Team Teaching Native American Studies Online

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The authors of this article are both Spirit Lake Tribal members, ages 66 and 75.[1] The elder teaches Dakota Thought, Philosophy, and Culture at the tribal college, Cankdeska Cikana (Little Hoop) Community College (CCCC), in Fort Totten, North Dakota. The younger teaches Native American Studies in Baltimore at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), where there are very few Native American students.

Having taught our courses separately for many years, in fall 2015 we partially merged and team-taught them online from the same classrooms that we teach our own students in face-to-face. MICA and CCCC students used the online learning management system MOODLE to have asynchronous discussions about power-point lectures video-captured or delivered live over Adobe Connect, which we also used for videoconferences between the two classes. Each class also continued to hold separate face-to-face meetings.

We both came to this experiment wondering whether our students could better achieve together our very different learning objectives:

The main objective of the CCCC course was to help tribal college students learn to understand and balance their dual status as citizens of a sovereign nation predicated on the traditions of an originally oral civilization and as US citizens of a nation of laws promulgated in writing.

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[1] Authors' names, withheld for blind review at the editor's request, will be reinserted for publication.

The main learning objective of the MICA course was to help non-Native students challenge the stereotype that American Indians still live entirely traditional lives and are therefore inevitably going to continue being passed over as part of America's Manifest Destiny.

The fact that both MICA and CCCC students of this generation spend so much time online raised the possibility in our minds that CCCC students could learn to better balance being tribal and US citizens by interacting digitally with non-Native US citizens their own age, and that non-Native MICA students could learn to blast the stereotype of Indians living in the past by interacting with their tribal college peers in the digital present.

We never would have ended up teaching together if we had not visited each other's classes several times in person over the years to guest lecture about our very different experiences as contemporary Dakota: the elder living on the reservation as both a US and tribal citizen; the younger growing up, living, and working off the reservation (like the majority of American Indians today), sometimes knowing no more than non-Indians about being Indian.

Not surprisingly, we didn't have enough time with each other's students on these visits. On the elder's first visit to MICA, for example, students didn't ask many questions because, indeed, most of them had never even seen an Indian except on the silver screen, didn't know that Indians existed anymore, and were just in awe of one that did, as if he had stepped out of the past.

When the elder was invited back to MICA the next year, he was asked and agreed to join an online discussion forum before he came. Such forums had already become a way for the MICA professor to get students to discuss assignments online before class so that they would be better prepared to talk face-to-face. Forums gave them additional time and opportunity to come up with questions after lectures, and gave students who were shy speaking in class another way

to participate. The MICA professor would usually assign a couple of students to post some questions about a reading assignment for the rest to answer online. He would begin in-class discussions by asking which questions had already been answered online and didn't need to be further discussed; which questions asked online still needed to be discussed in class; and which questions were never raised online but needed to be in class. Finally the forums served as an archive for students to return to and find threads running through as they came up with questions for paper topics and exam questions.

MICA students asked the elder many more questions in class on his second visit because the online discussion forum had allowed them extra time to think about and revise what they wanted to say to him before he came. Because he had already answered some of their questions online, the face-to-face conversation began on a higher plane. After he left and totally on their own, a few MICA illustration students continued communicating with him online, only not just in words: they produced graphics for him to incorporate into the power-point presentation he gave them on Dakota dual citizenship, a talk he mentioned he also gave to tribal college students, about whom MICA students asked an abundance of questions, mainly having to do with whether their CCCC peers lived traditional lives and had exactly the same values as the elder, or whether they had cell phones and lap tops and went online—that is, lived in the same digital present as MICA students—questions the latter were still a little hesitant asking the elder, especially in front of their MICA professor, but were fine asking him online.

Maybe if they hadn't remained hesitant with him in person, we would have continued to try to raise the funds to bring him from North Dakota to Baltimore every year. But since MICA students seemed as comfortable with the virtual as the face-to-face elder, especially when

communicating with him about whether his students were digital natives like themselves, we got the idea that it would be more effective and economical simply to digitally connect our classes.

When we did, we discovered that MICA students who were used to participating online in the above ways as a required part of the course participated in both asynchronous and synchronous discussions far more than CCCC students who had less experience with asynchronous forums and were not graded for participating in them.

