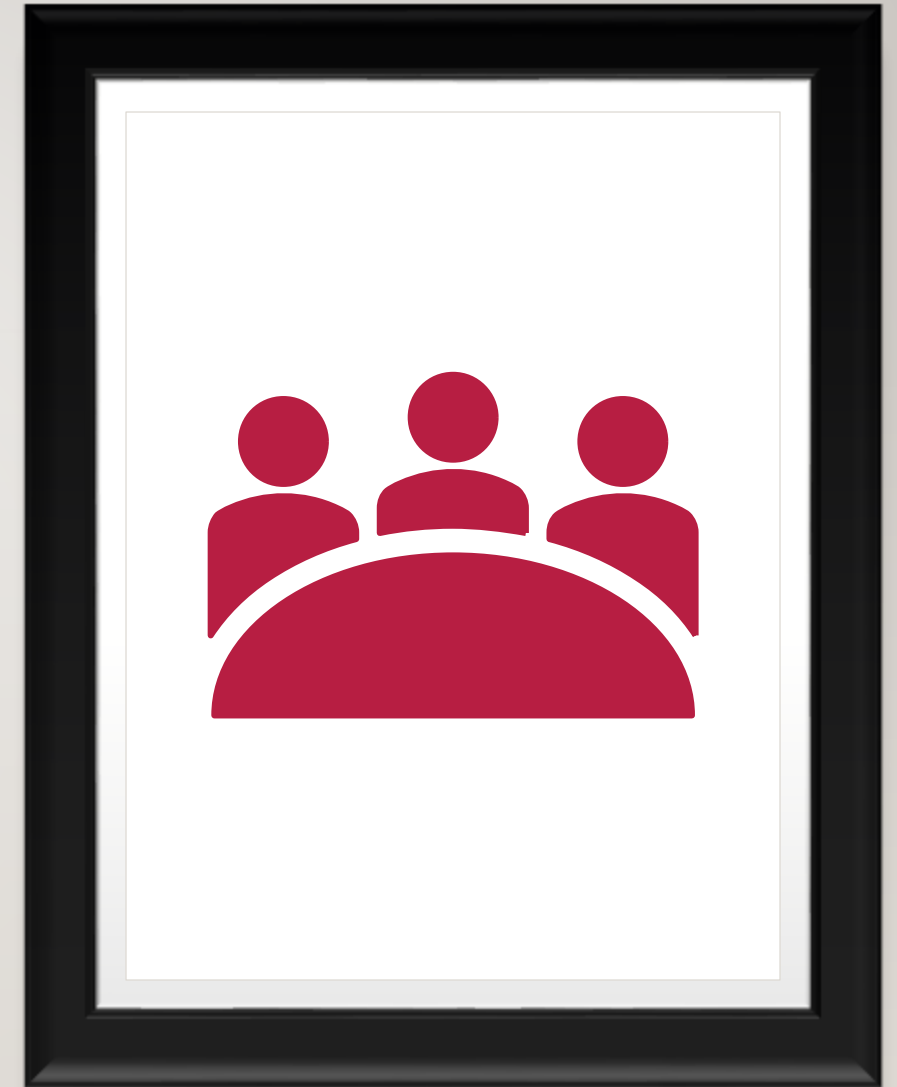


COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN THE WIND RIVER RESERVATION

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AGENDA

- Thank you- Grant support
- Acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples
- **Project: Collaborative Learning (Research)and Professional Development Project in the Wind River Reservation**

Why this project- literature review

- Context & Process
- Approach: Collaborative Community Based Learning/Professional development (PD)
- Objectives
 - Deepen Understanding of Indigenous Pedagogies
 - Increase Educators Cultural Competence
 - Strengthen Partnerships with Tribal Communities.
- Outcomes
- Q & questions.

Thank you!

