

Culture-Based Arts Education

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This chapter focuses on two teachers who participated in Project Intersect (PI), a federally funded arts in education demonstration grant that supported the collaborative efforts of over 50 educators teaching at a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) tribal school and two neighboring public elementary schools in the upper Midwest. PI teachers worked with a team made up of education researchers from their state's urban Land Grant university, local Native¹ and non-Native program managers, and over 20 local Native cultural experts—crafters, visual artists, musicians, linguists, historians, and others—to fashion culturally responsive curriculum in all academic areas.

Project Intersect (PI), an arts in education demonstration project, began with a planning year during which a small design team made up of Native elders, teachers, linguists and other tribal leaders interested in cultural literacy and local control of schooling were asked to help envision what culture-based arts education might look like if it were a means for increasing the relevance of study in mathematics, language arts, science and other traditional subjects. Non-Native design team members included classroom teachers, public school administrators and university-based arts educators and researchers who envisioned arts education that promotes sensitivity and cultural awareness of American Indian societies among all teachers and students as well as familiarity with the historical and contemporary work of present and past Native artists and crafters. Together the entire design team laid the foundation for teacher professional development in three area schools that resulted in culture-based curriculum that helped students' respect and appreciate their own and other's cultures. PI then focused on a three-year teaching intervention that stressed the importance of increasing K-8 American Indian and non-Indian students' interest, understanding, enthusiasm and performance in culture-based arts education.

PI was designed to assess how culture-based arts education enhances and/or remediates learning specific to identified state and national academic standards for student achievement. All PI teachers' were expected to develop and implement curriculum that mapped where teaching about American Indian art and culture could meaningfully intersect with interdisciplinary learning activities involving other core academic subjects. When external funding for the PI grant ends in 2010, examples of successful curriculum projects developed for K-8 Native and non-Native students by Native and non-Native teachers will be published and disseminated regionally and nationally. That said, this chapter provides a preview of two PI teachers' culturally responsive and critically focused curriculum endeavors. We showcase their diverse projects that weave American Indian arts

¹This chapter uses American Indian, Indian, Native and Native American to represent the Indigenous Peoples of North America. Cite as from J. Reyhner, W.S. Gilbert & L. Lockard (Eds.). (2011). *Honoring Our Heritage: Culturally Appropriate Approaches to Indigenous Education* (pp. 97-113). Flagstaff, AZ: Northern Arizona University.

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education into existing standards-based language arts, mathematics, science and social studies teaching. Our exemplars, Ms. Roberts¹, a tribal school second grade teacher, and Ms. Christenson, a public school upper elementary teacher, were members of the first of three PI teacher cohorts.

Project Intersect: Mapping the terrain where cultures intersect

All of PI's participating public and tribal school teachers received stipends for their efforts and funds for securing human and material resources that respected the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of all students. PI teachers also received coaching from American Indian academics and cultural experts, often in authentic settings, such as a hike in the forest for a lesson on the sociocultural norms of gathering birch bark led by a local Indigenous crafter. Each cohort of teachers enhanced their cultural competency by participating in a weeklong summer institute and then four additional inservice workshops during the academic year.

During their training teachers were asked to value America Indian epistemologies as a way to thwart ethnocentrism and “unconscious” racism. Activities to encourage thinking critically about institutionalized White racism (Pollock, 2006) helped raise those educators’ cultural awareness, sensitivity and “appreciation and respect for the Indian child...teaching characteristics that will surmount a multitude of other shortcomings” (Garcia & Ahler, 1992, p. 14). In other words, teachers were given “permission” to err when weaving the culture-based arts knowledge of local Native Peoples into respectful new lessons that focused on the relevance of such content. We were less forgiving of choosing curriculum materials that simply tack decontextualized cultural pieces that are “Indian” onto lessons that may perpetuate stereotypes and Western hegemony. PI training sessions thus challenged teachers to embrace conceptions of cultural relativism as they took on the daunting task of creating classroom environments and intelligent activities that neither devalued American Indian cultures nor the arts while marrying their study with other academic subjects (Bequette, 2009, 2007).

The authors of this chapter are White, university-based, teacher educators with over 25 years of combined experience teaching art and/or working in schools and communities with American Indian students. We observed every PI teacher’s practice, acting as colleagues who could provide feedback to help participants master the culture-based teaching approach envisioned by the project’s design team. While in classrooms or other learning environments (e.g., museums, busses, the natural world) we took fieldnotes, audio recorded key events and photographed students working and the art and utilitarian objects they created—from birchbark baskets and beaded pendants, to rice knockers and powwow regalia.