Even before the elder met with his tribal college class, he cautioned the MICA professor that videoconferencing with MICA students might make tribal college students feel like they were being "looked at," as he put it. He therefore limited the number of video conferences to eight and their duration to fifteen minutes; declined a request from MICA that his students sit closer to the camera and microphone so that MICA students could hear and see them; and himself appeared in front of the camera and close to the microphone so that, for the benefit of MICA students, he could repeat the few comments his students made as they sat behind him in rows of the classroom, largely out of camera range and inaudible (until the very last videoconference, about which more later.) For their part, MICA students appeared all together around a table with the professor among them, with the camera and microphone turned to whoever was speaking and with the MICA professor encouraging them to speak up so they could be heard.

Other cultural differences in the two classrooms included a greater number of CCCC than MICA absences and late arrivals (the elder explained "Indian time" by comparing it to Japanese "just in time" problem solving). When MICA students once asked if CCCC students had read an article that a MICA student posted online, there was a pregnant pause, broken by the elder

himself: “this is an oral class,” he said.

If it’s an oral class, MICA students wondered in a MICA only discussion after the videoconference, how come only the traditional elder speaks and CCCC students listen without asking a lot of questions? That’s precisely what makes an oral Dakota Thought, Philosophy, and Culture class, explained the MICA professor, who then elicited from MICA students what they thought made their MICA Native studies class an oral class: student-centered discussion in which students and professor ask each other many questions.

A related cultural difference was the two classes’ different emphases on reading not just the article that MICA students had posted for CCCC to read, but the textbook *Native American Studies 2nd Edition* (Kendall Hurt, 2011), co-authored by three University of North Dakota professors (one a Turtle Mt. Chippewa), who acknowledged the elder in their introduction. He had taught the book before, and the MICA professor adopted it for their joint class.

Before each videoconference with CCCC, a MICA student-centered discussion of a chapter in the textbook began where the online MOODLE forum left off in the way already described. It was a nine a.m. class, students were sometimes sleepy, and once, when the professor found himself slipping into the role of sage on the stage—asking and answering all his own questions—he asked his students, what’s the difference between a sage on the stage and a Native American elder to whom tribal college students mainly listen? Their answer woke everyone up: a sage of a stage is an authority in academic reading, writing, and lecturing, whereas an Indian elder passes down oral traditions and protocols. Hadn’t our elder said he didn’t pay too much attention to the textbook, acknowledging that he had read only select parts of it himself, and considering it basically a foil against which to pose his oral traditional

knowledge and cultural understanding?

The elder took basically the same position toward a book the MICA professor gave a powerpoint on, *The Dakota Prisoner of War Letters,* a dual-language translation of fifty letters that Dakota prisoners of war wrote to missionaries who had taught them how to read and write in their own language while in prison for their participation in the Dakota-US War of 1862. The elder was skeptical about whether the prisoners had really learned how to write in their own language, about whether the letters had actually been written by whites on the prisoners' behalf or even without the Indians' knowledge, about whether they had been translated accurately. These were essentially the same questions he asked about the written version of treaties that Dakota had negotiated and smoked the pipe over in an entirely oral process that, he argued, ended up being intentionally or unintentionally misrepresented as soon as the treaties were translated in the form of rough notes, transcribed in standard treaty format, and altered further in Congressional confirmation.

Trying to redress violations of written treaties had led to a legal quagmire in the US Supreme Court, which ruled that Congress had plenary power over Indian affairs even when it passed federal Indian laws that the Court declared unconstitutional (Braun, Gagnon, & Hans, 2011, p. 242). Instead of seeking justice in federal courts, therefore, the elder, who was active on treaty councils, advocated that the Dakota submit what their ancestors had agreed to orally to international tribunals that were beginning to admit as evidence this kind of oral argument.

Asked for the source of his oral understanding of treaties, the elder answered that that was "American question," which he said he would answer as an American: he had acquired his oral understanding of the treaties during all his years working for the tribal

government and listening to tribal people, including a few professors.

ii

Only MICA students participated in asynchronous and synchronous discussions of the elder's power-point presentation on the 1867 Treaty and 1873 Agreement between the US and the tribe's Sisseton and Wahpeton bands. "Reading the written treaties is a little difficult given the jargon used," wrote sophomore Austin Beach,[2] so his professor posted excerpts from two key passages that the elder had reduced to bullet points in his power-point:

> 1867 Treaty: [T]he Sissiton and Warpeton [sic] bands of Santee Sioux Indians hereby cede to the United States the right to construct wagon-roads, railroads, mail stations, telegraph lines, and such other public improvements as the interest of the Government may require, over and across the lands claimed by said bands, including their reservation. For and in consideration of the cession above mentioned, Congress will establish and support manual-labor schools to promote the agricultural improvement and civilization of said bands [ellipses deleted].

