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Intergenerational Wisdom through Autoethnography

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Intergenerational Wisdom through Auto ethnography

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in American Indian Studies

by

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2018
Indigenous scholars and academics play a pivotal role in creating and defining social terms and frameworks for what it means to be a Native person in contemporary U.S. society. These terms and frameworks contribute to social norms, how we as Native people view ourselves, and how others view us. In this study, I draw on the work of Native scholars and practitioners who have been instrumental in conducting groundbreaking work to document the role of historical and intergenerational trauma in the continuity and disruption of tribal epistemologies and lifeways. The groundbreaking work on historical trauma has provided explanatory models for educational and health disparities that do not lay blame at the individual level. These models, in contrast to deficit-based narratives that focus on what is inherently “wrong” with Native peoples and cultures, point to structural, historical, societal, and structural determinants for inequities. In this thesis, I employ autoethnography to develop historical and intergenerational wisdom as a parallel and complementary strand of work to historical and
intergenerational trauma. Drawing on my life-long experience with the Native Wellness Institute, a national non-profit organization, as well as interviews with leaders in the Native wellness and healing movement, including family members, I sift through information, stories, and examples from everyday experiences to bring forth the spirit of our ancestors. By doing so, I aim to simultaneously change models in academia that have fore-grounded deficit-based narratives and re-focus the lens on abundance-based, also referred to as strength-based or culture-based, research. A framework of intergenerational wisdom can guide and influence future students and scholars as well as permeate beyond academia. As individuals, families and communities continue to learn more about historical and intergenerational trauma, they can also learn more about historical and intergenerational wisdom. My hope is that through this, Indigenous peoples will understand that the answer to trauma is healing and the tools to healing are embedded in intergenerational wisdom.
The thesis of Shalene Niltinna Joseph is approved.

Ananda Marin

Kyle T. Mays

Duane Champagne, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2018
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This thesis is a lifetime in the making, and all that I know comes from others, so the acknowledgments can make a thesis in itself. You will find in this thesis there are people who made this project what it is today. Dr. Lynette Chandler, who I aspire to be like more and more every day. She showed me we belong in these spaces and wisdom passes through us, that there are no limits when it comes to our dreams. She showed me true love and to remember to smile even in the hardest of times. To the matriarchs of my family, thank you and I love you. This thesis could not be what it is today without you. To my family and friends who have given me an immense amount of support, I thank you as well. This thesis is a commitment to positive change and to continue the legacy of storytellers, to acknowledge and repatriate how we tell our stories and through what lens. I want to acknowledge the land in which my studies took place, the land I occupied, Tongva territories, and the spaces occupied while I traveled. To my cohort, who endured the battle of school together, we made it. To the movers and shakers, academics, community workers, elders, and ancestors who have paved the way for me to be here today to add to the body of wisdom already here, I am eternally grateful. Special thanks to the Dr. Boxer sisters, Majel and Elise, who have shaped me as an academic I am today. To Dr. Marin for believing in my project and my work on another level and creating a space I felt comfortable in, while being in such a turbulent place in my life. Dr. Champagne and Dr. Mays for lending a hand and helpful words along the journey of this thesis. Dr. Shannon Speed, I am so thankful for your heart work, for your compassion and understanding. The last year of my program, with so much going on, you made the time to check in and make sure I was in a place to do the best work I could do, thank you. Dr. Theresa Stewart Ambo, who in some ways manifested my journey to UCLA and made sure I found a home here, thank you. There are many individuals I would love
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much so I can give to others. I love and appreciate you all.
Introduction

As an A’aniiih and Athabacan woman my work within the nonprofit sector and academia, as well as my academic journey, has predominantly focused on how Indigenous communities heal from of Historical and Intergenerational Trauma. The word “heal” or haélan in Old English, is Germanic in origin and means “to make whole or sound in bodily condition” (Oxford English dictionary online, n.d.). From a tribal perspective, becoming whole means attaining physical, mental, emotional and spiritual balance and well-being. In my work, I research healing from an academic perspective and a personal perspective, drawing on experiences along my own healing journey. As a staff member of the Native Wellness Institute, I co-facilitate a summer program for Native youth that focuses on Native Youth Leadership. The Native Wellness Institute (NWI) is officially recognized as non-profit organization, however we refer to NWI as a social-profit organization – a name that recognizes our efforts to benefit society. Promoting the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of North America’s Indigenous peoples is our labor of love. The goal of the Native Wellness Institute is to continue facilitating positive changes in the lifestyles, relationships, education, and overall wellness of Native people. As a leading social-services training and technical assistance resource, NWI aims to address historical trauma by supporting communities in healing. Historical Trauma is defined as “the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding of an individual or generation caused by a traumatic experience or event. Historical trauma response (HTR) refers to the manifestation of emotions and actions that stem from this perceived trauma” (Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 1998). Recognizing the significant impact of historical trauma, NWI works to promote physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Toward this end, NWI has identified five main areas of work:

- Healthy Relationships and Parenting
- Youth Leadership and Development
- Workplace Wellness/ Staff Development
- Strategic Planning, Program Development and Curriculum Development
- Wellness and Healing Conferences, Retreats and Targeted Community Training

We accomplish work in across these five areas by:

- Bringing together highly skilled Native trainers and consultants across the United States and Canada for trainings, gatherings, conferences, workshops and other projects;
- Implementing an internal and external leadership training initiative that will strengthen the circle and prepare Native people for leadership opportunities; and
- Developing programs and services to meet the areas of need that impact the physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental well-being of Native people. (Nativewellness.com, 2000).

Our elders have told us “be careful in the decisions we make today as they will impact the 7th generation- our grandchildren’s grandchildren.” Respect for this wisdom continues to guide us in our commitment to preparing Native youth for a brighter future. It is our cultural responsibility to prepare our young people to be positive, productive, and proactive members of their families and communities.

NWI strives to provide a process where our young ones can make a “head to heart” connection and understand the “why” of behaviors and how we can promote and maintain living by the “Warrior’s Spirit” – being positive, productive, and proactive. We know our ancestors are smiling with pride with our accomplishments in the present and our visions for the future.

**In the Beginning**

In 1997 when I was five, my mom took a healthy risk and quit her full-time job to stay home and raise her children. She had just given birth to my brother and at three months old she had to put him in childcare, a first for any of her children. Prior, her mother took care of me and my other brother when my mom had to go back to work. This lasted for a month and my mom could not allow a stranger to raise her child for ten hours a day. She embraced her historical wisdom, took that healthy risk to quit her job and become a wellness consultant, providing
training and technical assistance to tribes and organizations throughout North America. During this time, she gathered with her friends who were doing similar work as private consultants and they decided to join forces to begin their own social profit organization to collaboratively bring healing and wellness to Indian Country. In 2000, the Native Wellness Institute was created. I was 8 years old at the time. I grew up in this work and learning on the go and community-based collaboration was my education. My mom took me everywhere with her from the time I was in a cradleboard- to work in her office, to tribal communities where she worked, or to tribal communities for gatherings and celebrations. This story is pivotal to who I am and the place my thesis comes from.

This was the topic of my undergraduate degree. In my master’s program, I felt the focus and emphasis on healing historical trauma through Indigenous youth leadership to be not enough; something else had to factor into the equation. I have worked, assisted and witnessed healing and wellness work for many years in Indigenous communities in North America. I began speaking in communities at the age of 13, getting practice and learning the skills needed to be a facilitator. These experiences have profoundly shaped my understanding of the true brilliance of our cultural ways. In my experience as a student, I have seen very little research and writing within academia that fully reflects the holistic worldview and healing practices in many of these communities. As an Indigenous woman in the field of Native wellness and youth leadership development I am often bombarded with depressing and raw readings of our traumatic history. Although we have witnessed an increase in Indigenous activism and coalition building, for example the No Dakota Access Pipe Line movement that produced a movement in Standing Rock or the push for Indigenous Peoples Day over Columbus Day, two efforts that have
happened in the time span of writing this thesis, a significant amount of scholarship still continues to focus on chronic problems in our communities.

In 2009, Eve Tuck, a Unangax scholar wrote *Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities*. This open letter called for communities, researchers, and educators to reconsider the long-term impact of “damage-centered” research. Tuck (2009) explains:

In damaged-centered research, one of the major activities is to document pain or loss in an individual, community, or tribe. Though connected to deficit models—frameworks that emphasize what a particular student, family, or community is lacking to explain underachievement or failure—damage-centered research is distinct in being more socially and historically situated. It looks to historical exploitation, domination, and colonization to explain contemporary brokenness, such as poverty, poor health, and low literacy. Common sense tells us this is a good thing, but the danger in damage-centered research is that it is a pathologizing approach in which the oppression singularly defines a community. Here’s a more applied definition of damage-centered research: research that operates, even benevolently, from a theory of change that establishes harm or injury in order to achieve reparation. (p. 413)

Tuck (2009) raises many of the issues that I have wrestled with and her open letter speaks to the reasons I decided to address the topic of intergenerational wisdom in my thesis. Tuck (2009) explains, the trouble that comes not only from historical exploitation and mistreatment of people but also from “feelings of being overresearched yet, ironically, made invisible” (p. 411-412). Tuck’s (2009) answer to damaged-centered research is writing from a more desire-based framework, one that “recognizes desire as multiplicitous and as assembled from prior experiences, and that utilizes depathologizing analyses” (p. 418).
I would like to suggest that Indigenous scholars in academia have been impacted by historical and intergenerational trauma and that is time for us as scholars to begin to make a shift. My reading of Eve Tuck’s open letter came at the right time in this journey of mine. I was thankful for this piece because the work of healing in academia has begun, and I want to be a part of perpetuating that work into the future. As I read Eve Tuck’s letter, my thoughts turned to positionality. Where do you as a researcher fit in this framework? As I write about Native peoples, who may I benefit and who could I potentially harm? I am highly aware of the ongoing negative stereotypes of Indigenous peoples, Native Americans specifically. Research has the potential to shift negative stereotypes, however as Medin, ojaletho, Marin, and Bang (2017), suggest the lack of diversity in social, behavioral, and educational sciences “create something of a crisis for the science of human behavior” where what is valued in research is narrowly defined and who decisions about what should be researched are made by a privileged few (p. 1).