**THANK YOU:
EVERETT D. AND
ELIZABETH
LANTZ
DISTINGUISHED
PROFESSORSHIP
GRANT**

- I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Donor's – of the Everett D. and Elizabeth Lantz Distinguished Professorship, the College of Education, and the University of Wyoming for the generous support of my project: **Community Based Collaborative Learning (Research) and Professional Development Project in the Wind River Reservation**. This project has made significant strides in exploring the educational best practices when working with Native American students. Additionally, the project has explored challenges by educators in the Wind River Reservation, while also supporting the professional development of Culturally Relevant Pedagogies (CRP).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' HISTORICAL EXPERIENCES

- *"We collectively acknowledge that the University of Wyoming occupies the ancestral and traditional lands of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Crow, and Shoshone Indigenous peoples along with other Native tribes who call the Great Basin and Rocky Mountain region home. We recognize, support, and advocate alongside Indigenous individuals and communities who live here now, and with those forcibly removed from their Homelands."* University of Wyoming Statement
- [ASUW Senate Bill #](#)

5 WHY THIS PROJECT

- Indigenous students: less likely to:
 - Have lowest educational attainment of any group in U.S.
 - Experience high school dropout rate double the national average
 - Less likely to meet local and national testing standards
 - 49% graduate from high school (Whites: 76%)
 - 13% have a BA (compared to 25% general population)
 - Source: Rachel Bryan (2017). CMSI Research Brief: Native American students' success



6 POSSIBLE CAUSES:

Curricula incongruity

- Disconnect between curricula in use & Native ways of knowing (Swisher, 1991).
- Teaching and learning resources that tend to advance Euro-American voices (Epstein, 2009; Foner, 2010).

Learner alienation:

- Used identifiers communicate “otherness” and/or foreign
 - Aboriginal, Indian, Native American, American Indian, Amerindian, Indigenous, First Nations, or First Peoples (Pewewardy, 2000:3)
 - However, the US has federally recognized 550 tribes (US). Each group has unique cultural and heritage (NSBA, 2020).

Possible solutions?

7 AVAILABLE LITERATURE

Available literature is replete with data that support contextually and culturally sustaining/responsive education. Nevertheless, Native Indigenous people in America continue to experience colonization, and a lack of educators who are well trained to meet the needs of Native Indigenous students (Brayboy, 2005; Jaime & Russel, 2019).



Indigenous students are largely taught by educators from the dominant culture who “often find themselves unprepared for their tasks as they don’t understand the history, culture, communities, and learning needs of their students” (Starnes, 2006, p. 384).

8 *PURPOSE OF PROJECT*

- **Examine the effects of a planned Collaborative Community Based Learning/Professional development (PD) .**
 - **Examine “the ways in which historical, geographical and contextual factors impact teaching and learning for Indigenous students”.**
- **Explore perspectives of Native Peoples about preferred pedagogical approaches for Indigenous learners.**
- **Examine best practices that can promote academic success of Native American students.**
- **Help better understand how teacher education programs & institutions can prepare teachers to meet the needs of Indigenous students and those that are not from the dominant culture.**

9 RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the challenges faced by teachers of Native American students?

How might collaborative community-based learning support Inservice Teachers and Teacher Educators' professional development in Culturally Responsive Teaching?

What do Native American teachers and community members perceive to be culturally acceptable curriculum practice/s for Native American learners?

10 METHODOLOGY

- Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRM)
 - While working with Indigenous participants, Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRM) will be used. IRM places emphasis on **forming collaborative relationships with the community and encouraging their participation** (Smith, 1999). Further, IRM recommends the use of various tenets of TribalCrit theory, particularly when examining challenges of lived experiences as colonized people (Brayboy, 2005; Jaime & Russel, 2019).
- IRB permission obtained

METHODOLOGY

Approach- 1). Collaborative Community Based Learning/ Professional Development (PD) also referenced as Community-Based Professional Development (CBPD).

- Approach allows for development of trusting relationships with Native People. "Trust between American Indian community members and academic researchers is crucial to the success of intervention research with these communities."(Christopher, Watts, McCormick & Young, 2008).
- Approach has the ability for true collaboration and partnerships. "trust is more likely to develop than with traditional Western research approaches. "([Christopher, Watts, McCormick & Young, 2008](#)).

2.) Collaborative autoethnography and community-based learning, when used for professional development, support the researchers conducting a self-critique of their own experience other than just reporting the participant's perspectives

- The literature contains many recommendations for conducting research with American Indian populations, including the importance of building trust (Brayboy, 2005).
- Incorporating community voices into the scientific literature is of utmost importance. Community members can better reflect the community's views and explain the culture.(Christopher, Watts, McCormick & Young, 2008).