> 1873 Agreement: [T]he Sisseton and Wahpeton chiefs and head-men propose to [further] cede, sell, and relinquish to the United States all land and territory, particularly described in article II of [the 1867] treaty, as well as all lands in the Territory of Dakota, excepting tracts and territory reserved as permanent reservations by articles VIII, IX, and X. [I]n consideration of said cession and relinquishment, the United States shall advance and pay, annually, for the term of ten years eighty thousand (80,000) dollars for the support of manual-labor schools [to which] the Sisseton and Wahpeton bands of Dakota or Sioux

[2] All quotes from CCCC and MICA students are excerpts (sometimes with ellipses deleted) from CCCC's Dakota Thought, Philosophy, and Culture or MICA's Native American Studies MOODLE course pages.

> Indians [are] entitled according to the said treaty of February 19, 1867. Said consideration, amounting, in the aggregate, to eight hundred thousand (800,000) dollars [ellipses deleted].

"What is the difference between these two documents?" the elder asked MICA students in the videoconference. Austin Beach paraphrased from memory what he had written in the asynchronous discussion forum: "[In] the 1873 [Agreement] the U.S. abused its position and took advantage of native people, outright going back on previously enacted agreements."

"Very interesting," the elder replied, adding that the way the 1873 Agreement outright went back on the 1867 treaty was by applying the $800,000 for newly ceded land to pay for (in the words of the 1873 Agreement) "manor-labor schools" to which the Sisseton Wahpeton were already freely "entitled according to the said treaty of February 19, 1867."

"Native Leaders basically signed over most of their rights," concluded MICA sophomore Chaunice Greenway.

At this point in the videoconference, the MICA professor asked CCCC students if they had anything to add. There was another pregnant pause. "Remember we went over the two documents," the elder gently reminded. The answer came back through the elder: "They said they have so many other assignments that they don't remember."

iii

In addition to more MICA students participating, they tended to come up with questions directed to each other rather than to CCCC students.

In one asynchronous online discussion module, for example, MICA students selected a textbook quote for everyone to respond to that practically restated part of the learning objective already mentioned for non-Native students like themselves:

> In states without contemporary Indian reservations, students are often surprised to hear that Indians still exist. Once [they] know Indians are still alive, they often still equate them with historical images [of] warriors [who] live in tipis and wear feather headdresses and buckskin clothing (p. 7).

More specifically, the textbook continued, “[b]y the late nineteenth century, the Lakota Sioux became the symbol of Indians in the American Mind. They still are."

Is this true, and if so, why, MICA sophomore David Hein began the forum by asking. MICA sophomore Ella Ritts answered:

> When I searched ‘American Indian’ on the internet, what commonly popped up were pictures of tipis, men in feather war bonnets, warriors on horses, and paintings of buffalo hunting, which are all specifically part of historic Lakota culture. So yes, [the] statement [that Lakota symbolize Indians in the American Mind] is very accurate.

"[T]heir historic military dominance is one reason” Ella cited for “why the Lakota are held as exemplary of Indian culture to many Euro-Americans . . . ever since their adoption of [European] firearms and horses allowed for fruitful wars against many other Plains tribes.”

Chaunice Greenway added “it only makes sense that the Lakota Sioux are the symbol for Native Americans because most of the actors chosen to play Native Americans in films were from the Sioux Nation . . . creating a stereotypical image.”

MICA students went on to question the stereotype of Sioux living in the past, but they didn't reject the conclusion that because Sioux lived in the past, the Sioux were inevitably going to be conquered as part of America's Manifest Destiny and remain in the shadows of history. MICA senior Maya Kuntze's wondered "do you think there could have been an alternative, more peaceful way for the Americans and the Indians to coexist with one another and equally share the land? Or was war inevitable between the Indian tribes and the Americans over who owned the lands?" David Hein answered "the opportunity for wealth was too tantalizing for the Americans; it would have been next to impossible for Americans to not end up fighting with many of the Indian Tribes." MICA Sophomore Jacob Nemec agreed that "the constant expansion of the European settlers and their descendants, combined with the idea of manifest destiny over the untamed wild, meant that there would be more people in the USA than the Native civilizations were used to. This created space issues and resulted in wars." MICA Junior Christina Rinker concluded,

> It [was] survival of the fittest. If you are the best equipped with guns and training you are more likely to have what you want. I would like to believe that America would respect and love nature, be less wasteful, a little bit kinder [and] work together in harmony. But that's not the world we live in, nor how people act. I don't really think there could have been an alternative at the time. Our brains might need to evolve more to handle very complex thinking. This is billion of years I'm talking about.