In addition to analyzing the baseline and post-intervention standardized test scores and attendance records provided by the schools for all participating students (some covering a three-year period), other data sources we scrutinized

¹All surnames are pseudonyms.

before writing this chapter included Ms. Christenson and Ms. Roberts' lesson plans and the self-assessment rubrics from daily teaching and learning experiences. The latter were qualitative indicators of a teaching episode's strengths—the teacher's perceived comfort delivering cultural content and the degree to which students were engaged by authentic activities that infused cultural arts learning into many subjects.

We analyzed and isolated from the data noteworthy elements in lesson plans and transcribed overheard teacher and student discourse and reflexive writing (e.g., student journals, teacher anecdotal accounts of student engagement). When coding this information, arcane pedagogical descriptions like good, better, or best practice were circumvented by coining a new descriptor for a third, albeit theoretical, level of expertise evident in some PI teachers' practice. We call this phenomenon cultural bricolage, and describe it as teaching with critical awareness that opens up new spaces of student voice, knowledge, and discourse. This is akin to what others conceptualize as a "third" or "hybrid" space where the discourses of home and school morph into new understandings (see e.g., Moje, et al, 2004; Gutierrez, et al, 1999; Soja, 1996; Bhabda, 1994). PI encouraged teachers to develop critically charged arts lessons and pedagogy that gave children the confidence to eschew dominant culture perspectives when studying cultures; and when those cultures varied from their own, "to accept that they are merely different—neither superior nor inferior" (Garcia & Ahler, 1992, p. 30).

Teaching of this sort was at play, often unintentionally, in both Christenson and Roberts' practice when curriculum permitted different historical and contemporary perspectives of Native art and culture to critically wrestle with particular dominant discourses—those of Western schooling, of Western art and of American Indian historicization. It is important to note that we are not describing cultural bricolage as moments of assimilation, exploitation of "otherness" or instances of harmonious cultural melding. We are seeing, however, a recognizable hybrid space where Native and non-Native teachers and their students realize that what they share in common is difference, not identity. While we do not detail the conceptual underpinnings of this third space of teacher practice in our chapter, we do believe teachers elsewhere will benefit from our portraits of Roberts and Christenson and specifically how the curriculums they constructed in very different school settings opened up new spaces of possibility for building acceptance of all cultures.

Although neither teacher identified critical pedagogy as a teaching strategy of choice, the culture-based arts integration they oversaw effectively countered underlying assumptions of power, legitimacy and ethnocentrism that too often creep into the multicultural lessons of privileged White educators. Culture-based Native arts education, we argue, can bridge new knowledge and existing knowledge in ways that help learners see connections as well as contradictions between the way they know the world and the way others see the world. Roberts and Christenson became our exemplars because of the degree to which each engaged with contemporary American Indian cultural gatekeepers (e.g., resources like elders, artists, crafters, academics and tribal historians) and how success-

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fully they wove that traditional cultural knowledge and other grant-sponsored professional development training received into their respective tribal and public school classroom.

Theoretical considerations: Our familiarity with postmodern art curriculum design (Freedman, 2003), multicultural arts learning (Chalmers, 1996) and how students respond to culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000), particularly in arts settings (Bequette, 2005), guided analysis of Roberts, Christenson and other PI teachers' effectiveness. This research is also grounded by principles of critical pedagogy (Grande, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2001, 1995; Nakata, 2000; Friere, 1998; hooks, 1995) and literature on increasing school success for Indigenous youth using culturally responsive pedagogy (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Hermes, 2007, 2005; McCarty, 2002). By design the federally funded Project Intersect intervention draws from theoretical studies that espouse the social reconstructive power of art and visual culture education (Ballengee-Morris, & Stuhr, 2001; Duncum, 2001; McFee, 1995; Stuhr, 1994), and the rightness of fit of focusing on issues of social justice in teaching (Delpit, 1995). We believe culture-based arts education offers entry points for making visible American Indian cultures (Brayboy, 2003), and that tapping the non-dominant cultural capital of Native crafters, artists, and other cultural gatekeepers gives them sovereignty in deciding what cultural content is appropriate for use in their schools (Bequette, 2009).

This chapter also draws from methods of social science portraiture (Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), a genre of inquiry and means for representation of qualitative data. As a research method it blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience. We use portraiture in describing the work of Ms. Roberts and Ms. Christenson to document the culture of schools, the life stories of individuals, and the relationships among families, communities, and local schools.

