to participate will not change your future relations with the University of North Dakota, the *Department of Education*, or any of its members. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

The researcher conducting this study is Chad Dahlen. You may ask any questions you have now. If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact **Chad Dahlen** at **701-421-6452** during the day and at **701-938-0227** after hours. **You may also contact Dr. Pauline Stonehouse (Advisor) at the University of North Dakota at 701-777-4163.**

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at **(701) 777-4279**.

- You may also call this number about any problems, complaints, or concerns you have about this research study.
- You may also call this number if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is independent of the research team.
- General information about being a research subject can be found by clicking “Information for Research Participants” on the web site:  
<http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.cfm>

**I give consent to be audiotaped during this study.**

**Please initial:**         **Yes**         **No**

**I give consent to be videotaped during this study.**

**Please initial:**         **Yes**         **No**

**I give consent to be photographed during this study.**

**Please initial:**         **Yes**         **No**

**I give consent for my quotes to be used in the research with the understanding that I will be identified as the source of the quotes.**

**Please initial:**         **Yes**         **No**

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. A copy of this consent form will be stored with the archival data as a record that you consented to this study and you will also receive a copy of this consent form.

Subjects Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I have discussed the above points with the subject or, where appropriate, with the subject's legally authorized representative.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**APPENDIX G**  
Permission to Conduct Study by Three Affiliated Tribes



**MANDAN, HIDATSA & ARIKARA NATION**  
Three Affiliated Tribes \* Fort Berthold Indian Reservation  
404 Frontage Road New Town, ND 58763  
Tribal Business Council

Office of the Chairman  
Mark N. Fox

Dear Michelle Bowles –IRB/University of North Dakota,

The Three Affiliated Tribes hereby gives permission for Chad Dahlen, a Three Affiliated Tribal Member and a University of North Dakota graduate student, to conduct research regarding members of the Three Affiliated Tribes for his research study. The Three Affiliated Tribes has heard his research proposal and we agree to the involvement of tribal members in this study and to the nature of our involvement in this study. We agree as a tribe to participate in this study.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mark N. Fox".

Mark Fox Chairman of the Three Affiliated Tribes

Date: March 10, 2016

404 Frontage Road \* New Town, North Dakota \* 58763  
Phone: 701.627.4781 \* EXT. 8203 \* Fax: 701.627.3503

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