"Can't the human brain adapt quicker through cultural adaptation than by natural selection?" the MICA professor interjected in a post. "We don't have billions of years, only a semester to evolve more complex thinking." Austin Beach answered with a question: "What ways would you

propose to create more connectivity between Native people and those off the reservation? How can we as non-natives be a part of spreading the word about Native experiences?"

These exchanges demonstrated that the course was working for MICA students, but, as the elder emailed the MICA professor, "we have to work out a different strategy to get the Indian students involved" (Mon, Nov 16, 2015).

In order to get them involved, we first had to understand why they weren't so far.

iv

In *Teaching to Transgress,* African American activist and educator bell hooks observes the tendency of "non-white students [to] talk in class only when they feel connected via experience" (87). Obviously it was not part of CCCC students' experience that Indians no longer exist or exist only in the past. What in their experience could possibly be brought out in a discussion with students at MICA, in Baltimore, fifteen hundred miles from CCCC, but only a mile and a half east of the intersection of North and Pennsylvania Avenues, where Freddie Gray's death at the hands of police on April 2015 led to riots which closed the school? Native American peoples, the textbook said, were historically seeking separate rights as sovereign, independent nations, whereas African Americans were historically seeking equal rights as American citizens within the US political system (Braun, Gagnon, & Hans, 2011, p. 331). To turn this comment into a lesson in experiential learning, the MICA professor suggested both classes watch MICA's 2015 Constitution Day symposium on "Black Lives Matter" online and then to compare and contrast their experiences on the reservation and in inner-city Baltimore.

Tribal student Jeffrey White Buffalo broke the silence of CCCC students in the videoconferences by asking if any MICA students had been racially profiled by Baltimore city police during the riots. “Most of us are white” was the first reply, but then one of those white MICA students volunteered that he was gay, as was his brother, who had been hassled by police. MICA students reversed the question and asked whether tribal students had been racially profiled, to which Jeff White Buffalo replied yes, sometimes when they went into the white town off the reservation. The elder added that clerks sometimes followed them around in white-owned stores.

On the asynchronous forum, MICA senior Iraida Santiago posted a link to a Lakota People's Law project article entitled “Native Lives Matter,” which quoted data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention for the period 1999-2011 showing that “the racial group most likely to be killed by law enforcement is Native Americans, followed by African Americans, Latinos, Whites, and Asian Americans” (p. 2). Iraida posted the question “why is the Black Lives Matter movement receiving more hype than the Native Lives Matter movement?” Tribal college student Jennifer Delorme-Rocha broke the silence of CCCC students in the asynchronous forums by posting:

> I think the Black population has had more time to perfect their skills using the media. Throughout history the media has been used to shed light on situations political as well as racial. Our [Dakota] people are so busy warring with each other or trying to resolve things on our own that we haven't taken a lot of time to shed light on our situation to others. All together we make a decent number of people in this country but each Tribe or Clan is

> different and cannot be classified as one. It has been mentioned that we are a Political group not an Ethnic group, which means we fall through many more cracks than others.

She continued:

> I've also observed our culture being very quiet and reserved versus the Black population being a lot more verbal about things in their everyday lives. People have been able to relate to Black culture because Blacks have had more time to assimilate. We are trying to preserve our culture, which is one that very few take the time to understand. Throughout the history of this country most of the stories about our people taught in books are about us being conquered, driven out, or removed.

Could the last sentence indicate why the elder didn’t pay much attention to the textbook?

v

Another question about our class—and Indian education in general—is raised by Jennifer’s observation about “our culture being very quiet and reserved.” How much is Dakota students’ quiet and reserve a positive sign of respect when learning from elders? How much is it a negative legacy of boarding schools? In the two South Dakota Boarding schools attended by Standing Rock Lakota Phyllis Young,

> You had to suppress your feelings because you couldn’t have an opinion . . . you did not speak when you were talked to or talked at. Indian children in the boarding schools did not interact, did not respond, did not question. . . . There are three generations of parents that have raised their children that way; we are just now coming out of that. . . . [T]he teachers . . . were threatened . . . if you communicated . . . and you were punished for it (Barrett & Britton, 1997, p. 22, quoted in Braun, Gagnon, & Hans, 2011, p. 227).