I have a unique perspective and opportunity to the shift what is valued. I have a deep understanding of Historical and Intergenerational Trauma and the behaviors attached to those traumas. I also have a deep understanding of the power of Intergenerational Wisdom. My goal in this thesis is to shift the focus from a damage-centered model and give focus to the abundance-thinking model that is finally emerging. Outside of academia I work for the Native Wellness Institute, an organization that travels into Native communities to facilitate wellness and healing work on the ground as well as provide skill-building training, leaving participants with tools to continue the healing and wellness for themselves, their families and in their communities. My goal while at UCLA was to bring the healing and wellness work lessons from outside of academia, into the academic system, and in a reciprocal way, thereby creating positive change that also influences the community’s social construction of who they are.
Autoethnography

I chose to use autoethnography (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Spry, 2001), and specifically Indigenous approaches to autoethnography, as a method for sharing my story and further developing Intergenerational Wisdom as a framework to guide work in the field of Native wellness. Autoethnography as a method, privileges the power inherent in truth telling, the power in our own stories as experts in our life experiences. Through auto-ethnographic writing researcher shares personal stories “for the purposes of extending sociological understanding” (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21). As Denshire (2014) reminds us, “Writing both selves and others into a larger story goes against the grain of much academic discourse” (p. 1). Denzin (2003) explains that through auto-ethnographic writing the researcher makes “themselves accountable and vulnerable to the public”” (p. 137). In this thesis, I allow readers to glance into the life of myself and the stories of others. To put the relationship with the person first and create conversation rather than a hierarchy of an interview process, which creates balance in the process, as it is their information that co-participants/researchers are allowing us to build our argument from. The motivation of the project then becomes balanced, myself and the participants all have a say in the direction we are moving in.

With this auto-ethnography, I aim to “address social questions of difference and becoming that may enable voices previously silenced to speak back.” (Denshire, 2014, p. 833). I analyze the past, present, and look to the future to contextualize Intergenerational Wisdom through collective collaboration. I view this approach as holistic. Archibald (2014) writes:

“An Indigenous philosophical concept of holism refers to the interrelatedness between the intellectual, spiritual, (metaphysical values and beliefs and the creator), emotional, and physical (body and behavior/action) realms to form a whole healthy person. The
development of holism extends to and is mutually influenced by one’s family, community, band, and nation” (p. 11).

Holism, places value on family and community. As a researcher, I resist colonial approaches by drawing on my own ties to my community, life experience, and relationality to the world. Connecting to ancestry and land is a vital component to autoethnography. Whitinui (2013) describes Indigenous autoethnography as a “distinct method of inquiry” which requires that she, “as a person of Māori descent…respectfully introduce ‘who I am’ (social identity) and ‘where I am from’ (place identity)” (p. 458).

**My Autoethnographic Process**

In this process of reflection on my own relationality to Intergenerational Wisdom, I wrote a series of letters to myself, family members, and colleagues. These letters helped me to process in a very personal way what I was attempting to express about intergenerational wisdom. By being vulnerable, these letters showed my social identity, introduced who I am and the place I come from, and provides you, the reader, with the opportunity to connect on a personal level to my expressions of connectedness and belonging. Further, these letters express my gratitude to the matriarchs of my family and allow readers to witness how intergenerational wisdom is experienced and passed down from generation to generation. Writing these letters reaffirmed my own historical wisdom by helping me to organize my thoughts and to escape the confinements of being an academic writer, it allowed me to be my genuine self on my terms. I wrote a total of five letters: letters to myself, the future, my mother, grandmother, and future academics. These letters describe aspects of Intergenerational Wisdom and share my thinking in a personal way to the people who have shaped my understanding of Intergenerational Wisdom and made this thesis
possible. These letters also showcase my own storytelling, allowing the reader to better understand my point of view of sharing my journey through the process of autoethnography.

We are in a time where we get to define who we are, we get to tell our stories, we can change scholarship (Smith, 2012). Building from methods other Indigenous scholars use (Archibald, 2014; Wilson, 2008), I conducted group conversations with my family and co-workers to bring the vital community voices who often go unheard in academic settings. In order to create an understanding of a shared experience and theoretical lens, I draw on these conversations and stories, to form a framework of Historical and Intergenerational Wisdom. Twelve individuals were interviewed and these individuals have been profound in shaping my worldview. I have woven quotes from the interview transcriptions across this thesis in order to emphasize the importance of healthy collaboration and the strength of the people who allowed me to share a piece of them in this process. In this way, the storytelling is enriched by my family, elders, mentors and leaders in the Native wellness movement.

In my storytelling, I include and begin with my academic journey as it clearly highlights my own realizations of historical wisdom across time. Writing about my academic journey helped me to embrace my own historical wisdom and helped me to navigate a system that wasn’t built for academics like me. Writing from my personal experiences also allowed me to find my voice and use my voice in order to make contributions to academia that are based in historical wisdom. My thesis is structured in a flow that describes my family and includes a letter to the reader. From here, I begin to define historical wisdom and then move to a letter I wrote to myself. Next, a review of literature on historical trauma is included to convey how important that work is and to provide a context from which to understand historical wisdom. After the literature review I pay homage to the matriarchs in my family and include a letter to my mom and
grandmother. I also present stories that my grandmother and mom shared with me about their experiences of historical wisdom. The thesis then includes narrative from the interviews with elders, peers, and mentors. I conclude by offering a letter to fellow academics.

Academia

"Academia has dominated and shifted the way that we think. Religion has really dominated and shifted the way that we pray or shifted the way that I thought about spirituality. And just as much as even the word love, has dominated and shifted the way of emotion because love is not an emotion, love is spiritual attachment, but just as everything has shifted, and, like Thosh said, just give them access to something beyond that, something beyond, something beyond being able to see it on the internet or read in a book." - Robert Johnston, (Az Interview)

Intergenerational Wisdom goes beyond the boundaries of academia and religion. Robert is talking about accessing something beyond what we physically see. Through these conversations we talked about this contemporary life that we live in- it’s fast paced and always on the go, we constantly have screens in our faces, new information coming towards us from all directions at all times. An important component of Intergenerational Wisdom is taking the time to be human and interact with people we love by bringing humanity into the created space where we are allowed to embrace fully the power of our ancestors and each other. As Māori scholar, Linda Smith explains:

"There is no easy or natural relationship between activism and research. Although some activists are also researchers, and have to undertake their own research, and researchers may also be activists, the roles are very different. Research and activism exist as different activities, undertaken by different kinds of people employing different tools for different kinds of ends (p. 217)."
My journey through academia has been a long road of twists and turns, roundabouts and redirections. I had internal battles with finding my place within the institution and fully embracing the education I was receiving. I struggled to find balance in school and my life, to find a place where my healing journey, activism, and education could co-exist. It was not until my undergraduate career where I found there was much more I could learn and with topics that I was actually interested in. I had been exposed and immersed into the work of the Native Wellness Institute, first as a child attending trainings and gatherings, intently listening, and then later as a youth participant and then later as a youth leader and now as a staff member. Due to this experience, and it being the basis of my early education and formation of my worldview, I wrote my undergraduate thesis on “Healing Historical Trauma through Indigenous Youth Leadership.” During my time at Fort Lewis College I realized how damage centered American Indian Studies/ Native American and Indigenous Studies really is. It is not my intention to make the important and intensive work that has already been done irrelevant, because we need that work. The research on Historical and Intergenerational Trauma has profoundly impacted the way we can connect trauma to behavior in order to create greater awareness in moving forward; and now is the time to reclaim who we are in research as a means to begin to change and add to the narrative of historical and intergenerational wisdom.

**Undergrad**

*You know, I wanted to learn. I want to try new things. It's like, that so goes against the grain of what American culture's all about because American culture is really all about knowing more than the next person and having more than the next person. And, to me, that's still deficit thinking but in another way.* - Robert Johnston (GR Interview)
By the time I graduated from Fort Lewis I had found a newly refreshed academic passion, I knew I wanted to continue with my education and more importantly, to leave a mark in academia that included a piece of me. I had discussed with friends who had also taken the academic route about what programs and environment they felt would be a good fit and where they felt I could thrive. I chose UCLA as I knew I could take this journey to another level at this institution, and it was the only school I applied to. While at the Nike N7 Sports Summit at the Nike World Headquarters in Oregon, I connected with a good friend who was in attendance. She had been through and finishing up the UCLA program I had been looking at. We talked about her thoughts on the program and she offered advice. She shared the good things she liked about being in LA and about the community she had built. I became excited as I could visualize the possibility of me moving and starting a new program at UCLA. Having a relationship with place was important for me in order to move.

Grad School

*Research in any discipline that Native researchers are doing, depends on where they're at. Are they still in a place of historical trauma? Or not even understanding that? Or are they coming from a place of historical wisdom? Or where are they on their healing journey? It's gonna impact their work.* - Jillene Joseph (Interview)

I really dug into my healing journey after undergrad. I took the time to learn from my mistakes and address the information I had learned from academia. I went through the angry Indigenous academic phase and I needed to give myself the time and space to process the information. It was a time of transition for me to embrace this new side of me. Writing was a way for me to be heard and to express my understanding of the world. Like this thesis, it has been a long process to get to this point. Grief and loss were major components to that process.
My own Historical Wisdom allowed the pain and hurt to move through the words, to permeate every thought and move forward with healing. My healing journey is what inspired this topic.

In the quote above, Jillene, my mother, is talking about our own personal journey’s having an effect in the work we do. We are all somewhere on the healing journey and therefore are inherently biased; like myself knowing that Intergenerational Wisdom exists just as Integrational trauma does. We embody our work and in a program, like our masters, we choose a topic we are interested in. With that choice comes dedication and a process we are personally invested in. Where we are in our personal healing journey is going to impact the work. Knowing this, I had to pull myself away from writing in order to heal my own broken heart to ensure I was in a good place to write to better express what I am attempting to explain.

Once I was accepted to UCLA, life began to rapidly change. I was working for NWI and was getting ready for my move to California. I began talking to my immediate family and NWI family about the work I wanted to do. They helped me to think critically, some who have been through the academic process were getting me mentally prepared for what was to come. I took everything in, all the lessons, stories, advice, and love they had to give. As work wrapped up I packed my things and made the move to LA. My cousin, Martin, and good friend, Bethany, were already established in LA and made sure my move was easy. Having a connection to family made the move smooth and having my aunt and cousin living in the area was comforting as well.

Classes started and I was visiting with a friend one day while making shawls for the Indigenous Women Rise March in Washington DC, and we started talking about academia. As we sat volunteering our time, being busy with our hands, putting our love into the shawl making, being proactive and contributing to an event that would help Indigenous women and other women find their voice and use it, she shared about how traumatic her experience was in
academia. Her perspective was one that I had not heard from her specifically before. Unfortunately, it was a conversation that not many Indigenous scholars are having. She talked about the system of academia being traumatizing. She talked about how scaring and jarring some of the information was that we had to learn in-depth about. I agreed, as reading genocidal histories of Indigenous people is difficult, it rarely gets easier. I listened to her and her experiences with academia and I became sad. I knew there was more to her story. In that moment, I knew there was a greater purpose of why she was telling me about her experience. This was a pivotal moment for me and would help shape the work that I wanted to leave in academia.