I2 COLLABORATIVE AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

- **Collaborative autoethnography** is a research methodology where a group of researchers, often with shared experiences, engage in collective self-reflection to analyze their personal narratives in relation to broader cultural, social, and institutional contexts.
- It combines the introspective nature of autoethnography with the collaborative aspect of group work, allowing participants to co-construct meaning by examining their individual and collective experiences.
- This approach is particularly valuable for exploring complex, multifaceted issues, as it provides a way to understand how personal and shared experiences intersect with larger cultural phenomena.
 - Blalock, A. E., & Akehi, M. (2018). Collaborative autoethnography as a pathway for transformative learning. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 16(2), 89-107.
 - Hernandez, K. A. C. (2021). Collaborative Autoethnography as Method and Praxis: Understanding self and others in practice. In *Autoethnography for librarians and information scientists* (pp. 61-76). Routledge.

13 COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY BASED LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PD): WHY USE THIS APPROACH?



Collaborative learning and Professional Development (PD) are essential when working with Native American teachers because they foster a culturally responsive and inclusive educational environment.



Collaboration encourages the exchange of diverse teaching practices, which integrates Indigenous knowledge systems with Western pedagogies.



By engaging in PD, teachers and scholars (researchers) collectively address the unique needs of Native American students, especially regarding trauma-informed practices and culturally relevant education.



This approach strengthens community ties, respects traditional values, and promotes continuous learning and adaptation in teaching strategies, leading to better outcomes for both teachers and students.

14 COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



Identify Focus Areas: Define the specific professional development need or area for growth.



Collaborative Learning: Share knowledge, ideas, and research among group members.



Reflective Practice: Encourage participants to reflect on their teaching or professional practice and identify ways to improve.



Action-Oriented: Develop and implement action plans or strategies to address the identified focus area.



Ongoing Support: Provide continuous feedback, support, and opportunities for reflection to enhance professional growth.

15 CONTINUED

- Research involved active interactions, discussions and planned activities with educators and other stakeholders using in-depth interviews.
- Professional learning focus groups were also used
 - Focus groups in this study are defined as *“... group discussions organized to explore a specific set of issues ... The group is focused in the sense that it involves some kind of collective activity ... crucially, focus groups are distinguished from the broader category of group interview by the explicit use of the group interaction as research data”* (Kitzinger 1994, p. 103).
- Professional learning focus groups are typically small, collaborative gatherings of educators or professionals who come together to focus on improving specific skills, knowledge, or practices within their field.
 - In the context of education, these groups might explore instructional strategies, curriculum development, assessment methods, or other professional topics.
 - The key goal is to facilitate meaningful dialogue, share experiences, and implement strategies that lead to improved outcomes in teaching and learning

16 DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

- Qualitative data collected from **Collaborative** Professional learning focus groups, selected randomized interviews, collaborative discussions, written reflections (Patton, 2002; Tobin & Hsueh, 2007).
- Thematic analysis of data (Creswell (2000)).

Table 1. Synopsis -community-based learning activities.