How can educators accentuate the positive traditional causes and help heal the negative boarding-school effects of Indian learners' quiet ways? This question has been studied extensively in early Indian education, where some provisional answers have been proposed that might be applicable in modified form at the tribal college level.

Paralleling early education research done on the Wasco and Paiute confederated tribes of Oregon's Warm Springs Reservation, for example, Haida researcher Fred White found that Haida first graders in the Massett Haida tribal school tend not to compete academically. Expecting them to compete only alienates them not only from American mainstream culture but from their own Haida traditions, in which appearing to outsmart others is culturally unacceptable, the model learner being first an observer/apprentice and only later a participant. Also paralleling Warm Springs research, White observed that Haida children respond to teachers' questions less but visit with each other and wander in and out of class more than mainstream students. This may be, White suggests, because at tribal gatherings where attention shifts among as many speakers as in a normal class, nobody equivalent to a teacher formally decides who gets to talk and when, and children are free to come and go and interact with whomever they please while others talk. Non-Native first graders transition easier from informal kinship gatherings to classrooms controlled by non-kin authority figures with whom they have already had more experience than Haida children. Haida children do better with a teacher they are allowed to call "auntie" or "grandma," but even then, rather than raise hands to talk to her, they tend to get out of their seats to go ask her something, often out of hearing of the others. Non-Indian first graders class raise their hands more.

As for how teachers shape student behavior, White cites research on an Odawa teacher who gives students three times longer to answer than a Euro-Canadian teacher does. In turn he finds Haida teachers differ from mainstream ones in how much and what kind of participation they expect and therefore require of Haida students—subtle differences that have received little attention. When "peripheral participation" – neither fruitless nor pressured – is encouraged at the students' discretion, Haida first graders participate more. Typically they are silent or give wrong (because premature) answers when forced to demonstrate skills or knowledge beyond what their community would normally expect of a nonparticipating observer/apprentice; or else they deliberately give incorrect answers or shrug their shoulders so as to compel the teacher to ask someone else for the correct answer. By not forcing these kinds of participation, Haida teachers take the stress off and free Haida students to participate more, when they are ready. Doing this in Haida language classes where participation is crucial allows students to concentrate on, rather than anxiously filter out, the language. By contrast, mainstream teachers actually ratchet up the stress level by quickly stifling student interactions not directly related to instruction, thus maintaining the teacher's own sole authority over who speaks when. Tolerant of much more noise and interruption, Haida teachers let students wander or speak when they want.[3]

White's research on classroom dynamics helped the MICA professor make sense of a Sisseton Wahpeton College Dakota language and culture class to which he once guest lectured. He remembered a young woman wandering in late, going right up to the Sisseton Wahpeton college instructor's desk in the middle of class (although not while that elder was speaking), asking the instructor to fill out some forms, leaving, and coming back later (again when the

[3] This summary closely follows the MICA professor's introduction to White's book.

instructor was not talking) to ask if he had completed them – something the instructor didn't seem to mind.

When the instructor introduced the MICA professor to the class, he told students that the MICA professor had studied and taught in mainstream American universities and therefore expected them to ask to questions. Many fewer did so during class than came up individually afterwards.

In a film class at the Sisseton Wahpeton Tribal College taught by the MICA professor's nephew, students often skipped class even though they clearly relished group projects when they did come. Nor did absenteeism and tardiness undermine yet another class, a Dakota language class, that the MICA professor took as a student at the Enemy Swim community school at Lake Traverse. When the female teacher herself was not there, students would come anyway and engage in group activities that "auntie" or "grandma," as she was called, had introduced, such as playing Scrabble in Dakota.

She told the MICA professor, when he joined her multigenerational language class, that he could be another "uncle" to several toddlers who came with young single mothers and expected to sit on the laps of older adults. This reminded the MICA professor of White's point that Haida teachers themselves were more physical with their students than were non-Indian teachers. So was the male Sisseton Wahpeton College Dakota instructor, whom the MICA professor saw a little boy approach and lean into for an affectionate hug.

The bottom line, White concluded, is that the best designed language lessons would be in vain if Haida students didn't participate more, and the main contribution of his findings was to

suggest they would participate more if their culture's traditional learning and participation styles were accommodated, at their own pace.

vi

One of our Spirit Lake tribal elder's online lectures stressed how Dakota traditionally promote communal sharing over individualistic striving; authority figures are looked to as guides by apprentice learners who tend to listen, observe, and collaborate rather than single themselves out for individual recognition in accordance with the mainstream ethos of personal autonomy.

