

INDIGENOUS CULTURE AS AN ASSET FOR STUDENT ACADEMIC SUCCESS:
A FORMATIVE MIXED METHOD CASE STUDY TO EXAMINE SCHOOL LEADERS' ROLES IN POLICY
DEVELOPMENT, ADOPTION AND APPLICATION IN SCHOOLS SERVING
AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS

Mary E. Ratchford

Dr. Jerry W. Valentine Advisor

ABSTRACT

This study explored one public school on a tribal reservation to construct understanding of leadership effect on policy supporting academic achievement. Primary data were collected between June 2011 and August 2011 providing sequential opportunities to collect School Culture Survey (SCS) (Gruenert, 1998) data and follow-up interviews with stakeholder groups.

The SCS and interviews gathered data about cultural values and beliefs, patterns of behavior and relationships from multiple stakeholder groups. Secondary data included school report cards, websites, Board of Education meeting minutes, school forms, and professional development in-service training documents.

The data described strengths including unity of purpose, transformational leadership, faculty collaboration, professional development, equality development, culture departmental support, the new school building, tangible assets of lands and enterprises, and intangible assets that are the people and their unique culture. Areas of concern were expectation of failure, equity measures, parent involvement, discipline, health services, a culture clash, attendance, and community infrastructure.

This study brought together American scholarly expertise and indigenous scholarly expertise from the United States, New Zealand and Canada. The findings suggest a formative comprehensive systemic school improvement plan process can be developed as recommended practice for replication in other schools serving American Indian children across North America.