

Running Head: GIFTED NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS

**Gifted Native American Students—Overlooked and Underserved:
A Long-Overdue Call for Research and Action**

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Abstract

The SIG has as a major initiative to develop a national research agenda focused on gifted/creative/talented Native American students, as this population is one of the least researched, most overlooked and most underserved in the field. To launch the initiative, assumptions were drawn from a comprehensive review of the literature on gifted/talented/creative Native Americans. Because the literature is limited and dated, assumptions were reviewed and revised in May 2011 at the second annual leadership summit on identifying and serving gifted Native American Students in Ganado, AZ. This process of reviewing and revision the assumptions was used two more times, by teachers on the Standing Rock and Red Lake Reservations in South Dakota and Minnesota, respectively. Data from these three sites revealed differences and nuances among these three different population groups. The process resulted in more accurate and current assumptions for these three groups of students, as well as a replicable procedure for use with other Native populations. An initial research agenda was generated in collaboration with participants.

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The purposes of this paper are to test literature-based assumptions about gifted, Native American students and to begin to set a research agenda for the field of gifted education that addresses the real needs and gaps concerning the discovery and development of giftedness, creativity, and talent among Native American¹ populations. By setting a collaborative research agenda with three groups of Native Americans—the Diné, the Lakota, and the Ojibwe—we have begun to address the long-overdue inclusion of Native American children and their educators in research concerning giftedness, creativity, and talent. With the current emphasis in the field concerning the need to address issues of equity, under-identification, and underrepresentation, the time is right to ensure that Native American children are included in this important focus.

To set a research agenda, we first reviewed the gifted education literature and sought input from educators on the Navajo, Standing Rock, and Red Lake reservations concerning literature-based assumptions identified from the literature about gifted, Native American youth. By working with these educators we confirmed some of the assumptions, identified misconceptions, and added new understandings to what we found in the literature. Differences existed among the three groups concerning these assumptions, misconceptions, and new understandings, confirming that each group needs to be viewed as its own culture with unique characteristics and needs. Next we engaged the educators in a discussion about research that would be important to helping discover and develop talents among Native American children and youth.

Background

¹ Another generally accepted term is American Indian/Alaskan Native, however our initial work was with the Diné (Navajo) people, and they prefer the term Native American.

We conducted a comprehensive review of the extant literature on gifted, Native American children, which revealed a limited number of empirical studies, scholarly articles, chapters, and government reports in the past 40 years (e.g., Bradley, 1989; Christensen, 1991; George, 1987; Grigg, Moran, & Kuang, 2010; Hartley, 1991; Herring, 1996; Kirschenbaum, 1989; Mead, Grigg, Moran, & Kuang, 2010; Montgomery, 2001; Omdal, Rude, Betts, & Toy, 2010; Peterson, 1999; Tonemah, 1991). This literature about gifted, Native Americans is largely dated and frequently generic, generally viewing all Native American children as if they were one population, leading to stereotyping and overgeneralization and to little nuanced knowledge of the needs and talent pathways of these diverse groups of people. Other literature, from outside the field of gifted education, concerning Native American children frequently takes a deficit viewpoint, focusing on poverty, learning deficiencies, violence, and substance abuse (Brandt, 1992; Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010; Mead, Grigg, Moran, & Kuang, 2010; National Caucus of Native American State Legislators, 2008) In reviewing the literature from within the field of gifted education we identified general assumptions and grouped them into four overarching themes: *Talent Development*; *Culture and Traditions*; *Cognitive Styles and Learning Preferences*; and *Communication*. The assumptions underlying each of these four themes are contained in the results section in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Talent Development

Several assumptions were identified that defined the theme of talent development in the gifted literature. The United States Department of Education (USDOE; 1993) acknowledged that gifted, creative and talented young people *exist within all cultural and economic groups* in a variety of areas of human endeavor. This same definition acknowledged outstanding talent or potential for outstanding talent as recognizable when young people are compared with others