To several videoconferences of our team-taught class, tribal college students brought young children, who, though sometimes a little loud, were so obviously tolerated that the MICA professor took to affectionately addressing them on occasion. The elder remarked that he would lose his job if he didn't let his students bring their young children to class.

The course textbook states that some "TCU students . . . prior to their college experience, have found formal educational settings to be a hostile environment" (231). One research study finds that mainstream colleges and universities can be perceived as alien, if not hostile, environments by Native American college students. They sometimes avoid participating in academic reading, writing, or speaking, which can seem so impersonal, so exclusive of ordinary people, and so dubiously authoritative, compared to stories they hear or tell in their homes or other familiar cultural settings, where nobody pretends their ideas are absolutely factual rather than mainly experiential and felt. In many traditional tribal cultures, one does not state one's opinions so unequivocally, with so little doubt, to elders or in competition (explicit or implicit) with one's peers (Elbow, p. 78). Doing so in mainstream college classrooms can feel like "acting white," "selling out," disrespecting or betraying one's own culture, especially in discussions of

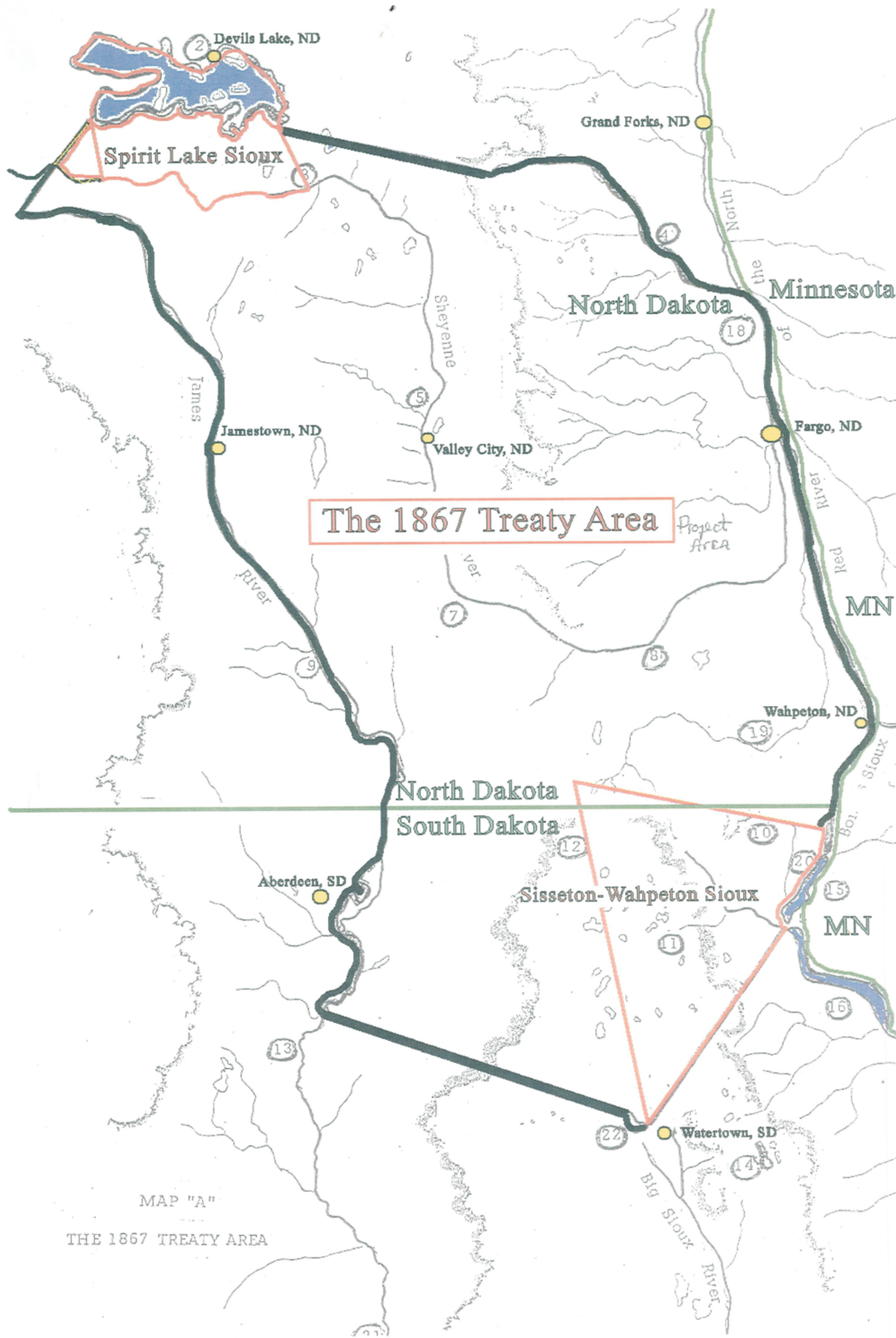
race and ethnicity, in which transfer students from tribal colleges may already feel at odds with mainstream peers. The frequent presumption in mainstream higher education that every Native student must already possess the knowledge and information to speak for and about the whole of his or her culture's experience runs directly counter to tribal cultural norms that teach young students not to be so presumptuous--a lesson they carry with them to college, where they feel they have come to listen and learn, not to speak authoritatively. Being called on in class can feel like being "picked on" (White, J., 2011, p. 12).