Community-Based Focus Groups	Activities
<p>Focus-Group Session 1: introductions and alliance building</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sharing collective stories both inside and outside the classroom.2. Examining the meaning of “meaningful education” for Native Americans. <p>Purpose: Build a deeper understanding of each educator's experiences and perspectives regarding Indigenous students by sharing personal and professional stories. Deepen understanding of what “meaningful education” means for Native American students and identify both opportunities and challenges in providing such education</p>	<p>Activity # 1: Introductions: Sharing Collective Stories</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Tell us who you are, the role you play/ed in your school/communities2. Tell us about your work with Indigenous students/communities. What does that look like from your perspective? <p>Activity # 2: Discuss meaningful education for Native American children—opportunities and challenges. Group Discussion on Opportunities and Challenges: Break participants into smaller groups to discuss the following questions: A). What does meaningful education for Native American learners entail? B). What are the unique challenges Indigenous students face in our schools? C.) What strategies have you used to overcome these challenges? D.) How can schools create spaces that support and respect Indigenous knowledge?</p>
<p>Session 2: Reflecting on practices essential to promoting Native American education</p> <p>Objectives Explore instructional strategies that effectively support the academic success of Native American students. Examine the role of culturally responsive pedagogy in Indigenous education. Develop actionable strategies for creating inclusive learning environments for Native American students.</p>	<p>Research on effective practices in Native American education, focusing on community involvement, Indigenous knowledge systems, and culturally responsive teaching.</p> <p>Activity: Discuss community mindset relative to the success of Native American learners. The role of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools,• Teachers,• Teacher educators,• The community. <p>Activity 2: How can schools serve Indigenous children effectively?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do schools and educators need to know about community that can help support Native American students?• What instructional strategies could be most helpful?
<p>Session 3: Exploring culture</p> <p>Objective To explore and understand individual and collective cultural identities. To identify strategies to affirm and integrate Native American heritage cultures in the classroom, enhancing school experiences for Native American learners</p> <p>Activity 1: Guiding questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How do we understand culture individually and collectively?2. What aspects of Native American culture should be implemented in the classroom and why?	<p>Activity 1:Activity – Personal and Collective Cultural Reflection (20 minutes): Divide teachers into small groups and provide chart paper. Have them draw a cultural iceberg and list examples from their own lives or experiences. Encourage open sharing of experiences and reflection on how these aspects have shaped their perspectives. Each group shares their cultural icebergs with the whole room</p> <p>Activity # 2 Preparing schools/classrooms for Native American learners Divide the group into small teams, each tasked with brainstorming on one of the following prompts: How can schools acknowledge and affirm Native American cultural identity from the moment a student enters the building? What barriers or challenges might Native American students face in a typical classroom setting? How can we build partnerships with Native American communities and families to create more culturally responsive environments? Each group will report their key points on chart paper, which will be displayed for the whole group to</p>

18 COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PD)

- **Four professional development (PD) sessions were prepared and completed** between June 2023 and June 2024
- I led focus group activities and facilitated discussions through collaborative learning exercises, also conducting interviews with randomly selected participants
- Participants ranged from 8 to 20 per session, with a total attendance of 53. These participants included K-12 educators, Native American community members, and elders who support Native American students.

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OUTCOMES FOR PARTICIPANTS

- **Incorporation of Cultural Heritage:** Participants reported a deeper understanding of Indigenous students' needs and felt better equipped to incorporate cultural heritage into their practice. Anonymous feedback from participants included:
 - "The experiential exercises were immensely powerful. They showed me a structure that I believe will help me better relate to my students and the community."
 - "Exploring educational concepts allowed me to identify different ways of approaching students in my class."
 - "I learned about the importance of culture in education and how it plays a vital role in educating Indigenous students on the reservation."
 - "I now understand the impact of trauma on learning and how storytelling can help address difficult issues in the classroom."
 - "I want to bring more Indigenous ways into the education system. Understanding colonization's effects and decolonization's role in education is crucial for supporting all cultures."

20 IMPLEMENTATION OF LEARNING FROM PD SESSIONS

- Participants have begun incorporating what they learned into their workplaces .Some notable examples include:
 - "I will invite Tribal Elders into my classroom more often to interact with students—they are the keepers of our cultural heritage."
 - "Acknowledging historical trauma is essential. I recently intervened when someone misinterpreted a student's trauma response as defiance. Recognizing that the student's behavior stemmed from their experiences outside of school, I addressed it, preventing their expulsion."
- "I've learned the importance of place-based teaching. In the fall, I took six sections of fourth graders on a tour of the Wind River Reservation to learn about native plants and fruits historically used by the community. This strategy connects students to their home environments and communities, and it is important for all grade levels

DATA DISSEMINATION AND BROADER IMPACT

-
- **Preliminary findings** were shared at two conferences, with one manuscript already published in *Education Sciences* and another under review. Further dissemination is planned through additional publications and academic presentations, highlighting the broader impact of the project.
 - **a. Presentations at National and International Conferences**
 - **National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Conference**
 - *December 1-3, 2023, Nashville, Tennessee*
 - Presentation: *Teachers' Understanding of Teaching Indigenous Students: Perspectives of Best Practices*
 - **American Educational Research Association (AERA)**
 - *April 11-14, 2024, Philadelphia*
 - Presentation: *Examining Best Practices and Challenges of Teaching Indigenous Learners in a Global Context: Implications for Preparing Social Studies Teachers*
 - **b. Research Publications**
 - Nganga, L., & Kambutu, J. (2024). Culturally Responsive Professional Development Programs for Teacher Educators Using Community-Based Collaborative Learning: Lessons Learned from a Native American Community. *Educ. Sci.* 2024, 14(7), 787; <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14070787>