“similar in age, experience, or environment” (p. 3, emphasis added). Despite longstanding and severe underrepresentation in programs for gifted and talented children, gaps in achievement, and lower performance on measures of achievement than most other cultural groups (Grigg, Moran, & Kuang, 2010; Mead et al., 2010), talent exists among Native American populations. Recognition, development, services, and programs are needed to nurture these youth (USDOE, 1993). Unfortunately, most Native American children and youth with high potential go unrecognized in today’s schools, resulting in the underdevelopment of their gifts and talents and ultimately a loss to their communities (Yoon & Gentry, 2009). In addition to being underrepresented as gifted (Christensen, 1991; Hartley, 1991; Tonemah, 1987, 1991), Native American students are not only more likely to live in poverty, but also less likely to graduate from high school, attend, or graduate from college (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008; Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010) than their more affluent, non-native peers.

These issues of underrepresentation and underperformance warrant re-examination of identification and development methods for these populations. According to the literature, early identification, enrichment programming, and on-going identification should be done in a variety of areas (Gentry, 2009). Furthermore, for Native youth, specific considerations should be given to develop spiritualistic, naturalistic, leadership, visual/spatial, artistic, musical, creative problem solving, and communication strengths (Tonemah & Brittan, 1985; Gentry, 2010). And programs and curriculum should be tied to culture, and delivered according to learning preferences and cognitive styles of the students (Omdal et al. 2010) with a focus on opportunities to solve relevant problems in a small group setting. Unfortunately, Native American children living on reservations face a “triple threat” to their academic achievement because they deal with poverty,

marginalization of their cultures, and the challenges of living in a remote, rural area, without the technology and basic resources taken for granted in most schools and communities.

Culture and Traditions

Native societies have been described as collective (Bradley, 1989; George, 1987; Kirschenbaum, 1989; Sisk, 1989) and matriarchal (Hartley, 1991; Gentry, 2010) where authority and elders were highly respected (Christensen, 1991). Christensen described tribal leaders, spiritual leaders, and medicine people as valuable community members, and suggested oral traditions, ceremonies, and storytelling as important facets of the culture. She further stated that according to Native standards, shamans, holy men, and medicine people are the only individuals actually perceived as gifted by tribal people. These gifted individuals understand that their abilities are given to them by the Creator with careful instructions from the Master of Life, and should be practiced properly for the purpose of enhancing the life experiences of the next generations.

Christensen (1991) and Peterson (1999) also stressed the importance of traditions and cultural knowledge being handed down to future generations through ceremonies and storytelling. According to Herring (1996) and Sisk (1989) religion and spirituality were integral to Native Americans' way of life. Additionally, assumptions existed in the literature that Native people lived in harmony with nature (Zintz, 1962), pursued a non-materialistic life (Sanders, 1987), and valued patience and self-control (Bradley, 1989). A present, cyclical view of time was prevalent (Bradley, 1989; Garrison, 1989), so therefore it was important that Native youth understood their culture and accepted the responsibility of handing down these cultural values and traditions to future generations.

Cognitive Styles and Learning Preferences

With regard to cognitive styles and learning preferences, Bradley (1989) reported that Native American children preferred cooperation and sharing. Hartley (1991) explained that these children learned the best when they could watch and learn then engage in hands-on, active participation. They then needed some time to think about, practice, and perform the task. Several researchers discussed the spatial strengths of Native American children (Preston, 1991; Sarouphim & Maker, 2009), as well as their ability to engage in simultaneous processing (Davidson, 1992; Preston, 1991) while emphasizing their need to be humble in their public displays of knowledge (Hartley, 1991; Robinson, 1991). Christensen (1991) and participants of the Inaugural Leadership Summit on Identifying and Servicing Gifted Native American Students (Gentry, 2010) discussed students' preferences for storytelling and auditory learning. Additionally, 2010 Summit participants emphasized students' preferences for psychomotor and physical learning. Finally, Montgomery (1989) suggested that Native American students had a naturalistic and holistic view of the world around them with concern for accuracy over speed in their educational endeavors.