When I entered UCLA, I first wanted to focus on the same topic, healing historical trauma. However, that didn’t seem enough for me; I wanted to make more of a positive impact. I wanted to begin shifting the narrative in academia around historical and intergenerational trauma. I was not sure how, but I knew it was what I wanted to do. I wanted to do an abundant-based or resilient-based or cultural-based thesis with hopes to begin changing the dialogue about Native peoples. I wanted people to see the world the way that I do, how amazing and resilient our people are, and to repatriate that meaning. I was still traveling every so often for work, facilitating wellness and healing gatherings in tribal communities and making sure I had a fine balance of the healing work I love, and the academic work to be done. The academic term in school that I had been hearing about was now in my face- I had to narrow down my thesis topic and begin my research. Through my NWI work, which also melded into my personal life, we literally talked about my topic all the time- Intergenerational Wisdom. This was it! My topic! I finally had some tangible concept I could write about and add to the tiny pool of strength and culture-based academic literature.
I shared the idea with my family and colleagues and they loved the idea. We began having conversations about this shift in academia and what this could do for Native people. A slight shift had already been started in the academy and I knew I wanted to add to it, especially contribute in the area of healing and moving forward from historical and intergenerational trauma. Initially, I wanted Native people to have another lens to be able to write through, to help others see the good in our people and in spite of the harsh realities of massacres and boarding school, that through our historical wisdom we have a bounty of positive things in our lives and in our communities to help us move beyond the trauma. I did not want to have to continue the cycle of oppression or lateral oppression that I most often found and experienced in academia. I wanted others, including non-Native people, to see that we have not been erased, we live productive, positive and proactive lives, we thrive, we contribute, we resist, WE ARE STILL HERE and doing amazing things. Lateral oppression is one of those behaviors that has been taught and deeply engrained into our people. To be crabs in a bucket, to belittle by the colonial standard, who is native enough, who is allowed to do the work, rather than empowering one another. The academic literature on historical and intergenerational trauma is needed and I greatly appreciate the work of the Native academics who coined these terms, who put words and definitions to our collective experience and who helped us bridge trauma to behavior. That work was, and continues to be ground-breaking, and has helped thousands of our people better understand ourselves and the healing process. As our understanding and experiences continue to shift and grow as a people, so does the academic work. My focus on historical wisdom serves a purpose to bring balance to the trauma; to bring healing to the forefront. Where there has been trauma, healing is the answer.
The work we do as academics contributes to the larger conversations to be had about Native peoples. In Malia Villegas’ *What’s Love Got to Do With It? Stewarding a Healing Vision at the National Congress of American Indians Policy Research Center*, she speaks of her experience moving from a position at the Alaska Native Policy Center into an unexpected position at the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). The position she would later move into was the director of Policy Research Center. “As I close out my first four years as the director of the PRC, I have come to understand that *how we approach our work* is fully as important as what we produce. *Method* and *outcome* together define the impact we have and the contribution we make in Indian Country” (Villegas, 2016, p. 102).

Villegas goes on to demonstrate the challenges of research in Native communities by our own choice. “Over time, I have come to see that we limit ourselves by focusing on fear, because fear is a choice that will always be beckoning for our attention and energy. So much of our past work has been steeped in understanding trauma, oppression, violence, and stress. While we want our work to help do away with these destructive forces, we do so by setting our gaze on the strength, beauty, and resilience of our cultures” (Villegas, 2016, p. 102). The work she set her focus on as a researcher was based in positivity and was abundance based to further uplift our people. The idea of love and healing as research topics or written into policy is certainly an emerging norm. We are socialized to focus on the damaged based research to find the solution. “We will start introducing notions of healing and love in policy when you start telling us how to measure it!” Challenge noted and accepted. What does it look like to center love and healing in our measurement and policy research efforts? This is our work” (Villegas, 2016, p.102).

Malia Villegas’ work is abundance based while also questioning who gets to tell our stories and how they are being told. Are they accounts of the historical trauma and disparities of
our communities? Or are they uplifting our community, changing the external view and the social construction, the built stereotype that is placed on a people? Villegas explains the importance of us implementing tribal sovereignty over data collected, however, the battle begins before that. What is the research being done?

Shifting this narrative requires both a strategic, coordinated effort and one that is very deep. In this way, we have found that another challenge is to simultaneously plan the work in a strategic way while doing the work in a substantive way… We also have a responsibility to acknowledge the large number of Native scholars researching historical trauma, suicide prevention, and Indigenous stress for decades, and find a way to connect them to each other and to tribal leadership. In another case, we see the value in prioritizing discussions about improving tribal data. (Villegas, 2016, p. 17).

**Family Support**

My family is an immense support system for me, no matter the distance or time passed, they are there. When I first started this program my auntie/cousin, Dr. Lynette Chandler, was right there making sure I was on track. My first class at UCLA was a Language Revitalization class, which was her field of study. She was a published author and expert on this topic and has spent her professional career developing an immersion school on our reservation. I asked for guidance on my final paper. She provided resources and told me to read her work. I felt so proud to be able to cite her, to have a family connection in academia. I wanted to be like her- a strong, resilient, Native professional, and I still do. She earned her Bachelor’s degree in English literature in 2000, Masters of Arts in Native American Studies in 2003 and a Doctorate in Education Leadership in 2010, the year I graduated high school. She helped found the White Clay Immersion School to teach the Aaniiih Language and traditions back home on the Fort
Belknap Indian Reservation in north central Montana, where we call home. More than that, she was someone I looked up to because of how she lived her life. She embodied Historical and Intergenerational Wisdom. When you saw her you couldn't help but smile because she was smiling at you. She gave the best hugs and was always encouraging people. She often talked about how amazing our family is, how we embody who we are, where we come from, how important that was. She talked about education on many levels, going home and learning, and leaving home and learning and how it was all important and all has a purpose. Lynette is the type of person who you can't help but feel loved and appreciated just by being in her presence.

**The Power of Grief and Loss**

After finishing my first year I had talked to her about how excited I was to tell her about how this first year had gone. I wanted to hear all of her advice, mostly how to write a thesis because that was something I had never done before. Visiting her was one of my favorite things because the conversations were full of laughter and useful guidance. I was not always the best student in the field of academia, I knew her advice would always give me peace of mind. We were back home for our tribal celebration in early August 2017, the Hays Community Pow Wow. Every year it's my recharge time before going back to school, a place where I grab a piece of home before moving off again, these times are very grounding for me. This year was different and forever changing. During the pow wow, Lynette passed away, taking a piece of all of us with her on her journey. This hit Indian Country in a big way. Many people knew her due to her language revitalization efforts, they knew how amazing she was, and as the days passed we were reminded of her positive impact on this world.

Soon after the funeral, which was all done in a traditional manner, my family sent me back to school. Feeling unsure, lost, confused, I pushed myself into the work. I would sit and cry
and remember our conversations and use those as motivation. I would talk to my family about it as we were all feeling a bit lost. Still the encouragement continued. Several months passed and then November hit. My Uncle Matt had a courageous battle with cancer and his end time had come. We traveled back to Montana again for the funeral and anger set in. Earlier in the summer, my mom and I took a week off of work to help him through his last cancer treatment in Reno, Nevada. It was a week full of love and appreciation of the little things. We watched TV shows together, visited and built puzzles together- just me, my mom, and Matt. We talked about how things were getting better, we talked about the positive things we had in life and we talked about his vision for the future. We celebrated each day of treatment. One day we went for ice cream and Matt got a chocolate mocha, which was a big deal because we had been reverting back to traditional foods, and chocolate mochas were not on that list. I didn't know at the time that these days would be our last together. I would receive text updates from him every now and then and that “one day” came when we found out he had lost his battle with cancer. While getting ready for the service our whole family showed up. It’s always good to see each other and be together, yet it was also hard.

My cousins and I stayed up all night, or tried to, and talked about old times. We updated each other on life’s events, which was only a few months since we were all together for Lynette’s funeral. We shared stories, a lot of laughs and tears. As the hours went by, my family continued to be encouraging to us younger ones. The older generations were telling us how proud they were, how they were happy we were out doing whatever we were doing. The feeling I have when I am with family- the real comfort, unconditional love, embracing all that I have, is something I hold near and dear, it is a part of my historical wisdom.
My uncle Matt was also a proponent of education. He received his master’s in business administration and worked for the American Indian Business Leaders organization before working with several Northwest tribes as General Manager and director of tribal gaming. He worked hard and was proud of his many accomplishments. His Indian name, Many Chiefs, was so fitting. In addition to his tribal business acumen, he was an avid outdoorsman. He was a hunter, fisherman and enjoyed camping and wildlife photography. He was a husband, father, grandfather, son, nephew, cousin, uncle, colleague and friend. He had an infectious laugh. He loved life. And an interesting thing I learned about him over the summer, was that he was tired of tribal politics. He was tired of the way people treated each other with such disrespect and disregard, he was tired of lateral oppression, he was just tired. When asked about his dream job, he paused and deeply thought and then said, “I want to work for the Native Wellness Institute.” I took a moment to just take what he had just said in, I knew he was saying that he was tired of the chronic negativity and that he wanted to be surrounded with love and laughter and like-minded people that were moving toward helping our people to heal. He was feeling his historical wisdom.

Lessons from Grief and Loss

“I need to actively and consciously practice compassion and gratitude and kindness and respect, because I know those are things that are going to help me to heal to be in that better place so I can help others heal.” - Anthony Collins (AZ Interview)

I talk to a handful of people often, daily almost. These people don’t hold a physical presence on earth anymore, but a spiritual one. Lynette, Matt, Sharen, and my Old Gram. I ask them for help, I ask them for guidance, for their love. These are my go-to people. It used to only be my Old Gram and Sharen (my auntie who I never got to meet and am named after who passed
before I was born), and then more recently Lynette and Matt have been pivotal in me finishing this paper you are reading today. They remind me of the inherent love that is in all of us, the energy we carry from our relatives before us, our genetics, our genealogy, what we are made of and where we come from. That is the reason for this paper. To remind all of us that we come from somewhere special. We have a brilliant and magnificent past, whether we know that history or not, we come from somewhere and we come from someone. Remembering our past helps us have awareness of our responsibilities today and duties to ensure our future generations understand these teachings.