School sites, teacher examples and culture-based lessons

Ms. Roberts' BIA reservation elementary school serves a student body that self-identifies as members of several Ojibwe¹ bands of the Great Lakes region. The particular classroom of study is a second grade with 15 students. Roberts is White, middle-aged, and taught for eight years at an urban public elementary school that served a small percentage of Native students before transferring to the tribal school three years before volunteering to become a PI teacher.

Ms. Christenson's public elementary school is one of two K-5 buildings in the rural district that borders the Reservation. She is also White, nearing retirement, and already had clocked 10 years at her school before becoming a PI

¹We refer to the "Band of Lake Superior Chippewa" whose culture this initiative focuses on as Ojibwe (a name preferred by many tribal members) rather than use a pseudonym or refer to these Peoples with less specificity. However, the Band, Reservation name and geographic location of this tribal community's homeland and the neighboring public school district in which this research was also conducted are not specified in our text.

teacher. For reasons ranging from tribal politics to geography some American Indian parents send their children to these public schools. Seventeen percent of the district's population is Native and four of the twenty-one students in Christenson's class.

Baseline data collected from all PI teachers indicated that on average art found its way into their classrooms less than 30 minutes a week (and often only when taught by part-time arts specialists). These same teachers indicated a desire to include more art and culture in their classrooms but felt constrained to do so because it was challenging, time-consuming, and there was little financial support for resources and/or institutional encouragement for pursuing culturally responsive teaching. After joining PI and learning that simply creating new "stand alone" culture lessons was not a recommended model for change, the few teachers who still chose this route quickly realized the demands already placed on their time by accountability mandates like standardized testing left little room in the school day for additional lessons according to baseline survey data. Rather than randomly adding snippets of culture, PI teachers who found entry points where culture-based arts learning meaningfully intersected with teaching that already addressed existing standards in core subjects—that is enhanced or remediated student understanding of required content—experienced more success using this model.

Culture-based arts integration acknowledges the interconnectedness of school and home life. PI teachers who infused cultural arts experiences in this way opened up new channels of learning and communication in their classrooms and beyond in the communities from which the students come. "Better communication," according to former U.S. Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell (1992, p. vii) "has helped to bridge the gap between Indian and non-Indian cultures" and teachers who better understand unique American Indian cultures are best equipped to help Native students overcome any "alienation or apprehension" they may feel about schools. In the context of the three schools we worked with on this arts project, bridging American Indian art and culture with the constructs of Western schooling—also deeply imbedded in the tribal school—did at times change students' attitudes, but unfortunately resulted in no completely changed classrooms.

What did change as a result of the PI intervention was the facility of some teachers to access a new third space of hybrid knowledge and experience. This is the composite space we describe as cultural bricolage wherein knowledge and discourse from the "first space" of students' home, community and peer networks is integrated with the discourses students encounter in the "second space" of more formalized institutions like Whitemen's schools. When integrated spaces can be reconstructed to form a third or hybrid space different or alternative modes of knowledge and discourses can be accessed.

Culture-based arts education therefore is more than just adding a layer of multicultural curriculum to existing school structures. Not a specific lesson plan or teaching practice, culture-based arts education can be characterized as an integrated approach for challenging traditional schooling dichotomies. It

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is constant examination, thoughtful reflection and recognition of curriculum innovations that have the potential to create and sustain culturally responsive classrooms. Culture-based arts integration is one path to making school a more engaging place for Native students and a space in which to increase cultural awareness and sensitivity in all students. Although Roberts and Christenson's thematic units may appear overly simple and even idealistic, their reliance on viewing cultures from their unique perspectives required careful mapping of where culture, art and other subjects meaningfully intersect. In short, Roberts and Christenson successfully infused culture-based arts education into children's study of all subjects in the core curriculum by exploring local Native peoples "political, economic, and aesthetic histories... evident in their folkways and arts" (Garcia & Ahler, 1992, p. 28).

Ms. Roberts tribal school classroom

Roberts began her PI experience by generating a comprehensive plan for infusing Native arts experiences specific to Ojibwe cultures into her second grade curriculum. Even though she works in a Reservation school, Roberts received little encouragement or training on using culturally responsive teaching. Before PI no school sponsored initiatives or accountability measures focused on teaching Ojibwe culture in core subjects other than language lessons. Already motivated to learn more about American Indian art and the cultures of her students, Roberts knew joining PI presented a chance to do both and was eager to get started. By the end of the summer in which she attended the one-week introductory summer institute, Roberts had a comprehensive unit plan drafted and enough resources identified to begin implementing culturally responsive curriculum in early September. She was enthusiastic about her thematic approach and the project-based learning activities (see Quartaroli & Sherman, this volume) that would infuse weekly cultural study.