Communication

Assumptions derived from the literature from the theme of communication were varied. Hartley (1991) stated that Native American students might be fluent in two or more languages. Montgomery (1989) reported that Native American children had soft, slow speech; they tended to be quiet, and had delayed responses. Zintz (1962) found minority groups (including Pueblo, Diné, and Spanish speaking students) in New Mexico placed emphasis on non-verbal communication. Christensen's (1991) evaluation of the teachers and their classrooms in an Ojibwe summer school revealed that these students were accustomed to indirect communication and that educators needed to be competent in the use of these skills. Hartley (1991) and Robbins

(1991) stressed that feelings and display of knowledge were neither openly expressed nor encouraged by teachers, parents, or within tribal traditions. When asked to describe the typical student, 2010 Summit participants stated that their students tended to be more introspective than questioning (Gentry, 2010).

Research Agenda Needed

To date, issues of talent development, giftedness, and creativity among Native Americans have largely been ignored in our field; yet these populations of students deserve our attention as researchers and educators. “As a group, Native American students are not afforded educational opportunities equal to other American students” (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2003, p. xi). However, individual differences among Native American populations should not be oversimplified or ignored, because the diverse nature of Native American cultures prohibits their generalization into one single cultural group. Input from educators on the reservations are needed because they are keenly aware of the need for research concerning the development of giftedness, creativity, and talent and they are able to articulate important areas that form the basis of this research. As a field we need to ensure that these populations of young people, their cultures, families, and educators are included in our research agenda.

Methods

Participants

One hundred teachers and administrators who work in schools located on the Diné, Lakota, and Ojibwe reservations participated in this study. The sample included 20 educators from the Diné Nation who attended the 2011 leadership summit on gifted Native Americans in Ganado, AZ, 16 teachers from the Lakota Nation, who attended a professional development day hosted by Sitting Bull College and the Standing Rock Tribal Education Department, and 64

teachers and administrators from the Ojibwe Nation in Red Lake, MN. Of the 100 teachers and administrators in the sample, 50% were Native American, 4% were Hispanic, and 46% were White. All worked full-time with Native American youth. Each of these sites enrolled 95 to 100% Native American students in their schools.

Data Analysis

We sought to determine if the assumptions we identified within the themes that emerged from the literature were applicable to the Diné, Lakota, and Ojibwe people in 2011, as many of the assumptions were generalized across several different Native American populations, in some instances the Native American population was not specified, and most were from dated literature. We applied Stead's (2006) reading analysis of non-fiction (RAN) framework with each focus group. Focus group participants were asked to analyze, refine, and augment the assumptions that we identified in the literature.

Specifically, at the 2011 Summit and at the Standing Rock Reservation professional development day we formed four groups and had each group review a different category of assumptions. As they read and discussed each assumption they were asked to identify those they felt to be correct, identify misconceptions, and to add new culturally specific understandings that did not appear within the literature. Group members then presented their revised assumptions to the large group, and then these assumptions were confirmed and further refined with input from members of the entire group. With the Ojibwe site in Minnesota, two colleagues presented the themes and underlying assumptions individually on a response form to the members of the Red Lake teaching and administrative staff during their professional development day. Educators were asked to complete the form and discuss their findings. Our research team then aggregated the responses from these educators.

Results

The focus groups from the three nations identified some commonalities and differences when they reviewed the literature-based assumptions under each of the four themes. The results of these analyses yielded unique perspectives across Native cultures that were representative of their tribal communities and in the schools in which these educators were employed. In the following sections these differences and similarities are presented and discussed by theme.

Theme 1: Considerations for Talent Development

Although members of all three tribal focus groups agreed with the assumptions found in the literature regarding talent development, they identified several new understandings. Table 1 contains these results. The Diné focus group pointed out the need for more positive Native American male role models primarily due to the high alcoholism rate on the reservation. Brandt (1992) found the lack of academically successful role models to be a contributing factor to the number of dropouts among Native American students. For many students a caring adult with whom they can relate can be a lifeline that keeps them in school and puts them on the path to success. Further, the Diné focus group identified a need for greater emphasis on and recognition of verbal and mathematical strengths while acknowledging the importance of spiritualistic, naturalistic, leadership, visual-spatial, artistic, musical, creative problem solving and communication strengths stated in the literature (Tonemah & Brittan, 1985; Gentry, 2010)

Table 1.