Writing this paper has given me the space to remember where I come from, remember the words of encouragement, and remember my own intergenerational wisdom. As I reflect on my quarter of a century on this earth, Historical Wisdom has been modeled for me my entire life. We have gone through loss together, we have gone through devastating news together; we have also gone through growth, healing, and empowerment together. Everything is about balance and through this life journey, I have been blessed to embrace that wisdom through this writing. This paper has become a product of my healing journey. We have formed a relationship to one another and it will forever be a part of me; the part of me that I will be able to share with the intention of beginning a conversation about healing, about your healing journey and how you cultivate your historical wisdom. Most importantly, this paper is an opportunity to tell you a story of where I come from and how I began to understand the concept of Intergenerational Wisdom.

**This is Who I Am**

Through my own story, I also tell the story of my family and ancestors. Everything I have is because of others. Those who have come before me, those here now, and those to come. I will
tell you about myself and where I come from for you to create a better understanding of my foundation. My name is Ah-yan, meaning Long Shell in my language. My great grandmother Florence Skinner Stiffarm gave me that name and named me after her sister, Alma Skinner Brockie, shortly after my birth. Along with that name came the positive attributes that would be a part of my internal guide, traits passed down that I will embody. My given English name is Shalene Niltinna Joseph. Shalene was given to me by my mother with the intent of giving me a part of hers and my late aunt Sharen by combining their names together (Jillene and Sharen). Niltinna is my middle name and it means “Lightning” in my father’s Athabascan language. That was a tribal compromise since my Indian name was in my mother's language. On my mother's side I am an A’aniiih (White Clay) woman from Fort Belknap, Montana, located in a place now known as North Central Montana. On my father's side I am Koyokon Athabascan from Tanana, Alaska, which is in the interior, right where the Yukon and Tanana rivers meet.

I am a daughter, granddaughter, little sister, big sister, aunt, cousin, niece, colleague and friend. I was conceived in love, born into love and shaped by love. I was raised with my cultural values. I was raised by a mother who was decolonizing and Indigenizing the world around her, beginning with herself. I was raised to know my purpose and responsibility as an Indigenous woman. I was raised to be a leader and as such was surrounded by leaders my entire life. I am the answer to my ancestors’ prayers.

**My Parents**

My parents married when they were in their mid-twenties. My mom was raised by both of her parents, in the country and in her culture. Her mother and grandmother had a profound impact on shaping her worldview and life’s passions. My mom had a deep love for Indigenous people and as a teenager she knew her calling was to help her people heal. At nineteen she began
doing training in Indian boarding schools to help high school students stay drug and alcohol free. This allowed her to travel to various tribal communities across the nation where she learned and grew professionally all the while navigating academia. She was the first person in her family to go to college. My mom always wanted a family and wanted to raise children who were loving, kind, compassionate and good human beings. She loved and adored her children, all of us.

My dad was raised with his parents and siblings in the woods, hunting and trapping. He didn’t see television until he was in his twenties. He was the first person to graduate from high school in his family and the first person to go to college in his family and he was the first person in his family to leave the state of Alaska, aside from his brother who fought in Vietnam. My dad graduated from college in three years and did so with honors. He was a computer aided drafter and had a mind of an engineer. He built things out of wood. He loved and adored his children. My parents split up by the time I was around 10. My dad became an alcoholic through his poor coping skills in reaction to his unresolved grief and trauma. His loss of his family members close together in his adulthood became too much to handle as it compounded the existing unresolved childhood trauma from his past.

My mom tried hard to make it work and learned that sometimes love is not enough. My dad’s experience became a major reason as I grew up and created a better understanding of grief and trauma that I wanted to do the work that I am doing today. My mom then raised my older brother, me and my three younger brothers on her own. My older brother was my dad's nephew, who they adopted before I was born, and he decided to stay with us during the split. My maternal grandparents were a big part of our upbringing as well as the rest of our family and community. We traveled back home to Montana as often as we could, every summer, and throughout the year
for pow wows and family gatherings. Our community was the basis of who we are, so going
home was just a part of life, where my most favorite memories were created.

My Grandparents

My maternal grandparents are Jack and Jewell Stiffarm Lamb who had my mother,
Jillene Lamb Joseph. I was predominantly raised with my mother’s side of the family and grew
up knowing those ways of being and through this lens is how my story is influenced.

My mom’s mom, my grandma, also went to boarding school as her dad did not want his children
attending the local Catholic school because they were too mean. She was raised with horses and
gardens and our culture. My grandma traveled to Flandreau, South Dakota and attended school
with one of her younger sisters. After she graduated, she waited a year for her sister to graduate
and together they traveled to San Francisco, California to babysit for a Fort Belknap family who
had moved out there on relocation. They eventually met two other Native women, one from Fort
Peck and one from Pine Ridge, and became fast friends; a relocation benefit. Around that time,
my grandpa lied about his age to join the service early. He had a physically ill father who could
not work and a mother who worked hard to raise her three boys. My dad grew up farming and
working hard. He joined the Navy with his younger brother. While on the ship, the brothers met
a young man from the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation and another Native guy from Alaska.
They also became fast friends; a benefit of the US Navy. One day the four guys from the Navy
ship were stationed in San Francisco. My grandpa, his brother and the guy from Fort Belknap,
who turned out to be my grandma’s cousin/brother, and their other friend, met my grandma, her
sister and their friends. Eventually, my grandpa married my grandma, my grandpa’s brother
married my grandma’s sister, their cousin/brother married my grandma’s roommate from Pine
Ridge and my grandpa’s Alaska Native friend married my grandma’s friend from Fort Peck. All
four women are still alive, including my grandma, and two of the men, including my grandpa’s brother, have passed on; each are still married to each other.

**Siblings**

I grew up with a large family and with the traditional understanding that our cousins are like our siblings. That's just the way Natives are, the familial structure is not the colonial structure we tend to go by today. I have an older brother, who my mom and dad adopted before I was born, Frederick Lee Joseph. After Fred, came myself and three younger brothers, Traven, Tresten, and Shadren. We grew up with a family who loved to pow wow, to travel and be together. When we are together laughter is a key component to gathering because we genuinely love being around one another. I learn so much from my siblings, about life, about wisdom, about who I am. Mentors are not always elders, or people older than us. My siblings and the youth I work with have shown me that. Their journeys have shown me that with dedication and support there are no limits. If you have a passion, you can make it. I strive to be like my siblings, each of them have such outstanding qualities of life and outlooks on life that amaze me.

**Ancestors**

My great grandma, Florence Skinner Stiffarm, or who we called Old Gram or Neewah, was born in 1910, and she grew up her whole life in an area called Dry Lake of Hays, Montana. Actually, they called part of the area Happy Valley. The matriarch of our family, she gave birth to 11 children, two passed away at birth, and 8 of the 9 remain living today. She is an important figure in my upbringing and in my story of matriarchs.

My paternal grandparents are Percy and Marion Albert Joseph who then had my father, Jerry Joseph. My dad’s mom went to school until the third grade and when her mom passed away that year she had to quit school. She then had to raise her younger siblings and travel the
trap line with her dad, my great grandfather, who lived off the land. My grandmother watched her dad fall through the ice and drown one winter as they were out trapping. This traumatic part of her childhood would slowly trickle down to my dad. At the same time, my dad’s dad was removed from his village at the age of 5 and sent to boarding school. He was not allowed to return until he was 16. Two lost and hurt young people found each, fell in love and had 12 children, of which three are still alive today.

Swirling in this pain and hurt from the lasting impacts of Intergenerational Trauma, is Intergenerational Wisdom that runs in my veins. My grandmother was a storyteller. Kids and adults gathered in her one room, dirt floor log cabin to hear her stories. She was a master sewer and plucked geese down to make quilts and clothes. She could hunt, fish and prepare the meat. She told her children and others everyday that she loved them. My grandfather was a hunter and trapper. He knew the woods just like his father, Sam Joseph, who was one of the original men that took the influenza serum to Nome and later that race for life became the Iditarod, a famous dog-sled race in Alaska. He loved his children and grandchildren.

Place

As mentioned before, my story is based off of the matriarchs in my family who have molded who I am today, and where I most identify. The maternal side of my family is from Fort Belknap, Montana, roughly 40 miles south of the Canadian Border and 20 miles north of the Missouri River. Home of the Aaniiih and Nakoda people, or the government calls Gros Ventre and Assiniboine. The reservation includes 675,147 acres of rolling plains and also includes the Little Rocky Mountains. You can stand in one place and see rolling hills for miles as there are big skies all around. Two places come to mind instinctively when I think of this place. The little cabin, situated off the road where my grandma was raised and where we continue to gather and
camp as a family. This little cabin sits by wagon trails still embedded in the ground and wild horses roam. The second place is the canyon, Little People’s Canyon which is easily one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen. The memories, energy, feelings and stories attached to these places is where I call home. This place helps me find reason, strength, direction and reminds me of why I take care of the land because we come from it. She is our first mother.

People

The A’aniiinin come from this area, built from the white clay of the Milk River. In our old language, sign language, we were known as The people of the Waterfall due to our original location in the southern Ontario area of Canada as far back as the 1500’s. The sign has your two fingers on each hand coming from the top of your chest area forward and down. The first European contact was with French fur trappers and traders and it is assumed they thought we were motioning about big bellies, hence the name Gros Ventre, which translates to “big belly” in French. Fort Belknap comes from William W. Belknap who was the Secretary of War at the time of the reservation era for the community when the Fort Laramie Treaty was signed in 1851 and 1855. He was based at the military base there which also served as a trading post. The A’aniiih people are predominantly in the southern end of the reservation near the little rockies and farthest away from the watchful and oppressive eye of the Indian Agent post.

Shalene Today

Today I am a masters student at the University of California Los Angeles in American Indian Studies, and will be graduated by the time you read this. I am the first person in my family to obtain a master’s degree. I work for NWI and have been affiliated with this organization since its founding 18 years ago. I have traveled to many, many tribal communities in my lifetime; for work and for personal reasons such as tribal gatherings and ceremonies. I
have met and worked with hundreds of tribal and urban Native youth and adults. I have been
trained and educated outside of academia by many of the founders and leaders of the Native
wellness and healing movements. I currently co-coordinate the Indigenous 20-Something
Project, a project of the Native Wellness Institute to heal a generation from the lasting toxic
impacts of historical and intergenerational trauma and to help our generation find and nurture
and use their Historical Wisdom.