Life in second grade: Roberts' classroom is large with natural light pouring in from a wall of windows. The cabinets lining the opposite side of the room are sheathed in bright yellow laminate. There is a large, well-used "ABC" carpet in the middle of the blue and white tiled floor and a rocking chair nearby. Student desks are clustered in groups of two or three around the perimeter. Roberts' desk is covered with pictures colored by students present and past, their artwork often including images of and notes to Bernie, her dog. Photographs of places visited and school pictures that were gifts from young admirers complement those other visuals. Add a large water bottle, a coffee thermos from the morning commute, the always present folded scarf—thick wool in winter and thin gossamer in spring—random piles of papers, and there is little room for actual deskwork.

Since colonization the upper Great Lakes region has been home to a large population who identify with Nordic cultures, so it is not unusual for Indian families to be of mixed Native American and Nordic heritage, as the last names of several students on Roberts' class roster confirm. Roberts is also of Nordic descent and her fondness for traditional Marimekko patterns and bold designs inspired using large patterned panels of this Finnish fabric to serve as a back-

drop for the individual student photos she took to line the hallway outside her classroom.

Architecturally the Reservation school resembles a turtle, an animal of significance to many American Indians of the Great Lakes region. The building's interior aesthetic includes patterned floor tiles and painted cement-block walls that look like beaded designs. There are routines in the school day that honor Native Peoples past and present. For example, in place of bells recorded Native flute music spills from the school intercom to signal class changes. A morning assembly and prayer begin each school day (much like the flag salute does in many public schools). It would seem like the Nativecentric environment of the school would inspire greater integration of Ojibwe-based curriculum in the arts and other academic subjects. Instead there are "Indian education" specialists, extracurricular activities like beading, powwow dancing and regalia making, and a circular library with a sizable collection of historical-style Native art forms and other artifacts displayed in glass cases.

Using culture-based art education to explore the natural world: Ms Roberts' curriculum plan for her PI year relied heavily on Holling Clancy Holling's classic 1941 picturebook *Paddle-to-the-Sea*. After clearing its appropriateness with two tribal elders and checking that this book was not on the "do not read" list of a website that reviews children's literature with Native content (see e.g., www.oyate.org), Roberts began planning culturally responsive lessons around this text. Place-based literacy, mathematics and science teaching about the Great Lakes watershed, the region where the students live and the setting for Holling's book, was the result. Conceptions of habitat, ecosystems, treaty rights and other issues pertinent to Native Americans were connected to state academic standards and a means for introducing Indian children to the natural world. But *Paddle-to-the-Sea* is not without flaws; for instance, White loggers refer to Native trappers as "Injuns" in the book. Acknowledging such transgressions provided teachable moments for Roberts who deployed critical pedagogy to broach subjects like stereotyping and prejudice with her second graders.

The book begins as a First Nations boy positions "Paddle to the Sea," the miniature wooden canoe he carved, to launch itself in a Canadian tributary of Lake Superior. Paddle's serpentine journey through the Great Lakes and the Saint Lawrence River to the Atlantic mirrors the flow of a vast watershed, providing Native children a window on aquatic habitats, cultures, and industries that depend on waterways from the "Big Lake" to the sea:

Satisfied at last, the boy sat back on his heels. Before him lay a canoe one foot long. It looked like his father's big birchbark loaded with packs and supplies for a journey. Underneath was a tin rudder to keep it headed forward, and a lump of lead for ballast. This would keep the canoe low in the water, and turn it right side up after an upset. An Indian figure knelt just back of the middle, grasping a paddle. And along the bottom were carved these words: PLEASE PUT ME BACK IN WATER, I AM PADDLE TO THE SEA (Holling, 1941, p.1)

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Roberts used this book to talk about ideas of journey and travel as experienced in American Indian cultures, and specifically the role that dreams play in Ojibwe migration stories. The boy says,

I made you, Paddle Person, because I had a dream. A little wooden man smiled at me. He sat in a canoe on a snow bank on the hill. Now the dream has begun to come true. The Sun Spirit will look down at the snow. The snow will melt and the water will run down-hill to the river, on down to the Great Lakes, down again and on at last to the sea. You will go with the water and you will have adventures that I would like to have. But I cannot go with you because I have to help my father with the traps.