vii

Instead of calling on CCCC students in class to comment on the difference between the 1867 Treaty and the 1873 Agreement, what might be a better strategy for involving them experientially in these documents?

Like MICA art students, CCCC students tend to be non-traditional learners in the sense that they mainly learn from performing, practicing, and participating rather than passively absorbing. They tend to be "makers" and not just spectators or consumers. The year before MICA and CCCC classes were merged, students in the elder's Dakota Thought, Philosophy, and Culture class read President Obama's October 31, 2013 proclamation of National Native American Month in which the President challenged "a bright new generation [to] build on this work [of] strengthen[ing] our nation-to-nation relationships." As a class project, the elder's students submitted a recommendation to the tribal council to pass a resolution to engage with President Obama (representing the executive rather than judicial or legislative branch of the U.S. government) in a nation-to-nation negotiation to return the boundaries of Spirit Lake to the

jurisdiction of the tribe and to recombine, as per the 1867 treaty, the Spirit Lake and Sisseton Wahpeton reservations and all the land in between that had been taken and developed when the US violated the 1867 Treaty in the 1873 Agreement by deducting $800,000 from the 1873 land cession in order to pay for manual-labor schools already promised in the 1867 Treaty.



Devils Lake, ND
Grand Forks, ND
Spirit Lake Sioux
North Dakota
Minnesota
North of the Red River
Sheyenne
James
Jamestown, ND
Valley City, ND
Fargo, ND
The 1867 Treaty Area
Project Area
River
MN
Wahpeton, ND
North Dakota
South Dakota
Aberdeen, SD
Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux
MN
Watertown, SD
Big Sioux River
MAP "A"
THE 1867 TREATY AREA

The elder's students, in other words, had not just passively learned about sovereignty in class. As future tribal leaders, they were beginning to participate in practicing it.

viii

Such project-based learning is exactly what MICA students concluded would make the hybrid course work better. But what kind of project could CCCC and MICA students work on together that would turn the distance and difference between them into an advantage instead of a liability?

For years the elder has been asking the MICA professor to conduct various kinds of research regarding the tribe's treaties in the B.I.A. records at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Suppose the elder and his students generated questions for MICA students to research there. The elder and his students would need to answer MICA students' questions about how and why this research matters, spelling out its context and purpose from the perspective of the tribe. Small groups of members from both classes could jointly produce Google documents and present their research findings to the whole class. These projects could be archived as a knowledge base for future students in the course to learn from and build on.

Some of this research might be of interest to tribal constituencies, who, if sufficiently impressed, might in turn submit questions of their own for the class to research. In a very modest way, the class might, in collaboration, begin to learn to perform for the tribe some of the functions that post-secondary research institutions perform for their communities.

ix

The U.S. Department of Education recommends that, if interested in transferring to four-year institutions, tribal college students take courses from four-year colleges while they are still in tribal college (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Increasingly, tribal college students will be taking such courses online, and those courses may face some of the same challenges and opportunities that we faced in the Native American studies course that we taught online.