**Contextualization**

I began this project with people near and dear to my heart for many reasons- with hopes
to ignite a new way of writing about Native peoples and possibly, even a new way to write about
ourselves as Indigenous peoples. I wanted to contribute to creating a broad and positive
understanding of the way I view the complex, yet beautiful world we live in. I want to bring
voices into the academy and show that we are the true experts of our own stories. The time is
now for us to say who writes about us or for us. We are in a time where the paradigm is shifting.
We are bringing a human and contemporary component to an often historicized lens. *I am talking
about Historical and Intergenerational Wisdom as a parallel to Historical and Intergenerational
Trauma.* I do this through autoethnography, meaning I am telling my story of how I have come
to know this term. Through the storytelling and conversations with people I love, my co-workers
through the Native Wellness Institute who have been my family growing up, and through my
own blood family who have taught me how to view the world. I lived my life as a researcher and
I didn't even know it; learning, analyzing, and writing. All to lead me to this moment in time
writing this for you to read. Which is why it was important for me to tell you who I am, where I
come from, and where I am going.

*To the reader,*
I hope you read this with an open mind and an open heart. I hope you begin to create an understanding of a strength and positive-based view of Native people, people original to Turtle Island, or what is now called America, in hopes to start a new conversation, offer a new point of view, a view we see from the inside. Our view is not often asked about or seen in the media or read about in books, largely because we are written about and shown in film through an external lens. This is why I write this to you, to help you gain a better understanding of how I have formed my view of this world I live in. I most certainly do not speak for everyone in my community, or ethnicity, this is from my point of view and the view of others I bring into my story.

I will write letters, input voices of others who have made incredible impacts on my life. I will input my own voice through storytelling of how I have come to know this topic. I will bring in the most vital component to this whole project, my family. We will be the ones to tell this story. We work as a unit to move forward, to create positive change for the betterment of our communities. I am talking about my mother, grandmother, siblings and I'm also talking about the people I choose to have as family as well, my Native Wellness family. I also, most importantly, bring my ancestors with me, those who have gone before me. They are the reason I am here today. Everything they did brought us to this moment in time where I get to acknowledge everything I have ever known. While writing this paper I talked to them daily, asked for guidance and clarity. I found comfort in their presence. Remembrance of compassion was a theme through this process. I gained new ancestors during this process, and through those times is when I spoke to them the most. I created an understanding of how I got here, why am I doing this project, and where this paper itself is taking me and my family through representation and accomplishment.

This autoethnography spotlights how I, as an A’aniiih and Athabascan woman, have created and built an understanding of the world through cultural connection, personal and
familial experiences and stories. I write this as a letter to you, the reader as well as other letters, to create our own relationship and connection with the intent that you will see my world and the world of my people through a different lens and for you to create a relationship with a strength-based lens of Native peoples. The reason for these letters is to bring a piece of myself into this research, because relationships are vital to any work that I do and are the basis for any Native worldview. I hope through these letters you will help gain a better understanding of my research and enjoy my story.

Creating Space

In community, we work together as one to create a Nation. Within that Nation there are many challenges that may arise due to an array of causes. For Native peoples, many of those challenges stem from European contact and colonization. In academia, what is not focused on enough in American Indian studies is Native strength and resilience that is passed on from generation to generation, this is what Historical Wisdom is. Native people may hold the lasting impacts of colonization and experience the intergenerational negative cycles through our families, however, it is time to shift the focus and be self-aware to acknowledge the positive attributes that are inherently within us and attach the healing behavior of Intergenerational Wisdom. My goal through this research is to create and offer a new lens to look through by answering and defining what Intergenerational Wisdom means, as well as what those characteristics are. By doing so, I seek to create the shift that scholarship needs to then begin the social construction of what it means to be a Native person. Asking my interviewees what Historical and Intergenerational Wisdom means to them, how do they see this concept play out in their lives and allowing space for them to tell their story, will contribute to a piece of work in a space where we, as Native people, have often been left out of.
Historical Wisdom

Wisdom has many moving parts to it and what I am referring to is what is inherently already there in our blood memory- our internal guiding north star that keeps us moving forward, the whispers of our ancestors in the wind, embracing the miracle survivors that we are, acknowledging our interconnectedness to everything, understanding our place and purpose, feeling our connection to the past and present and future, this, in part, is Historical Wisdom. Historical Wisdom intersects with ancestral knowledge- the skills and values that have been taught and passed down from generation to generation. Yes, we are affected by Historical and Intergenerational Trauma through a horrific past 500 plus years, yet we continued to love and have babies through that, we continued to laugh and pray, we continued to teach and protect, and we remain. Why is that? What makes us (Native or American Indian) a people? How have we come this far? How did we survive genocide? People often say, “that happened a long time ago, just get over it.” Yes, we do need to move forward and “get over IT.” And first we need to figure out what the “it” is that we need to get over. When you are on a healing journey, figuring out the “it” is critical. What academia has assisted with, is giving language to describe concepts and life experiences which helped us to articulate and better understand ourselves and others. This paper will explain one of the natural laws of the universe- that everything has a flip side- and the flip side to Historical and Intergenerational Trauma is what I am calling Historical and Intergenerational Wisdom.

Letter to self:

Hey self, how's it going? You are currently on a flight home to see the family and speak at the Grand Ronde Youth Day and to also interview the Native Wellness family. Go to the state basketball championship to support a fellow Native, Kamaka Hepa, play and then continue the
travel day. We got a lot going on today and yet we are thankful, always thankful. These past few weeks have been a wild ride, and just in case you decide to go back and read this, let's do a quick re-cap and reflection: We have been in Winter quarter for what feels like a year. Time seemed to slow down and speed up at the same time on us. Probably one of the roughest quarters we have had in academia, and in life. Oddly, this thesis and writing and interviewing process has helped us out a lot, who knew, this is part of the reason we are thankful. This is our last year in this program, we are hitting the fourth quarter and its go time. The team is burnt, we’re down but not by a lot, it’s time to gather what we have left and pull through to get this W. This is the moment in the game where you close your eyes, take in three deep breaths and imagine getting this win. Visualize it, what it will look like, feel like, the time is now to manifest. Open your eyes, look in the crowd to who you are playing for, and get at it.

So, yesterday you were supposed to give a 5-minute presentation to the class that turned to roughly 20, guess you are more like mom than we thought. There was a moment of clarity in all of it. In a moment of babbling you are realizing how much this makes sense, and that you are kind of getting the hang of this whole academia thing. While anticipating feedback and looking at the faces in the class of people who you have come to be very comfortable with, there was all kinds of emotion. Then it happened. Priscilla had to lay it on ya. And let me remind you that you held back tears SO HARD, I still wonder why we did that. But the moment of clarity came from hearing what Clementine, Renee, Denise, what your peers have been saying this whole time. We are sharing our knowledge base system that has been taught to us for the last 26 years. The knowledge that has been gifted to us from hundreds of years before us. We are sharing empathy, emotion, stories, histories, knowledge... wisdom.
Who knew this would be us. Who knew I would be sitting on this plane, row 18, seat A, window seat with no window, thinking about how excited we are that we are finally getting it, understanding we have been “researchers” our whole lives. We have been an academic without even realizing it.

Everything that has happened in our lives has led to this moment. We have battled ups and downs our whole lives. We always come out on the winning side of things, I mean we are still here, our family built us up to see the positives in life. However, this seems like a whole new game. Like we made it to state and won, and now we're playing the country. Or are we playing for our own country? Indian country? We have so much on the line and this time it seems obtainable. Through writing these letters to the people you love, including to our self, we have found something new. All of our built knowledge systems, all of our wisdom is showing up to finish this project. But let's be real, this is never going to be finished. We will continue to learn, to strive to do better, to fight for what we believe and know is possible. We will look back at this in a few years and laugh about how little we knew because we are constantly on this learning journey.

Through this process we have dealt with some of the hardest times in our life. Lynette was a blow we didn’t know if we could come back from. But we did. Then there was Matt. We fought as a family, so hard, we went to Reno for the week to help him get through the treatments. I don’t even remember if I was on break or if I just left. Then the battle was over. Once again, lost, angry, guilty. Did I choose school over going back? Was it worth it? But here we are, we made it. This paper is more than a paper. It's more than compiled transcribed interviews. It's more than a colonial system telling us how this is supposed to be structured and built and finished. This paper is the story of our life. It may be the fourth quarter of one of the most
important and hardest games of our life, but we already know we are going to win. I mean with the power of the ancestors, old and new, we can’t lose.

This product we are producing is a community-built product. For the community, with the community. There is no other way to do it. We are a part of the we, this was one of our realizations in class. We are in some ways responsible to get this information in new outlets to let others continue to build. We are all building together. For ourselves, our communities, our people, our family. We can’t be stingy and keep all of these gems we have learned to ourselves. After all, everything we know is from others, unless you’re out here inventing things. Everyone deserves to hear them, Native or not, everyone deserves good things, needs wisdom. Who knows, if the orange guy had some of this the country wouldn’t be in so much turmoil. But that’s a conversation for another day. We are bringing people who should have degrees for all of their work they are doing anyways and taking them on this journey with us. We are not alone, even if sometimes we feel like we are.

A part of this project is reminding ourselves also that we have good things, we come from good people. We have lessons that sometimes we forget about. We have built a family here, whether those people know it or not we claim them now. We have created bonds that feel like they have always been there. Like when you haven’t seen that one cousin in years and finally see each other at a pow wow or a basketball game. Like a family, there can be a lot of dysfunction. That was a part of the battle with this project. Getting through the death of family members and the dysfunction of a built family you have made here, our historical and intergenerational wisdom got us through everything. Who knew. Reminding myself in a time of turmoil that these lessons, this knowledge that I have obtained over my lifetime was what would get me through.
We gained so much, from the knowledge and intergenerational wisdom we have attained through life, and even here in the academy. Wisdom has no boundaries. Can’t see color, economic status, colonial structure, it just comes from the people you are supposed to hear it from. Sometimes it may even come from the people we least expect it from, sometimes it even comes from the people we butt heads with the most.