Analysis of the Assumptions Concerning Theme 1: Talent Development

Diné	Lakota	Ojibwe	Assumptions	New Understandings
✓	✓	✓	Talented youth exist among Native populations (USDOE, 1993).	<i>Diné</i> Diné boys see the female figure as dominate in the family structure, “boys

✓	✓	✓	Recognition, development, services, and programs are needed to nurture these youth (USDOE, 1993).	know their place.” There is a need for more positive Native American male role models.
✓	✓	✓	More youth can achieve at higher levels than current expectations indicate (USDOE, 1993).	Group work and relevant problem solving should be focused and aligned with student needs.
✓	✓	✓	For Native youth, specific considerations should be given to develop spiritualistic, naturalistic, leadership, visual/spatial, artistic, musical, creative problem solving, and communication (naat' aanii) strengths (Tonemah & Brittan, 1985; Gentry, 2010).	These learning styles are areas that others perceive Native Americans as “being” – more acknowledgment should be given that Native Americans have strengths in verbal and mathematical areas as well.
✓	✓	✓	Programs and curriculum should be tied to culture, and delivered according to learning preferences and cognitive styles of the students (Omdal et al. 2010).	Lakota There is a lack of knowledge among Lakota students as to their post-secondary educational and career options.
✓	✓	✓	Group work and solving relevant problems should be a focus. [Group work is important, however just like other students, different preferences exist among Diné students; some prefer to work individually] (Gentry, 2010).	There is a lack of cultural understanding between Lakota students and non-Native educators.
✓	✓	✓	Early identification, enrichment programming, and on-going identification should be done in a variety of areas (Gentry, 2009).	Ojibwe Students are aware of and want to be a part of the global community Cultural teachings should begin with the home and with elders

Educators within the Lakota Nation pointed out that students lacked knowledge about their post-secondary educational and career options. Though they agreed that there should be a cultural connection within the talent development curriculum (Omdal et al., 2010), members of the Lakota group identified a lack of cultural understanding between Native students and non-Native educators. They emphasized that this cultural disconnect needed to be addressed in order to improve teaching, learning, and talent development. However, members of the Ojibwe focus group indicated that cultural teachings had to begin at home and with the elders before they could be addressed in the schools. They also noted that their students were very aware of and wanted to be a part of the larger global community.

That members of these focus groups agreed with the assumptions concerning talent development reinforces that the literature in our field accurately reflects considerations concerning developing talent among these populations. As affirming as this is, it is troubling that even though as a field we seem to have the right instincts concerning developing talents among these underserved populations, as indicated by our literature, we have yet to fully engage in this work. It is equally important that school administrators and staff commit to professional development that will increase their knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of the students and their families that they serve (Thornton & Sanchez, 2010), especially in the case of non-native educators who work with Native American children. These educators, together with their Native American colleagues must embrace the idea that talent exists within the Native American populations and they must advocate for and develop services for these children. Unfortunately, with some exceptions, in many of the reservation schools that serve these students, few if any are identified as gifted, and fewer still receive any services (Yoon & Gentry, 2009).

Theme 2: Culture and Traditions

Members of each tribal focus group identified several assumptions within the culture and traditions theme that they believed were no longer relevant to their communities (see Table 2). Although the Ojibwe agreed with the assertion of a collective society (Bradley, 1989; George, 1987; Kirschenbaum, 1989; Sisk, 1989), both the Diné and Lakota found that this notion did not represent current views within their tribal communities. Rather, these groups stated that the idea of a collective society tended to be generational and was not prevalent with today's youth. The Diné identified self-determination as the primary value for their youth; whereas, the Lakota said that the shift was a result of changing family structures with more single parent homes and "kids raising kids." They also said that even though women are influential within the family, there had been movement away from the traditional matriarchal structure within their community. Additionally, the Lakota group explained that the importance of traditions and cultural knowledge varied widely from family to family.

Table 2.