22 OUTCOMES

- **Nganga, L., Kambutu, J. & Maldonado, S.A.** Decolonizing Education: Indigenous Teachers' Understanding of Meaningful Education Practices That Promote the Success of Native American Learners (**under review**). *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*.

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HOW THE PROJECT HAS INFLUENCED MY TEACHING PRACTICES.

- The insights gained from collaborative professional development and the data collected have informed my current teaching and will continue to shape future curriculum development, **emphasizing the importance of culturally sustaining pedagogies in Indigenous communities.**
- Incorporating these learnings into both my undergraduate and graduate courses.
- In one course students are doing critical analysis of literature and materials specific to teaching about Native Americans

24 WHAT ARE SUGGESTED BEST PRACTICES

- **The Importance of Culturally Relevant Education:** Meaningful education for Native American learners must integrate Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and values into the curriculum.
 - *Listening to People's Stories and Histories Is Integral to Successful Teaching and Learning for Indigenous Children*
- **Respect for Indigenous Knowledge:** Schools should create spaces that value and incorporate Indigenous knowledge systems, ensuring that these traditions are not marginalized or diminished.
- **Acknowledging Indigenous Identity:** Creating educational spaces that respect and affirm Indigenous students' identities by including their cultural heritage in daily learning.
 - *Preferences of Contextually Appropriate and Culturally Responsive Education*
- **Collaborative Storytelling:** Encouraging the sharing of collective stories from Indigenous communities, both in and out of the classroom, as a tool for learning and fostering cross-cultural understanding.

25 USE OF STORIES AND INGENIOUS PEOPLES' HISTORIES.

- *There needs to be an acknowledgement of historical trauma and a reforming of public memory.... Some of student report experiencing racism and ignorance of intergenerational trauma on part of none-natives. These experiences should be addressed in the classroom.*



26 BEST PRACTICES: BE KNOWLEDGEABLE OF INDIGENOUS HISTORIES

- 1.) Teachers should:
 - *Be knowledgeable Indigenous histories,*
 - *Acknowledge Indigenous students come from diverse backgrounds,*
 - *Acknowledge that racism is real and not ignore impact on Indigenous students – “acknowledgement of historical trauma and a reforming of public memory” ... 3.) Embrace Indigenous Systems of knowing.*
- *Build relationships with nearby American Indian/Native American,*
- *Select a wide array of diverse texts that demonstrate the multitude of perspectives that exist but are usually excluded from mainstream texts,*
- *Include **parents and elders** as part of education and acknowledge their contributions in the curriculum- “Native people are quite capable of articulating their own dilemmas with how history is narrated and the problems with American history and its treatment of American Indians”.*

-
- **The Role of Elders and Community:** Including Indigenous elders and community members in the education process fosters a greater sense of belonging and strengthens the learning environment.
 - **Addressing Stereotypes and Biases:** Schools should actively challenge stereotypes and biases about Indigenous people, ensuring accurate and respectful representation in educational materials.
 - **Empowering Indigenous Voices:** Meaningful education includes giving Indigenous students a voice in their learning journey, allowing them to express their unique perspectives and experiences.
 - **Holistic Approaches to Learning:** Adopting a more holistic approach to education that acknowledges the spiritual, emotional, and community-based aspects of learning for Native American students.

- In this theme Indigenous teachers believed that when students have a strong sense of who they are and their capabilities they are more likely to succeed.
- *I teach a sense of ownership for their classroom. I teach them to help each other, even when they are not asked to. I teach them to ask for help. I teach them to encourage each other. ... we are a communal people and there is nothing wrong with that.*

- **Challenges:**
- **Time Constraints:** Many educators struggled to fully participate in workshops due to scheduling conflicts and heavy workloads.
- **Cultural Sensitivity in Research:** Conducting respectful research with Indigenous communities took more time than anticipated, requiring ongoing consultation and patience.
- **Lessons Learned:**
- **Building Relationships:** The project highlighted the importance of trust and long-term relationships with Native American communities. I am planning additional focus groups/ workshops to offer more flexible opportunities for educators.
- **Project Impact:** This work has provided valuable insights into best practices while working with Native American students. In addition, there are challenges Indigenous that face teacher of Indigenous students regarding practice and resources.