I gain an immense amount of wisdom from Indigenous women, they have been a huge element in this process. Let’s start off with a shout out to the woman who has played that, “concerned Indian auntie” as she puts it, Clementine. First, she was an academic advisor who you gave no choice but to succeed, but also created such a safe environment right away. She has fought for you and taught you how to navigate this place. She consistently asked how are you doing, making sure we had what we needed. She brought the human component of empathy into a place where it can be hard to find. Then we came into second year where she became a student. Clementine still continued to teach us about life. She never gave up, and I know we can be a handful. I mean just writing this I have gotten up twice, watched some videos, created a new playlist, and I’m on a flight heading home for the 5th time probably this quarter. Clementine always brings the conversation back to community, what we are doing to give back to the community. Whose land are we on and how are we actively occupying space. The community we are from, or living in at the moment, we have all kinds of communities. She always says “we are all fighting so hard so we can better our communities, that is why we are here, and to break the system down”, she is also waiting for a zombie apocalypse but, again, that’s a story for another time. She has taught me that we belong here, to reclaim what it means to be in these spaces. A Native woman in a colonial school that was not historically built in our favor. The women in my 222 class have forever helped me change the way I see academia. Renee, who has always shown
me love, been so accepting and pushing me to really put my all into my work. She encouraged me to work just as hard in school as I work outside of school. She reminded me mistakes are just a part of the journey. Denise, my home girl who lets me laugh at everything and still encourages me to just be crazy and live life. Then Taryn, who is not even in the 222 class but she was there for everything we did anyways, our honorary member haha, who I feel made an entrance into my life at a great time because Taryn was another friend who never judged, always joked, and also reminded me to keep my eye on the prize. She gave me the space to laugh and be crazy, but then like the rest of these wonderful people, created space for me to work. I am forever thankful for that. Along with these amazing people, there is Megan, who was the stricter one, for all of the best reasons. She was the voice of reason, made me sit and write, reminded me why I decided to do this program, and explained to me all of these crazy academic terms in a way that made sense. These amazing humans are changing the world!

Now, Professor Marin. This woman puts the fear of Creator into me, in all of the best ways of course. She is so calm in anything she says or does, with a slight smile she can set you straight and in the end, you still want to thank her. She has that kind of profound effect on you. You can tell she has some powerful ancestors behind her. The wisdom in this woman is a huge reason I am still here in academia, writing to myself on a plane to go do these interviews she told me needed to be done. She showed me something that I have not seen from a lot of people in the academy. It's not something I can really explain, rather it's a feeling. Almost like the feeling you get when you go home. It’s a sense of comfort, care, and compassion. She has this way of letting you know everything is going to be OK, whether you are ready for that or not. She pushed the boundaries because she sees potential, she sees the capacity of a person. She not only meets you where you are at, but she helps you and guides you to that next step. And I just realized she is the
only professor that I feel could have helped me get here, to my second year, thankfully on my committee, completing my thesis. There are many reasons I am thankful to be working with this strong Indigenous woman.

During this writing process I have had a lot of experiences that have shown me Intergenerational Wisdom. For example, it is just about time to land, I have a young girl sitting next to me who while writing this decided she wanted to be my friend. She poked my shoulder and I took out my headphone, and she said, “can we be friends”, I smiled and said “of course, my name is Shay, what’s your name”, and this conversation began. This young lady explained that she was 6, and she was heading to Oregon to see her great grandma for the last time. Now the profound moment for me was this young lady explained that she was not sad because she had a dream that her grandma said she would visit her in her dreams, so she knew everything would be ok. I wanted to cry. Especially because of everything I had been thinking about recently. She said it so matter of fact, and within moments of asking to be my friend. She followed up with a hard question that I could not answer for her. She asked what should happen after she said bye, does she just shut the door and walk away. I told her she was wise, and she would know what to do. We then had a 15-minute conversation about what wise meant, but it made me think of this project. What does that mean?

Wisdom. What kind of wisdom am I speaking of. Ancestral wisdom? Wisdom from language? Wisdom from community? Wisdom from our parents? Wisdom of foods and plants? Or is it collective ancestral wisdom? We have these teachings that have been passed down from generation to generation that are within us. In our blood memory. There are teachings that maybe we have not literally been told to us, but we act them out in ways of respect. Community norms that are taught by action. My Historical Wisdom lets me know that it was no accident that
the little girl sat next to me. It lets me know that her spirit or energy felt welcomed by my spirit
or energy and we both needed that conversation. My Historical Wisdom lets me know that
teachers and messengers come in all shapes, forms, sizes and ages and come across our path
when we need them.

Well self, it is time to pack up my laptop and get off this flight. I am excited to be home,
and more excited to be back to work for the weekend, working with a group of Native youth and
interviewing my crew to get this knowledge put on paper. Then jam out at the round dance and
fill myself with the good feelings to feed my ancestors.

See you later self,

Love always, Shalene

My research is a compilation of my life experiences, the experiences of my family- blood
related and chosen, and stories told through these relationalities. I wrote this letter in a time
where I was finding myself again. My own Intergenerational Wisdom came through and I saw,
heard and felt themes repeat themselves throughout the generations. One major theme was the
responsibility to share my knowledge in order to continue the cycle of intergenerational
knowledge. Another theme was learning as we go and questioning why I decided to hold back
tears in a space I thought I was comfortable in. Being able to have hard conversations with
myself was another theme and a fundamental aspect was to remain thankful, to allow the
positivity in to manifest the good and to speak into existence this work, this life I have lived and
will continue to live. As well, I wanted to visualize where I wanted to be and begin making
moves to get there by trusting the process and embracing the teachers that crossed my path. As
discussed, I have chosen to do this topic area because of the continued historicized and damage
based model that has been used to describe Native peoples in academia, which trickles its way
into other forms like media which becomes the narrative and perpetuated stereotype for all Native people. This can be taxing on Native people, someone like me, a Native woman getting her education in a field where the majority of what is written is by non-Native people and usually written in a way that still portrays the “poor Indian” mentality and mostly written through a Historical Trauma lens, keeping us a people of the past.

**Literature Review: Historical and Intergenerational Trauma**

I want to give some context of why this narrative is so prevalent. The reason the literature review is placed here is because I felt it was important for you to know more about where I come from in this process before getting into the literature. I wanted to acknowledge my blood lines, the reason for this specific project. I wanted to begin from an abundance-based worldview and to build our relationality between myself the writer and you the reader. Indigenous peoples of North America have endured genocide, massacres, boarding school, assimilation, relocation, defeating federal policy, ongoing dehumanization and more, since early colonial contact (location pending, many places were colonized by different people). There have been many discussions and research regarding what these historical implications have resulted in and the lasting impacts to modern day Indigenous people and communities. The terms “Historical and Intergenerational Trauma” were coined during the 1980s, a time of cultural renaissance and a western academic influence in Indian Country. Authors and researchers over the years have evaluated the concept of historical and intergenerational trauma and the work that has been done by Indigenous scholars like Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart (1998), and so many more who have made a profound impact on communities and within academia. This work is needed and valued, additionally to this work needs to be the counter to help create balance. This is why I am doing
my thesis on Historical Wisdom; to help balance this conversation and bring that into academia and scholarship.

There have been many scholars and individuals in the field of American Indian Studies who have worked hard to create a term to distinctly describe the issues and conditions of the contemporary lives of Indigenous peoples. These terms have helped to define and explain the root causes and ongoing challenges that continue to plague tribal communities. The term Historical and Intergenerational Trauma has been researched to validate this concept. Scholars like Dr. Bonnie Duran has been foundational in this work. It has become widely used in scholarly journals and books. It has helped explain some of the occurrences we have seen through the generations. The term Historical Trauma has been widely used in the Native wellness and healing movements as well as the sobriety movement and with a deeper understanding of the term has created more critical views from others including disagreement. The terminology we use in scholarship shapes the way the world, and even our own country, views the Indigenous peoples of this land.

Historical trauma is cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma (Brave Heart 1998). The current problems facing the Native American people may be the result of “a legacy of chronic trauma and unresolved grief across generations” enacted on them by the European dominant culture (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, p. 60). The primary feature of historical trauma is that the trauma is transferred to subsequent generations through biological, psychological, environmental, and social means, resulting in a cross-generational cycle of trauma (Sotero, 2006).
Yellow Horse Brave Heart’s early work (1998), she focused on how the past actions of the colonizers affected Indigenous peoples today. Her article, *The Historical Trauma Response among Natives and its Relationship with Substance Abuse: A Lakota Illustration*, gives the reader a better look into her community and a better understanding of the behaviors that have continued. In this article she gives focus to the effects of Historical Trauma: depression, self-destructive behavior, suicidal thoughts and gestures, anxiety, low self-esteem, anger, and difficulty recognizing and expressing emotions (Brave Heart, 2003). She also explains the along with these reactions, these lead to substance abuse problems in these communities.

The substance abuse factor contributes to all ages, the youth who are being majorly affected still to this day is yet another issue. Trauma knows no boundaries, age, sex, family; it has continued to find its way to be transferred from one generation to another. Intergenerational trauma, and the response to this occurrence, has contributed to the alcoholism rates in Native youth. Yellow Horse Brave Heart (1998) talks about the need for healing in these Indigenous communities because the youth are being strongly impacted. To create a better understanding means to create change and healing for these communities.

Native people are not a people born into deficit, we may be born into struggles and disadvantage on a certain level, however, we are not a deficit or damaged centered people. We are a people of abundance by our own standards. Many scholars doing work to explain the behaviors attached to the traumas and where they originate from have also begun to look at the effects of this continued damage-based research.

In a country heavily influenced by the patriarchy, the stories of the matriarchs are often excluded or have been silenced. In Native culture and families, the matriarchs are always at the center. The matriarchs of Indian Country have been instrumental in bringing forth historical
wisdom and this is true for my family. We may not have had the language of “historical wisdom,” however, that is what their attitudes and behaviors were, bringing forth the wisdom of the past to help create a better path for the future. The matriarchs in my family have influenced me in such a profound way and have literally embedded a deep sense of what historical wisdom is that I honor them with their own section in my thesis. By doing so, I hope you are inspired to think about and reach out to the matriarchs in your family.

The Matriarchs

So, you have learned about where I come from, why I am writing this, and how much it means to me. I want to introduce you to the people who have helped mold me into who I am, who very generously shared their information with me and have helped this paper you are reading today become a tangible product. The Native Wellness Institute (NWI) has been a large part of my life and has been around since 2000, where our story here begins. My mother, Jillene Joseph, is our Executive Director and one of the founders. We have many trainers and facilitators that work with us to create healthier communities, promoting physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. NWI facilitates an array of topics important to Indian Country including healthy relationships, healthy parenting, youth leadership development, wellness in the workplace, staff development, community healing, strategic planning and much more. Indigenous voices have often been misconstrued and stereotyped. The diversity of Indigenous populations, tribal communities, and individuals is often undermined. My research aims to maintain the integrity and individuality of Indigenous voices. Through interviews, I have learned about Historical Wisdom from the perspective of a carefully selected group of people from a variety of age groups, tribal affiliations, genders, careers, and backgrounds. The following
section will highlight at least one example of historical thriving as told to me by each of these individuals.