The time has come for you to sit in this snow bank and wait for the Sun Spirit to set you free. Then you will be a real Paddle Person, a real Paddle-to-the-Sea. (Holling, 1941, p.2)

Paddle to the Sea became a vehicle for teaching art, science, math, literacy, social studies, and culture in the second-grade classroom for an entire school year. Each chapter inspired interdisciplinary teaching that intersected with the themes, ideas or locations the children read about weekly. Her lesson plans invited Native student's to critically explore their past and present lifeways:

There are many land features, animals, lakes, and rivers (to name a few) that fit nicely into [the] intent of this curriculum for our Ojibwe [students], learning about their past, their migration. The lesson plans will include as much [cultural content] as possible for presenting, discovering, creating, and learning about their past to make sense of the present day, of where they came to settle. We will talk about why, how, what, where, and when this migration took place. We will include prediction questions that will keep them interested [in] present day curriculum i.e. for science, what would the weather be like, how many fish will they catch, how would they fish, what kind of fish would Paddle eat? Using these questions we will be able to compare and contrast life today and long ago.

Holling's character Paddle became a classroom mascot and a means for learning about Ojibwe migration and postcontact history. To further this intention, Roberts commissioned a Native artist to carve a one-foot wooden Paddle replica for her class to care for during their extended study. The students took turns holding this Paddle person during the chapter readings, docking his canoe on a desk as they completed classroom projects. Fondness for the storybook initially engaged the students' interest. The tangible form of Paddle helped motivate their weekly studies. And Roberts culture-based teaching connected Paddle, in a captivating way, to study in other subjects.

Art, culture, and interdisciplinary connections: Reading *Paddle-to-the-Sea* made possible interdisciplinary connections for both Roberts and her second graders. They explored the book's illustrated map using mathematical calculations of proportion, distance, and time to trace the route that led Paddle to the Atlantic Ocean. They used scale to recreate Paddle's journey on a five- by twelve-foot classroom map and worked with the school's American Indian art teacher to paint the landscape along this aquatic route. Students also sculpted tiny clay models of Paddle to act as placeholders on the map. These clay canoes were tools for review and to predict Paddle's rate of travel between stops. While estimating distance for each segment of the journey, the second graders anticipated the geography Paddle would witness along the way. Ideas of environment and natural resources (then and now) prompted many of the science connections outlined in Roberts's written unit plan:

As we are reading our story of Paddle, we will explore what the natural world looked like and explore...what kinds of trees, rocks, lakes, and rivers Paddle will [see and] travel. We will learn about animals, bugs, fish, and berries. We will discuss the wind and weather conditions of traveling, i.e. winter vs. summer. Our children will understand and know the four directions. We will raise the question and examine how the Ojibwe peoples used the stars/constellations as a guide on their journeys. We will label these words in Ojibwe...[and read] story of Beaver, a prominent animal in Ojibwe cultures.

Students were also responsible for chronicling and illustrating the story of Paddle in personal journals. Doing so made them accountable for retelling and summarizing the weekly chapters, predicting outcomes, reviewing Ojibwe vocabulary words Roberts connected to the text, and completing at least one art lesson. It was through this inquiry, exploration, storytelling, and play that students' place-based learning occurred.

Guest teachers, storytellers, and local artists and crafters. Roberts worked hard to use local and regional published resources and Native personnel throughout the year. The latter were cultural practitioners—language teachers, storytellers, artists, crafters, academics—invited into the classroom to offer specific information about the region and its history. In doing this, Roberts purposefully showed interest in the Reservation communities from which the children come and respect for the cultural knowledge and arts and crafts expertise local American Indians provided. The transparency of Roberts' embrace of place-based culture education in her classroom helped validate for parents, community members, and her Native colleagues that a White outsider was willing to tap the Indigenous cultural capital of Reservation insiders.

Conversations about oral traditions and discrepancies in practices described in stories were an important part of Roberts's lesson plans:

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How did the Ojibwe peoples get here...How do we know [whether] the Ojibwe people migrated from the east? This is one theory or idea that people have studied, researched, and... archeologists found many items that belonged to and were from the Ojibwe peoples.

The students were encouraged to talk about multiple interpretations with visiting elders, storytellers who critiqued the complication of “truth” in oral traditions. Roberts was aware that these topics needed to be broached by knowledgeable tribal community members who understood oral traditions and were comfortable talking with second graders.