30 **TEACHER EDUCATOR LESSONS LEARNED**

- Providing collaborative learning sessions is instrumental in equipping educators with tools to create culturally inclusive learning environments and ways in which the community can be involved
- The impact is already visible, and I am excited to continue promoting educational equity for Indigenous students in Wyoming. Based on sessions completed, I am working in collaboration with key participants and community Elders to organize a mini conference – either a half day or full day – A celebration of Native American Education. In this forum, I will be able to present to the community some of the important findings of the projects (as a collaborative learning endeavor).

3 | CONCLUSIONS: BEST PRACTICES

- Be knowledgeable about students' backgrounds. Native American children are diverse, just like the communities in which they come from.
- Establish and maintain positive relationships with communities from which learners come.
- Empower students by allowing them to share their personal stories. Stories do matter. Thus, allow learners to tell their family histories and personal stories.
- Infuse cultural practices and materials into the curriculum.
- Provide contextualized learning opportunities, such as community-based activities that are relevant to Native American students (and other marginalized learners).
- Ensure cultural congruity between home and classroom cultures.

32 COMMUNITY-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- For Community-Based Professional Development, it is important to create trusting relationships where everyone feels valued both as a researcher and participant.
- For Community-Based Professional Development to have an impact on teacher educators (and in-service teachers), it critical to address existing assumptions by consulting with respective community members.
- Community-Based Professional Development (CPD) Activities Provided Authentic Culturally Responsive Lessons for Teacher Educators

33

DECOLONIZE AMERICAN CLASSROOMS.

- Teachers noted that Indigenous languages and traditional ways of knowing are lacking in the curriculum. Additionally, there is an emphasis of Eurocentric colonial ideologies.
- To teacher Mindy, public schools based in the reservations fail to teach Indigenous languages.
- *I think of us, my tribe, my people and my community. It starts with our culture, our traditional ways and fighting for our language. We fight for our language in the classroom. The state University offers Arapaho. That is well and good, but part of me thinks 'they took our language and now that sell it back to us'. The only way to overcome this is to put it back with the children and have them grow with it*

34 DISCUSSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

- The project explored perspective of Indigenous teachers on best practices to promote the success of Indigenous students. A collaborative community-based learning approach was used based on Indigenous research paradigm (Wilson, 2008).
- The Project acknowledges the importance of using a curriculum that promotes the success of Indigenous students.
- Of importance to Indigenous teachers, educators must embrace Indigenous Systems of knowing, understand the histories of Indigenous communities as well as be well prepared to meet the needs of these learners.



QUESTIONS

THANK YOU

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37 CHALLENGES FACING TEACHERS

- **Cultural Disconnect in Curriculum:** The Western curriculum often does not align with Native American traditions, values, or perspectives, making it difficult for teachers to provide culturally relevant education.
- **Limited Resources:** Schools on reservations frequently face funding shortages, leading to a lack of educational materials, technology, and support services necessary for effective teaching.
- **High Student Trauma and Mental Health Needs:** Many Native American students may experience historical trauma, poverty, or instability, which can affect their mental health and academic performance. Teachers are often not equipped with adequate training to address these challenges.
- **Isolation and Lack of Professional Development:** Native teachers on the reservation may feel isolated from professional communities or opportunities for ongoing education and growth, making it harder to stay updated on effective teaching practices.

38 VIABLE SOLUTIONS

- **Integrating Indigenous Knowledge into Curriculum:**

- Teachers can work with community elders to infuse lessons with local Indigenous knowledge, history, and language, making the curriculum more relevant and meaningful to students.

- **Implementing Trauma-Informed Practices:**

- Schools can offer training in trauma-informed educational practices, equipping teachers with the skills to support students dealing with trauma and providing better mental health services on campus.

39 CONTINUED

- **Building Professional Networks**
- **Advocating for Increased Funding**