Jillene Joseph is an enrolled member of the Gros-Ventre, or A’aniiih people, from Fort Belknap, Montana. She is the daughter of Jewell and John Lamb. Mother of Frederick, myself, Traven, Tresten, and Shadren Joseph. Grandmother to Christine, as well as the Executive Director of the Native Wellness Institute. She obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Community Health Education from Portland State University and has been serving “Indian Country” for over 30 years. Her passion for being positive, productive, and proactive has molded my perspective on life. Her creative, loving, compassionate, and optimistic lens has shown me to view the world through Historical and Intergenerational Wisdom. Instead of telling you formally why this woman is an expert on the topic, I would like to take the time to write directly to her through this letter, as follows.

Letter to My Mom

Hey Mom,

I often reflect, daily in fact, about how I got to where I am now and the challenges that we have endured that helped to push and motivate me to move forward. I used to wonder why that is, why did I not let the tragedy and negativity keep me down or hold me back. As I sit here and reflect through writing this letter, I am holistically confident in saying I learned that from you and the matriarchs of our family. I learned to truly be a strong, resilient, Indigenous woman. I never knew any different. I get emotional thinking of the events and positions our family has been put in, put ourselves in, and have overcome. From a young age my earliest memories are of being with you, going to work with you and everyone allowing me to run around and be a kid, to draw and play as I pleased. Or family camp outs, which still to this day are the highlights of my
life. I remember we would take the long drive from Oregon back home to Montana to St. Maries Lake to Camp Neewah, some of the best times of my life. Sitting around the fire as a kid listening to stories old and new. Sharing laughs straight from our belly, with tears falling because we are enjoying it that much. Camping outside in a tent, tipi, or inside on the living room floor. A time that was specifically blocked off for our family to all be together. Learning on the go and through doing and not in a conventional space. Watching the woman of the family truly run things, the power of the matriarchy, more likely because there were more women than there were men, but I still like to think we run things, because we do.

There is power in woman, I have learned this through your actions, through our family and the powerhouse of women we have in the family. I feel like we have a common understanding of the role of women and men in the family and the men know the importance as well. We have a good balance. All of the grandmas have always been the focal point in my life. Us kids have known this, and we grew up with an understanding of respect. Understanding the roles of historical events, current events, and understanding the change. It is the reason we called our family camp outs “camp neewah”, in remembrance of Old Gram.

I grew up watching you, everything you did, how you resolved issues and created a space for healing for yourself and others around you. I aspire to be like you. To have no fear and just be. To never be afraid to try new things like quit your job and start your own business and be completely successful because you trust the process and define success on your own terms. Your value system comes through in the work that you do and the people you involve in the work. I watched as everyone, friends and family, came to you for help and no matter what we had going on you were there for them. To watch you resolve the most difficult of issues, or on the opposite end to watch you help start other programs and manifest the good. When dad decided that his
path was going to change for the worst, I watch the struggle that followed as you attempted to lead him back. I look back at that day you got him a one-way ticket home and can’t imagine the thought process and strength that lead to that moment. Although it was hard for everyone, I am truly thankful for that decision. To do what you knew was best for the family and for yourself! That alone is a huge life lesson.

You raised myself and my brothers, and cousins as a single parent and I know that was not easy. I mean, I was there, I know it was not easy we definitely had our struggles but look at us all now. I know that you did not view them as struggles though, because you always focused on historical wisdom. I think of these years growing up without a father and I don’t feel as if I lacked anything, thankfully because I still had strong men to look to who I knew had our backs. You made sure to strategically place these men in our lives. You always made sure there was balance in whatever we did. Whether it was having grandpa around more or going home to hang out with our cousins and uncles. I feel that working through the pain and the hurt you have almost in a lot of ways prepared us for this. Through all the struggles you never spoke down on anyone, no matter the extreme harm they had caused. You showed by example who you were and in line with who you hoped we would become. You gave us the tools that we need to not only cope with the hardest of situations but process with them along the way. You and grandma have shown us though action and story how there are all kinds of ways that we can process. In the toughest of situations, I go to the both of you for guidance and what usually ends up happening is you ask me questions you know I know the answer to. Things you both have taught me over the years.

A major part of my education growing up was traveling with you, tribal community to tribal community. The Native Wellness Institute was my school and my family, in addition to
western education. I am so thankful for these moments in my life because they played a major role in who I am today. I may have not known it at the time but as a kid I would see you up at a podium and large numbers of people listening and learning from you. I thought this was the norm for all little Native kids. I learned the terminology of Historical Trauma, Intergenerational Trauma, and Intergenerational Wisdom at a young age. Also, how these terms were played out in communities. I learned community work, at a community level, and this was the most profound education I could have ever gotten, and still continue to obtain today.

You always taught through example, and sometimes explaining the “why’s” we always had. Asking us along the way “why are you doing this”, and sometimes when we are lost reminding us of the “whys” we have always had. You always supported us in the decisions we made even if you knew they were not the best of decisions. These were always followed up by “what did you learn from that” and creating space for us to reflect. I think this lesson alone has helped me so much through my life. I reflect and check myself often to make sure I am in the right place and for the right reasons. You voice echoes in my mind: “would your ancestors be honored or happy with that.” You always had us reflecting forwards, and into the past. And it wasn’t adding pressure in anyway, but to gain perspective. Learning from the relationships with not only each other as humans but the relationship with feeling, the land, and our people as a whole.

I don't ever think I took the time to truly thank you for these life lessons you have taught me. I know I have tried, I know a thank you will never be enough because you have shaped me in so many ways that I now see as invaluable. You, and the family, have been the largest support system for me. You were with me for every heartbreak big or small, every loss and every gain, even when I was unappreciative and crazy and went through that long drawn out bratty stage,
(which I blame the crazy teen hormones), you always handled us, and everyone, with love and compassion. Thank you for not holding those other things against me.

Thank you for being a true role model, for teaching me what it means to be a Native woman, to be open-minded and open-hearted. I guess in a lot of ways, you gave me your eyes to view the world we live in, just as grandma gave you yours, and old gram hers. Because of that, I am mindful of what is passed down from one generation to another. I am mindful of the pain and hurt that people go through and the behaviors that follow, including the pain and hurt that gets passed down. I am aware of the importance of community, wherever we go. I want to be a positive force in this world as you are. I want to truly treat people as I wish to be treated, to never demand anything but to manifest the good. To make sure I am looking for a compassionate lens and not from a place of deficit, and when I am looking through a deficit place to take the time to heal. For that I am most thankful. I love you with all of my ancestors and understanding I have gained through my young life.

Always with love,

Shalene Niltinna Joseph

My mother is a wise woman, she lives her life knowing she is the answer to our ancestor’s prayers. She is born from our family’s matriarchy and continues this legacy. The matriarch I come from has taught me how to be an Indigenous woman in a contemporary time. It is the very motivation that feeds my soul. These women have taught me since my early years and have created norms that I am forever grateful for. Our genealogy runs deep and remembering the togetherness and storytelling are how we teach and come together to create balance. Our family creates space to trust the process from an abundance and strengths-based approach. Combined with travel and work in many communities, we have learned the value of healthy collaboration.
By remaining open minded as much as we are open hearted, these lessons have shaped my identity and expanded the space for my own Intergenerational Wisdom to shine through. In a conversation while driving to the airport my mother decided she had more to share on my topic. Jillene, chose to take some time to teach through story, which we decided together we would share with you. To teach through storytelling about transference of knowledge from her grandma to her. Here is her story of the Intergenerational Wisdom through three generations.

**Jillene Joseph, Stories of my great grandmother**

"My grandma, Florence Skinner Stiffarm, was born in 1910, and she grew up her whole life in an area called Dry Lake near Hays, Montana. Actually, they called the whole area Happy Valley, and my grandma never drank alcohol. She was the matriarch of our family, and she kept the family together through family gatherings, and she kept the culture alive, and that was her pride and joy was watching, especially, her grandkids engaged in culture, but also contemporary culture like sports, and she loved going to basketball games and all of that.

The lessons that she modeled like being that matriarch, living drug and alcohol free, committed to family, those are huge lessons that I learned from her. And the other lessons that I learned from her are about being a hard worker, and doing what she needed to do to take care of her family. That's how my grandma was, and she really instilled those values into her children and her grandchildren, and her great-grandchildren, and her great-great-grandchildren.

Historical wisdom has definitely been passed down through her, and passed to her daughter, my mom, and then passed down to me, and then I see it being passed down to you. So, you're the fourth generation that I see her historical wisdom passing through. So, you're a hard worker, you're family oriented, you pay attention and use your culture as a way to keep you on a good path drug and alcohol free. It just makes me happy that her legacy continues to live on
through us, and that's in part, what historical wisdom is all about. So, she created a path for us to follow. That in itself is to me, what her mother and grandmother and great-grandmother did for her. They created this path for her to follow and even though she had many hardships; loss of children, and different things like that, she preserved.

I remember interviewing her once when I was in school about the Great Depression, and her response was she didn't even know there was a Great Depression, because, they already lived poor. Well, she didn't say they lived poor, because she didn't know they were poor, but if you compared how they lived to American standards, they would be in poverty. But they didn't think they were in poverty, and maybe financially they didn't have money, but they had gardens and they hunted and they lived off the land, and they had family and they had culture, and they had friends. So, in that sense, they were rich. They had horses, and so in that sense, they were rich, and so she said the Great Depression didn't really impact them. And that's historical wisdom, living like your ancestors and being grateful for that.

Then she told me this other story. Where we used to ride horses there was still the wagon trail. They're still there, wagon ruts, because that's how they used to travel was by wagon, horse and wagon, and my grandma never drove. Her whole life she never drove, but she told me a story once where they wanted to leave the reservation to go visit family, and they loaded up their wagon, and it took them five days to travel from the South end of the reservation to the North end, and it took 'em five days. They would travel and set up camp, break camp in the morning, travel again, set up camp. Five days of doing that to get to the North end of the reservation where the Indian Agent was, and the Indian Agent stopped them. This is in the early 1900s. The Indian Agent stopped them and asked them what they were doing, and they said "Well, we're leaving the reservation to go visit family" and the Indian Agent denied them, and he told them
"No, that they couldn't leave the reservation." So, they turned around, and they traveled five days back.

Even through that, she didn't call it racism or oppression. She didn't use that language, but that's what she was describing, and how they didn't allow that Indian Agent to spark anger or frustration or anything like that inside of them. They just turned around, and they traveled the five days back. That story left a big mark on me too, because of how they would not give that Indian Agent the satisfaction of making them angry. And they knew that the reservation boundaries, I'm having a hard time thinking of the words. Like not a figment of their imagination, 'cause their boundaries were real, but they weren't gonna, limit them, confine them. Oh, I know what I'm trying to say. They knew it confined them physically, but they weren't gonna let them confine them spiritually or mentally or emotionally. So, that was a huge lesson when I heard that story.