Analysis of the Assumptions Concerning Culture and Traditions

Diné	Lakota	Ojibwe	Assumptions	New Understandings
No	No	✓	Collective society (individual less important than the group) (Bradley, 1989; George, 1987; Kirschenbaum, 1989; Sisk, 1989).	<i>Diné</i> Clan system following the mother's family. The uncle serves as the role model. In schools, group work usually follows clan groups.
✓	No	✓	Matriarchal society (Hartley, 1991; Gentry, 2010).	Non-materialism is not necessarily true for the current younger generation of Diné.
✓	✓	✓	Respect for authority and elders (Christensen, 1991).	Tribal leaders are considered politicians and therefore not valued like others in this assumption.
✓	✓	✓	Traditions and cultural knowledge are important to hand down to future generations (Christensen, 1991; Peterson, 1999).	Alcoholism affects all ages from infants to elderly.

✓	✓	✓	Oral traditions, ceremonies, and storytelling exist and are important (Christensen, 1991).	Teachers are valued. Many 40+ year olds return to school – spiritual awakening.
✓	✓	✓	Present, cyclical view of time is prevalent (Garrison, 1989; Bradley, 1989).	There are more women in the workforce than men. Self-determination is valued.
✓	✓	No	Religion and spirituality are ways of life (Herring, 1996; Sisk, 1989).	Lakota The idea of a collective society tends to be generational and is not as prevalent with the Lakota youth, often due to changing family structures with more single parents or “kids raising kids”.
✓	No	No	Live in harmony with nature (Zintz, 1962),	Though women are influential in the family, the Lakota have moved away from a traditional matriarchal society.
No	✓	No	Non-materialistic (Sanders, 1987).	The importance of traditions and cultural knowledge vary from family to family. Schools have been given a mission to integrate culture into the curriculum.
✓	✓	No	Patience and self-control are valued (Bradley, 1989).	The value of religion and spirituality is dependent upon the family.
No	No	✓	Tribal leaders, spiritual leaders, and medicine people are valuable community members (Christensen, 1991).	The idea of living in harmony with nature is a pre-70’s stereotype that is no longer true today. Though most students are non-materialistic, it may be more due to a lack of resources and many teachers see this changing. Tribal leaders are viewed as politicians and are therefore not valued as others in this group. Practice “give-away” – honor loved ones’ achievements/life.

				<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ojibwe</i></p> <p>For youth, ceremonies are more important than oral traditions, particularly pow-wows.</p> <p>There is primarily a focus on the here-and-now with little consideration for the future; seasonal cycles have lost their importance.</p> <p>Connections to religion and spirituality are dependent upon the family.</p> <p>Rejection of religion but a search for spirituality; these concepts are being replaced by gang affiliation for some youth.</p> <p>Widespread abuse of animals, overfishing for profit, and pollution of land and water yet many youth “escape to woods/lake/walking when stressed and need to think”</p> <p>Possessions are important as status symbols; money is equated to power and happiness</p> <p>Very little patience and lack of self-control.</p>
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Both the Diné and the Lakota stated that spiritual leaders and medicine people were valued (Christensen, 1991), but tribal leaders were viewed as politicians and therefore did not garner the same respect. Focus group members explained that Ojibwe youth, though searching for spirituality, have begun to reject formal religion. These focus group members stated that this spiritual quest has resulted in many students turning to gang affiliation. They explained that these students also show a lack of patience and self-control. Both the Diné and Ojibwe reported an

increase in materialistic attitudes among their youth, who view possessions as a status symbol and who equate money to power and happiness.

When asked about the assumption that Native Americans live in harmony with nature (Zintz, 1962), members of both the Lakota and Ojibwe groups rejected this idea. The Lakota identified this as a pre-1970 stereotype that is no longer true today. The Ojibwe focus group members reported that widespread abuse of animals, overfishing for profit, and extensive pollution of land and water were common. They did however state that it was not uncommon for youth to escape to the woods or the lake when they were feeling stressed or needed time to think.