Perhaps we were too optimistic in assuming when we began teaching together that both CCCC and MICA students would feel equally comfortable learning together online because they already spend so much time online. How students of all stripes experience online realms, how cultural influences affect their online discussions, how their past relationships may lead them to misunderstand and misinterpret one another online— these are all open questions in a new "Cyberpsychology" course to be taught by MICA professor Mikita Brottman in spring 2016. On hearing of this new course, the MICA professor in our course emailed Professor Brottman:

> Cultural differences may be part of the problem in the Native American Studies course I am now teaching online with a respected elder. I had assumed that because MICA and CCCC students all have had prior experience communicating on MOODLE, there would be no difference in their participation in our online discussion forums. But it turns out the tribal students hardly post online and participate even less in synchronous whole-class video conferences. This may be part of the same discomfort with formal education that makes Native American students sometimes reticent in fact-to-face classes.

However much mainstream students who take Native studies courses online with tribal students start to overcome the stereotype that Native Americans no longer exist or exist in the past, those courses will have to integrate tribal pedagogies if tribal students are to achieve their goals of understanding and balancing their dual status as tribal citizens of a sovereign nation predicated on the traditions of an originally oral civilization and as US citizens of a nation of laws promulgated in writing.

To CCCC as to MICA students, online media are interactive, lectures and books not so much. What our elder calls oral civilization is still a greater part of the cultural DNA of CCCC students than is written culture, just as visual media are more important to many MICA art students than print media. Online media are mainly visual and oral—images and sounds— as opposed to being strictly literary, which is why Marshall McLuhan in 1967 predicted online media would help revitalize traditional cultures (n.p.). Not everyone agrees. Among skeptics, Vine Deloria thought online media distracted traditional people from being present in the here and now (p. xi). Both McLuhan and Deloria have a point, but what matters to us in the classroom is how contemporary digital natives learn. Before joining forces with the elder, the MICA professor had already found that he could leverage online learning to get students to read, write, and participate in class better. Combine this kind of online learning with project based learning of the sort the elder had already been assigning his students, and CCCC students will reap the benefits of both. They will be participating in projects that are culturally appropriate. And they will gain experience participating in classes with non-Native students. What will be the results if and when they transfer to complete their four-year degrees at a mainstream college or university? They will feel better prepared to participate in mainstream higher education. When they return

with their education to their tribes, it will take them less time than the ten years the elder says it took him to apply to tribal schools what he had learned getting a master's degree in education from the University of North Dakota.

Institutionally, TCUs that integrate tribal project-based learning into online partnerships with mainstream colleges and universities will be a step closer to converting their Native studies programs from two to four years, if that is their goal.

Will CCCC students become more "colonized" by learning to be equally fluent in traditional Dakota oral communication and in academic reading, writing, and speaking? No more than when they "code-switch" from tribal to mainstream protocols with which they are already equally fluent: pow-wow to hip hop; face-to-face conversation to text messaging; teasing friends to speaking respectfully to a police officer. But just as police officers who expect tribal people to obey the law need in return to respect them and their oral civilization, so do educators who expect tribal students to learn how to read, write, and speak academically. Hybrid courses, with all the challenges discussed in this article, hold out the possibility for educators in TCU's and mainstream colleges and universities to turn the geographic and cultural distance between them to advantage.

In our course we definitely didn't solve all the challenges of our students' cultural differences, but, like the early Indian educators that Fred White observed, rather than trying to force CCCC students to participate as much as MICA students, we patiently waited for them to participate when they were ready, as a few of them finally were during our last video conference. It was supposed to last fifteen minutes, but ended up continuing for an hour and a half to accommodate these students.

After it was over, the elder told the MICA professor that years ago as an education student at the University of North Dakota, he had at first been advised by his non-Indian advisor to switch to another program in which he felt he might have more to say in class, but when he explained the more quiet and reserved educational protocol that Indian students like himself were observing, his advisor asked him to stay in the program and, when he was ready, to present this protocol to the other students, which he did, thus beginning a successful career as an Indian educator.

At the end of that last long videoconference, the elder suggested a future "cultural exchange" between MICA and the Tribal Community College, which offers an associate's degree program in fine arts (among other subjects). Several MICA studio faculty have already expressed interest in team-teaching with tribal college fine arts instructors, some of whom teach traditional Dakota art forms. Our students hope this exchange will not take place after they are in the course, and we told them, if it does, we will make sure it includes a reunion for alumni of the course to meet in person. The MICA professor has also already been in discussion with MICA's Vice President for Admissions about recruiting some CCCC students in the class who are fine arts majors to transfer to MICA to complete their education, if that is their desire.

In the meantime, so that they can keep in touch, MICA students created a Facebook page, which several CCCC students have joined.

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