After the journey with Paddle: The capstone experience after reading *Paddle-to-the-Sea* was the class exhibiting their journals and art projects for other elementary students to see. An unusual walking presentation traveled from classroom to classroom, permitting Roberts’ students to show favorite chapter illustrations, the Paddle replica, and recite Ojibwe words learned. For closure, and mostly for entertainment, Roberts showed the film adaptation of *Paddle-to-the-Sea* (Mason, 1966). This Canadian production retells Holling’s story, using actual footage of the Great Lakes region along with dramatic reenactments of Paddle’s journey. As the final credits rolled, children looked at each other and then at Roberts, before one girl asked what was on everyone’s minds, “Miss R., how can a storybook that took us so long to read be such a short movie?” Their teacher’s lengthy culturally connected rendition of *Paddle-to-the-Sea*, the children concluded, was a better read.

Ms. Christenson’s public school classroom

Christenson occasionally taught lessons focused on American Indian cultures in her public school for ten years before voluntarily joining the first cohort of PI teachers. Having access to the human and monetary resources the grant promised could further this cultural work. Of Nordic heritage, Christenson learned a lot about the Native tribes of the region from a grandfather who was an artist and author. She worked on several other past initiatives that funded teacher curriculum development, for instance using science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) teaching. However, an invitation to be part of a grant project focused on including Ojibwe art and culture in academic subjects seemed like a dream come true. Already a proponent of greater school-Indian community involvement, she frequently worked with fellow classroom teachers and children’s parents who were tribal members to forefront Ojibwe cultures in activities like the school’s annual powwow. Christenson thus brought a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm to her year of PI sponsored culture-based teaching.

A love of art and culture: Christenson radiates the confidence of a seasoned teacher. In the eyes of her “kids,” her familiarity with many of their families is more often than not a good thing. This insider knowledge gives her a lens through which to view the lives of her students’ and the challenging circumstances many face.

From a well equipped “art station” in one corner, to the display of contemporary Native art prints and historical-style crafts that span the length of another wall, Christenson’s classroom reveals she is an arts advocate and an admirer of Ojibwe art, both past and present. Since his recent passing, her grandfather’s published memoirs of many journeys with Ojibwe friends are now proudly displayed in the reference library Christenson amassed over her long teaching career. That collection also includes numerous storybooks written by and about Native North American Indians and their diverse cultures. Christenson admits her teaching philosophy and advocacy for inclusion of American Indian art and cultures in public school classrooms can be directly attributed to her grandfather’s life, artistry and respect for local Ojibwe lifeways.

Arguably the better of two elementary schools in a district of 2,400 students, “the school on the hill” as Christenson and others call it is an unadorned cement-block bastion perched on the highest point in town. Overlooking a riverside park and a paper mill that is happily downwind and downstream is perhaps its only aesthetic asset. She believes her building’s progressive curriculum and innovative teachers make it the preferred choice of Native parents who sometimes bypass the tribal school. Her administrator is supportive and pleased with Christenson’s accomplishments in the classroom, as well as the good will the community events and projects she organizes engender. Other teachers in the building respect Christenson’s teaching prowess, acknowledging her successful cultural outreach efforts. However, given the demands meeting the school’s average yearly progress (AYP) goals already place on her colleagues’ time, she is not surprised some question whether culture-based arts integration really makes a difference. Still, Christenson has little trouble persuading some of those teachers to collaborate on short-term projects, fieldtrips or even share the costs of cultural speakers she arranges. And of the ten or so PI teachers in her building, no one has yet replicated the degree to which she integrates Ojibwe art and culture into the academic day. Fortunately after completing her PI year, Christenson agreed to mentor teachers who joined the next two yearlong cohorts of arts project volunteers.

Revisiting first contact and the fur trade: Christenson used problem based historical inquiry to scaffold students’ understanding of the postcontact period of commerce between the Indigenous peoples of the upper Midwest and the French voyageurs (MacDonell, 1933). The fur trade that inspired this meeting of cultures became the catalyst for her yearlong unit on Ojibwe culture and art. She invited students to study the impact of trapping and trade, and the pros and cons of this commercial contact and cultural sharing that changed Native Americans forever. Her intent was not to gloss over the irreversible havoc colonization had on the first inhabitants of the upper Great Lakes region. Instead Christenson’s fur trade unit was an opportunity for her non-Native and Native students to decide for themselves what this period of business dealings and crosscultural communication meant for them today.