Though these three focus groups identified several misconceptions related to their communities and schools, there were many assumptions related to the importance of culture and traditions that they identified as relevant to all three populations. Included in these is the importance of traditional cultural knowledge (Christensen, 1991; Peterson, 1999) through oral traditions, ceremonies, and storytelling (Christensen, 1991). Students who attend schools run by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) are more likely than their peers in the dominant culture public schools to experience opportunities for cultural integration into the school day (Mead et al., 2010). Integrating cultural understanding and acceptance into the fabric of the school environment can serve to foster relationships with, connect to, and inspire learners of all ages (Demmert, Grissmer, & Towner, 2006).

Theme 3: Cognitive Style and Learning Preferences

Table 3 shows that members of the Diné focus group rejected the cognitive style and learning preferences assumption that their students had a greater concern for accuracy over speed (Montgomery, 1989). Additionally, participants explained that Diné students are more inclined to publicly demonstrate their academic achievements, contrary to the assumption of humility found

in the literature (Hartley, 1991; Robbins, 1991). Although the Lakota group members affirmed the assumption of humility with regard to academic achievement, the teachers explained that they believed this humility was out of fear of being rejected by their peers for being smart rather than an inherent sense of humility. They also rejected the assumption of anonymity put forth by participants of the 2010 Native American Summit on Gifted Education (Gentry, 2010), but did acknowledge that this varied from student to student. Ojibwe educators explained that their students placed little value in practice and that in some instances, viewed it as a weakness. Further, they stated that many of their students viewed aggressiveness as a normal behavior, with the younger generation being pushed to become more assertive with a desire for instant gratification and self-preservation. They concluded that these values have led to an increase in violence. Finally, focus group members from the Lakota and Ojibwe nations reported that today's youth have little or no connection to the Earth and that naturalistic views have been replaced by the ideologies of pop culture.

Table 3.

Analysis of the Assumptions on Cognitive Styles and Learning Preferences

Diné	Lakota	Ojibwe	Assumptions	New Understandings
No	✓	✓	Public display of knowledge is not encouraged (humility) (Hartley, 1991; Robbins, 1991).	<i>Diné</i> There are differences in the learning preferences of urban and rural (Rez) Diné youth.
✓	✓	✓	Cooperative and sharing (Bradley, 1989).	<i>Lakota</i> Though suppressing displays of knowledge is seen in school, it is more out of fear of being rejected by peers for being smart, "which is not cool". The level of anonymity is dependent upon the
✓	No	✓	Anonymity (Gentry, 2010).	
✓	✓	No	Non-competitive, non-aggressive (Tonemah, 1991).	
✓	✓	✓	Watch, learn, then do (Hartley, 1991).	
✓	✓	No	Practice (Hartley, 1991).	

✓	✓	✓	Hands-on, participation. (Hartley, 1991).	individual.
✓	✓	✓	Spatial strengths (Preston, 1991; Sarouphim & Maker, 2009).	Self-discipline often leads to perfectionist tendencies. Students prefer to learn through modeling.
✓	✓	✓	Simultaneous processing (Davidson, 1992; Preston, 1991).	There is little or no connection to the Earth, rather the focus is on instant gratification.
✓	No	No	Naturalistic, holistic views (Montgomery, 1989).	<i>Ojibwe</i>
✓	✓	✓	Storytelling, auditory learning (Christensen, 1991; Gentry, 2010).	Tend to be quiet and guarded with most preferring to work individually rather than in groups.
✓	✓	✓	Psychomotor, physical learning (Gentry, 2010).	High incidence rates of aggressiveness; fighting and aggression are seen as the norm.
No	✓	✓	Concern for accuracy over speed (Montgomery, 1989).	The younger generation is being pushed to be more assertive, sometimes to the point of aggression. Desire for instant gratification and self-preservation. Little value is seen in practice and can be seen as a sign of weakness. Naturalistic and holistic views have been replaced by the ideals of pop culture.

The peer networks with which students surround themselves have a profound influence on their achievement since the members tend to have similar values, levels of achievement, and academic goals (Anderman & Freeman, 2004; Bandura, 1986, 1988; Patrick, Anderman, & Ryan, 2002; Schunk & Pajares, 2009). This influence can be seen in many of the new understandings put forth by the focus groups. They noted that just like other students, different cognitive styles and learning preferences exist among their students. Thus, it is important to cultivate a learning environment in which achievement is valued and expected among the students.

Theme 4: Communication

As with the talent development theme, the three focus groups were in agreement in their evaluation of the assumptions of communication, as depicted in Table 4. Hartley (1991) compared the similarities and differences among gifted Navajo and gifted students in the dominant culture. She compared three communities which she labeled as Traditional—those who lived on the reservation, Acculturated—Navajo students who lived within a community in which they had become integrated and assimilated with the dominant Anglo culture, and one Anglo community. One of the findings from her study was that gifted Navajo students may be fluent in two or more languages, an assertion that was generalized to all Native American students and with which all three focus groups disagreed in 2011. All groups identified English as the primary language spoken by the students in their schools, with very few fluent or even familiar with their native languages. Members of the Ojibwe focus group said that many members of their community view Ojibwe as a dying language as a result of this lack of fluency in and understanding of the language. Though the Diné language is taught in schools on the reservation (The Navajo Nation Department of Diné Education, 2011), the difficulty lies in the fact that Navajo is an oral language that was never intended to have a written form. Thus, for many Diné students, learning their native language can be viewed as more of an impediment to learning than an asset, resulting in a lack of fluency in both the Diné and English languages. This is not to say that teaching the language is unimportant (as clearly it is very important to the survival of the culture and language) rather it is to acknowledge that some Diné students continue to struggle with both languages.

Table 4.

Analysis of the Assumptions of Communication

Diné	Lakota	Ojibwe	Assumptions	New Understandings
✓	✓	✓	Soft, slow speech, quiet, few interjections, delayed responses (Montgomery, 1989).	<i>Diné</i> Diné is an oral language that was not intended to have a written form.
✓	✓	✓	Non-verbal communication emphasized (Zintz, 1962).	Educators view the Navajo language as an impediment.
✓	✓	✓	Indirect, non-verbal cues to speaker or listener (Christensen, 1991).	Diné students often lack fluency in both the Dine' and English languages.
No	No	No	May be fluent in two or more languages (Hartley, 1991).	Strong visual-spatial skills incorporated into traditional Dine' communication.
✓	✓	✓	Introspective rather than questioning (Gentry, 2010).	Concern that lack of expression may contribute to alcoholism rates.
✓	✓	✓	Feelings unlikely to be openly expressed (Hartley, 1991).	<i>Lakota</i> Many Lakota students are placed in Special Education programs due to a lack of understanding of their communication norms. The majority of Lakota students speak English only. Many students speak in gang related slang. It takes time for Lakota students to warm up to non-Native peers.
				<i>Ojibwe</i> Few are fluent in the Ojibwe language which some see as a dying language

Agreeing with Montgomery's (1989) assertion that Native students have a soft, slow speech pattern, are generally quiet in class with limited interjections, and frequently have delayed response times, Lakota group members stated that a lack of understanding of these

communication norms by non-Native teachers frequently resulted in students being identified and placed in Special Education programs. Additionally, although they identified English as the primary language, they expressed concern that their students most often used gang related slang. Placing value on the language and understanding communication styles of the youth with which educators work is key to working successfully with them. This value and understanding is also important to conducting valuable, nuanced research, through a lens of understanding (Peterson, 1999).

A Call for Future Research

All of the barriers associated with poverty (Callahan, 2007; Ford, 2007; Miller, 2004; Wyner, Bridgeland, & DiIulio, 2009), with being a member of a marginalized culture (Bernal, 2007; Ford, 1998), and with living in remote, rural areas (Bauch, 2001; Bryant, 2007) deeply affect high-potential children living on these three reservations. Typically, reservation schools are poorly funded; lack up-to-date infrastructure and access to technology; struggle with attracting and retaining high-quality teachers; face drop-out rates many times greater than those in other schools in their states; and produce fewer graduates who continue their education at the postsecondary level (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008; Grigg et al., 2010; Mead et al., 2010).