An historical simulation in which students reenacted a bartering session between an Ojibwe band and a boatload of voyageurs was the culminating event of their thematic study. Costumed fourth graders “traded” items made under the

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tutelage of Native crafters and Christenson, and pelts and manufactured goods brought from home for their roleplay. They demonstrated their command of relevant Ojibwe and French vocabulary, mathematics, and even rudimentary economics. This inquiry project helped reveal why voyageurs' early relationships with Ojibwe communities resulted in constructive outcomes for both cultures and intermarriage. So too would the students learn that Ojibwe people's relatively benign encounters with the French would inculcate a false sense of security that in time was shattered by other White colonizers (Gawboy, 2009). The resulting conflicts over land, resources, and self-determination, that led to genocide and vengeance were also fodder for the fourth graders' class discussions.

Interdisciplinary connections: Christenson approached the over 200 year history of fur trading in North American as an ongoing exchange of ideas not just commerce. She gathered essential information for her unit mostly from local resources, including Carolyn Gilman's (1982) *Where Two Worlds Meet: The Great Lakes Fur Trade*. This text provided a fairly balanced telling of the events that followed first contact, inspiring Christenson to write in her lesson plans:

An example of how two dissimilar cultures establish a common ground of understanding without sacrificing their unique characteristics or annihilating one another. A novel kind of commerce ruled this land from 1600-1850. Europeans traded their manufactured goods for the furs of the American Indians. People from two different worlds met, and their goods and ideas mingled. Neither culture was ever the same again.

This emphasis on better communication to bridge the gap between dissimilar cultures also influenced the interdisciplinary lessons taught in the classroom. Christenson's class read Louise Erdrich's *Birchbark House* (2002) and *Game of Silence* (2006) for a Native youth's perspective on Ojibwe lifeways and then William Durbin's *Broken Blade* (1998) for insight on a young French Canadian voyageur's travails. Over the course of the school year the fourth graders created historical art forms like beaded pouches and necklaces, quillwork pendants, and birchbark baskets in preparation for the fur trade simulation. A Native elder who specialized in school presentations shared his knowledge of trading and his collection of goods that changed hands during this period of peaceful commerce—well crafted Ojibwe artifacts and the voyageurs' manufactured items. Students were able to see firsthand how tools and weapons from both cultures differed, another entry point for further inquiry to determine each culture's ideas and practices related to hunting, trapping, cultivating food crops. Christenson also took the fourth graders on a full-day fieldtrip to her state's largest historical museum for a fur trade class. During the visit they learned of collaboration, commerce, and cultural knowledge sharing between local bands of Ojibwe and other woodland tribes long before French speaking voyageurs appeared.

After gaining foundational information on how trade was conducted and which items were highly regarded by each culture, the students began exploring the relative value of goods and how to barter without currency. To reinforce

academic standards for math at this grade level the class created a trade chart of items ranked from most desirable (costing the most pelts) to most common (costing the least amount of pelts). After establishing an exchange rate for pelts and other items, story problems provided opportunities to practice trading. Calculating the distance each trading partner would travel with their goods to the trading post reviewed estimating and computation skills assessed on standardized tests each spring.

State science standards were addressed in lessons that studied regional geography and how it both hampered and hastened cultural contact. By better understanding the biodiversity of the region and its plant and animal life students learned why commodities like forest products, minerals, furs, hides, and birchbark attracted White entrepreneurs and settlers. Environmental science came into play when Christenson had students meet a natural resources manager from the Reservation who explained how overhunting, habitat destruction, stream erosion, and pollution changed the fauna of the upper Great Lakes watershed and how the tribe's restoration efforts addressed such issues.

The social dynamics of women's lives in Native societies and their role in trade were examined in social studies lessons. As was touring the historical site of a local trading post and being asked to consider the complex relationship between American Indian communities and the trading centers they came to rely on for commerce. Historically trading posts were sites of permanent White settlements in the upper Midwest. This new learning led the students to the bigger question of how everything they had studied about the fur trade's history had bearing on relationships between contemporary Native and non-Native cultures and communities today. Christenson's goal of increasing all children's cultural sensibility was the overarching objective articulated in the written plan for her yearlong economics unit and why she joined PI: "The raising of cultural awareness and appreciation for Ojibwe history, lives, stories, and people will improve the educational experience for all our students and help to breakdown stereotypes and prejudice."

Contemporary artists and historical art forms: Christenson's focus on the past practices of Native artisans and the role historical art forms played in early commerce influenced who from the pool of local cultural experts was invited into her classroom. She was also mindful of the importance of valuing living Ojibwe artists and introducing the fourth graders to contemporary American Indian art. Her class visited a regional art museum principally to see an exhibit of paintings created by a well know contemporary Native artist with ties to the region. The museum's collection of historical artifacts like quillwork, moccasins, birchbark baskets, and carved pipestone invited comparison with the contemporary work of Native artists the children saw exhibited—paintings, drawings, sculpture, prints, and mixed media pieces. The fourth graders were encouraged to view Native artistry as a means for cultural continuance and to understand an artists' cultural identity is often represented quite differently in historical and contemporary art forms.

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The fur trade unit offered many opportunities for students' families to be involved in classroom activities like beading, tool-making projects, and fashioning dance regalia. The spring powwow organized by Christenson's school was outreach that acknowledged cultural difference. It also was a way to connect and collaborate as a larger community of learners, as students and staff from the neighboring tribal school, including Christenson's PI colleague Ms. Roberts and many of her second grade students, attended the public school powwow.

Implications of Ms. Roberts and Ms. Christenson's culture-based teaching

Each teacher approached their culture-based arts integration from an historical perspective using different timeframes of significance to local American Indians. Having an engaging sequence of place-based (Graham, 2009; Gruenewald, 2003) activities also encouraged intentional learning transfer across several core academic subjects. In acknowledging that art and culture projects, Indian guest speakers, and meaningful fieldtrips motivated all students at one point or another, Christenson and Roberts reported these activities had an even more profound impact on a small group of other children, both Native and non-Native. These were students whose school attendance and/or behavior got markedly better on project days. Both teachers attributed this transformation to the cultural content of the varied learning episodes and the frequent presence of animated Native presenters and talented family members in their classrooms.

Evidence of new learning

Deconstructing the practice of Ms. Christenson and Ms. Roberts helps illustrate how their classrooms became hybrid spaces of possibility when teaching included the phenomenon we call cultural bricolage. That is to say, they optimized access to productive uncharted zones that lie between school and local cultural knowledge, language, and art. A classroom environment that brings art from both the community culture and mainstream school can create a safe space for integrated learning rooted in cultural understanding. We argue that these White educators were at times teaching in the critically charged space where discourses of art and culture exist from different historical and personal perspectives and from a place of new student voice, knowledge, and communication.

The 50 teachers in our study helped us recognize common factors that contributed to their success, or lack thereof, developing and delivering culture-based arts curriculum. Those women and men changed their practice only after negotiating a comfort with, awareness of, and exposure to Ojibwe cultures, mostly by accessing resources close to home. Human resources included regional artists and crafters, Indian teachers from K-12 and higher education settings, cultural liaisons already working in the schools and other culture bearers like elders and parents. The healthy budget provided by PI permitted ordering art supplies, scheduling fieldtrips, and compensating Native presenters as needed. Grant funds also provided stipends to compensate participating teachers for their off-the-clock efforts.

Although, constrained by time, those who approached the task at hand most effectively found time for conducting research, scheduling presenters, and essential face-to-face collaboration with local cultural practitioners. These teachers acknowledged that outside mentoring from both Native and non-Native PI facilitators was essential when they began transforming theories and ideas about culture-based arts learning into truly meaningful practice. In time many participants realized that they were in fact part of a larger cohort of learners and the work of planning culturally relevant curriculum could not be done in isolation. And despite some discomfort, teachers who looked outside their classrooms and schools for cultural funds of knowledge and positioned themselves as learners along with their students all experienced some degree of success. It was the collegial sharing of ideas—entry points for marrying art with academic subjects, new teaching strategies, how and where to find both material and human resources, and other information exchanges—that sustained less connected teachers. For all participants the PI experience forged lasting bonds between individuals working within the same building, the same school district, or across the few miles that separate the tribal and public schools.

On another level, when PI teachers' outreach efforts focused on culture-based arts education became more transparent, school-Indian community relations profited. Simply tapping the cultural knowledge of artists, crafters, parents, elders, and others who shared their expertise in Project Intersect classrooms may in time be an effective mechanism for engaging these stakeholders more fully with their children's education. PI was an opportunity to demonstrate how curriculum relevant to local Native cultures, with ongoing participation from those who know it best, can make learning enjoyable and school a more interesting place on many levels, for both Indian and non-Indian students.

Given the prevalence of White teachers in the workforce there is often a "wide gap" (Messing, 2005) between their life experiences and those of their students. Although this study looks at the use of culture-based arts education as a means for improving the school success of Midwest Native and non-Native students in many academic areas, there are implications for teachers elsewhere who work in classrooms with students who are culturally different from themselves. Our work is one model for addressing this cultural communication gap. We argue teachers can use similar classroom and community building strategies to create curriculum that is sustainable, culturally responsive, and critically charged.

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