The major focus of this initiative is to address the needs of Native American children and their educators by conducting research and providing resources that will lead to improvement in the recognition and development of talent among these children. Thus, once the assumptions were refined and agreed upon, participants generated important areas for research related to discovering and developing talents among Native children from varying populations. The results of these efforts are outlined in Table 5 and reflect the perceived interests and needs of members

of the educational community on these reservations, rather than the research interests of those of us from the outside.

Table 5.

Important Areas for Research as Identified by Study Participants

Potential Researchable Questions by Categorical Area

Culture and Tradition

Do teachers take into consideration cultural issues?
 How do 21st century skills align with the specific tribal philosophy of life and education?
 How do youth relate to traditional ceremonies?
 How do youth fit into the assumptions of tradition and culture?
 How are cultural values changing with the generations?
 How does knowledge of traditional ways affect students' sense of self, self-esteem, and achievement?
 What generalizations can be made across settings, and what differences exist across settings (rural/urban/remote)?

Family Roles and Connections

What enrichment can be developed/provided for parents of gifted students?
 Many children lack basic supplies (e.g., desks, chairs, a place to study, lights, paper, school supplies, technology) needed to do their school work at home. How can these basic needs be addressed?
 What role does family play in school success?
 How can home-school connections be strengthened?
 What methods can be used to effectively connect students (and/or their families) to the "outside" world?

Gender

Are male students at risk?
 What methods best address the needs of gifted Diné, Lakota, or Ojibwe boys?
 What implication does gender have on educational services and their delivery?
 How does the matriarchal society affect the social and emotional development of the whole child, boys and girls?
 What can be done about gangs?
 How can youth be connected to school and education?

Curricular and Instructional Considerations

How can the non-verbal, visual, and spatial strengths of these youth enhance their learning and success?
 How do the spatial strengths of these children fit with STEM education, specifically engineering?
 How can curriculum be adapted to fit the knowledge, background, and experiences of the children?
 What is the role of problem-based learning in educating these populations?
 In what ways can teachers' use of non-verbal strategies encourage communication?
 How can non-verbal communication and activities enhance learning?

Can teachers' better meet students' needs through accountability, goal setting, and reflective practice?

Technology

What is the role of technology in this generation of learners?
 How can technology bring learning to the reservation?
 How does technology inform the culture of today's generation Native students?
 What about the technological divide, its effects, and how can it be addressed?
 How can the need for infrastructure in many schools be addressed?

Connections to the Future

How can innovation and creativity be promoted among this generation of learners to improve infrastructure and living conditions on the reservation?
 What steps can be taken to address the tension between educational attainment and the poor job market on the reservations?
 How can educated young people effectively bring their knowledge and skills home to the Reservation?
 What tensions exist between education and the job market?

It is our hope that researchers will find the work discussed in this paper interesting, compelling, and replicable. We encourage others to test assumptions and to take the time to learn about the culture they intend to study. We encourage our colleagues to include nuances associated with Native American students and to include these students in their work, even if the sample size is very small.

By setting a collaborative research agenda with these three Native American populations, we have begun to address the long-overdue inclusion of Native American children and their educators in research concerning giftedness, creativity, and talent. We invite others to consider this research agenda or to replicate this process with other underserved Native American populations to set similar, important, research agendas.

Limitations

It should be noted that these findings are dependent upon the tribal communities represented and are not generalizable to all tribal communities within the three Native Nations

represented or to members of these nations who live off of the reservations. Further, the procedures for data collected at the Red Lake, MN site varied from the procedures used in Ganado, AZ, and at Sitting Bull College on the Standing Rock Reservation. First, the themes and assumptions were given to each member of the Red Lake educational community to individually assess, rather than discussed and evaluated in small groups. Further, no data were collected as to the identification of future areas of research from these participants. Finally, we would like to refer to a comment made by one Ojibwe teacher when asked to participate, “I will not fill this out. If you need research about Natives, come and live with us for a year and visit with the families around here. It’s not even accurate because there are different degrees of being traditional.” It is important to note the validity of this statement, the desire of this population to be recognized, and that ours is just a beginning effort. With 565 federally recognized Native tribes, there is much work that needs to be done to address the needs of each of these *unique* populations and it is our hope that others will join us in this important work.

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