When her kids started having kids, so her grandkids, she was there for every single birth she was there helping and teaching her kids how to take care of a newborn, and the things that they needed to do or not do. She was there for all of that. And then she did that for her grandchildren. For each of her grandchildren, she would be there.

When you were born Shalene, she came. Your great-grandmother, my grandma, she came, and she stayed with me for like a month I think, and she helped me, and she was there just doing the same thing that she did for her kids, and that was really special. And that was another way that the historical wisdom was passed down. She did it. She showed it, and then she would tell you stories. Not necessarily traditional stories, but she would tell you stories of her life that would give you examples, that would give you teachings really about how to be and how to live.
She liked to be called "Neewah". So, Neewah in our language means grandma, and she liked to be called that, and she lived through a time, she spoke her language fluently her whole life. She was raised with it, and spoke it, and would teach us, but she also lived through the time when it wasn't good to speak your language, but she didn't really care. She just kept speaking it, and when her and her siblings got together, they would just speak their language to each other. And then her kids, all her kids went to boarding school, and the language obviously, wasn't spoken there. So, her kids grew up understanding the language, and speaking some of the language, but not fluently. So, like in our family, in that generation, my mom's generation is where that language being spoken fluently stopped. And then in my upbringing, we would learn just phrases. We would learn "How are you" or "Come and eat" or stuff like that. She was a big part of language revitalization when she was still alive, 'cause people were able to interview her. I have tapes of her speaking the language, because I was my own anthropological self when I was growing up, and I would interview her and stuff like that.

She could do anything. I know how to cut meat, because my grandma taught me how to cut meat. I know how to make dry meat, because my grandma taught me how to make dry meat. She was open to teaching anyone that was interested in learning. What I'm talking about right now are like memories, and what my grandma did, and what she taught her daughters, and what I've learned from then is part of our jobs as mothers is to pass down that historical wisdom, and in doing so, helping our children have positive memories of their childhood. And when you focus on that, and you focus on being intentional about passing down that historical wisdom, then we're providing a strong foundation for our children to grow from. And when we pass on historical trauma as an example, and we're not focused on creating positive memories for our children, we're setting our children up to fail. And that's why what you're doing is so important.
is to help our people understand that way of thinking. That's called being proactive, because when we grew up in historical trauma, people are more bound to be reactive than proactive, and when we're coming from a place of reaction, we're just in survival mode for example, or hustling to live just in the moment. Living in the moment is good, but you also have to see yourself in the future and plan for that. Just like our ancestors did. Our ancestors just didn't live second to second, they were planners. They saw themselves in the future, and how they were gonna get there. When you focus on historical wisdom, you do that.

Historical wisdom allows your brain to think in those proactive ways so that's another big lesson that my grandma taught me, and she taught me by doing it. So, I've tried to do that with my kids, you know, create positive memories from their childhood, and that's how come I always ask you guys "Oh, what's your favorite childhood memory?" Just to get you thinking about things like that. Thinking in a positive way, because positive thinking is powerful, and so is negative thinking or stinking thinking. That's powerful too. So, it's like which one are you gonna choose, which one is more productive, and positive thinking is. Yeah. That's good."

Though this may be long, I felt it was important to allow the space for this entire story to be told and not pick and choose which parts of the story are most important to me, or to the academy, rather take the space for the importance of transference to come through and not limit a story based on a colonial structure, or page count. That intergenerational exchange through love and teachings shows the importance of familial ties and to know where you come from has no boundaries, we are A’aniiih no matter where we are. Sharing these stories, retelling these stories and reminiscing about these memories is Intergenerational Wisdom in practice because we are acknowledging the good that has been passed as well as who passed that wisdom. From my great grandma, my old gram, down to my grandma to my mother to me, we have a collective
knowledge base that will continue to share these stories and teachings to the future generations to come.

There is importance in stories, it shows the journey our people come from and teaches lessons we can learn from as children and adults. Often stories are told in times when knowledge needs to be passed down. The Indigenous teachings I grew up with came from stories and through example. “Sometimes Indigenous perspectives are presented without explicit comment - in accordance with the oral tradition of letting the listener, now reader, make meaning from someone’s words and stories without direction from the storyteller” (Archibald, 17, 2014). Context is important, tone of voice is important, all to make meaning of what is being said. The matriarchs of my family are where I gain strength. My grandma would be proud of the work that we are doing, she is always encouraging to learn more. She inspires this thesis on many levels, I don't even think she knows it just yet. So again, I will take the time to show the importance and make meaning through this letter.

**Letter to my Grandmother: To Be a Native Woman**

*To my niiwōśh,*

*As I write this, it has been the easiest part of this whole process of writing this thesis. I have a huge cheesy smile, like the ones in my childhood photos at your house. I have a full heart, and I know that everything will work out as it is supposed to, because you said it would. As a kid I would watch everything you did like I did with my mother, and all of us kids learned real early in life that you were the boss. Not in a, “we are afraid of you” kind of way, but in a loving and caring “she runs things” kind of way. We didn't even know the term matriarch at the time but that’s what you were, and still are. But that also taught all of us kids respect, we knew how to act when someone said “I'm gonna tell grandma” or “I'm going to tell your grandma” and we*
would shape up really quick. Not out of fear, but because we knew whatever we were doing was not acceptable and we always wanted to be better when you were around. It was our standard baseline of what it meant to be a good person. Still to this day if I hear “I’m gonna tell your grandma,” I shape up and make sure I am doing what I am supposed to be doing. In the daily choices I make I often reflect to see what you would think, if I have not already called you to ask. This project has put me in a position to reflect a lot, about my life, about my growing up, about our family, and about how I got here. Really this whole journey, is because of you. You are one of the most important people in my life. Your strength, compassion for others and yourself, and your ability to bring people together is something I aspire to be. I think about the stories you would tell us as a kid and now that I am older and can really reflect, I am more impressed now that I ever was.

You have taught me, along with my mother who you raised, how to be a Native woman in this world. How to uphold myself and my family. To always remember those who have come before me and what that means. To think about home and always carry that with me. To understand that those who have hurt us also come from a place of hurt, and to help them create a shared understanding of where that comes from. That lesson on its own has made me a more compassionate person.

I know it was a struggle getting me through school, but you never gave up on me. I was resistant to school for whatever reason, maybe it was being the only Native in school always, or the dreadful Native American week where I became the “token Indian” who had to explain Smoke Signals to a bunch of white kids. Who knows, could have been a lot of things really. Regardless of all of that, you knew my capability. You would sit and do homework with me, help me along the way, reassuring me that I knew the topic and that I was capable. Help me read,
spell, write (handwritten letter). You reminded me that I was enough. You always encouraged me, always told me I could do it. By giving me the freedom to be who I wanted while also teaching me lessons along the way, I am who I am because this is who you guys molded me to be.

One of the most profound memories I have was as a kid we were back in Belknap, I remember being so tired and Old Gram, your mom, was laying on this bed and I crawled in next to her. You guys were visiting, and I just snuggled in and listened to you guys visit as I fell asleep. I don't even remember what you guys were talking about but why this always stuck with me was because it was a moment in my life where I felt pure comfort, care and love. In my darkest of days this is the memory I go to, every time- Old Gram lying next to me, you in a chair and my mom on the couch with people coming in and out of the house. I may not have known it at the time, but that moment was so special. I never forgot it. Still to this day it is my absolute favorite memory of my life. The multiple generations represented. The reason we are all here today. Your mom gave you her strength, vision, wisdom and love. You then gave that same strength, vision, and wisdom to my mom and here we are. Intergenerational inheritance visibly seen, acknowledged, and appreciated. When I think about what “lens” I look through, or my worldview, I think about all of you. The intergenerational eyes, intergenerational knowledge, intergenerational wisdom I have gained from each of you.

I think back to your upbringing, in the little house in the field, just small yet mighty, with you and all of your siblings. I think of the way you all were raised and the similarities and differences of now. Your education and how different it was from mine, your transference of knowledge from then to now. If I could let you know anything in this world it is that I am so thankful to be your granddaughter. That the love you have shown me over my lifetime has been the most I could ever ask of anyone. The compassion and love for where you come from has
taught me that no matter where we are in the world we have a home. That we carry that home with us.

History, and its occurrences has created breaks. Breaks in culture, kinship, lifeways, and knowledge systems. But we also know those same cultural ties, kinship, lifeways and knowledge systems are still accessible. They are not lost. The broken hearts that were created don’t have to be broken. I guess in a way this paper, or this project, this heart-work is all in hopes to mend those pieces of hearts that may have been acknowledged a little less. To show what we know, our existence, is because of people like you, we are still here. It’s not by accident, not by chance, but because of your strength, resilience, and drive to reclaim who we are.

Reimagining the world through your eyes and working to strive to be someone you are proud of has been one of my greatest goals. One I am sure you would say I have met time and time again. But I will never stop striving to be great in your eyes. I feel a responsibility to change the narrative of how people see us, to speak our truth to the world. You speak about our people in a way that should be heard, you make your narrative the only one that matters, and I know you don’t care what other have to say about the matter and I want your view of the world to be known. I speak of you often, almost daily, because I strive to be more like you, every day.

Unapologetically you, no matter who is around, you and all of your sisters. You are easily one of the strongest people I know. You look out for everyone, no matter the cost. You have given me so many gifts in life, lessons about life, and life itself. If I could tell you anything in this project, it is that I am thankful for what you have done for me. For the lessons, the stories, the upbringing you have given me and my brothers. I love you more than I can express in words said or written. I hope you already know that.

Kénei’ihéi’aan’ó níiwiwásih
The relationship between myself and my grandmother has been a constant in my life that I will forever be thankful for. My grandmother talks of her mother as the matriarch of her life, and my grandmother is mine. She chooses to live her life a certain kind of way that makes sense to her, that is coming from a place of strength, compassion and understanding. Perceiving that people all have a story and we are not to judge because they are human like we are. My grandmother brings people together, wherever she is, it is almost like she never forgets people, and wherever we travel to she has someone we have to contact and reach out to no matter how many years have passed.

My most fond and revisited memory is with her, her mother, and my mother together, as I laid there to take a nap. I think of how this has impacted my life, and with my niece now who is a year and a half, I want her to have these experiences as well. My grandmother has given me so many gifts with the request that I share them with others. She reassures me that the future is bright because we continue to pass on the teachings, we are resilient and we can always reclaim who we are, even if we change paths. I had the opportunity to have a conversation about her and her life, any information she wanted to share, and during this process I learned more about myself and our family during this time. The following is a piece of this conversation.

*Shalene:* So what were your parents like? What was your mom and your dad like?

*Jewell:* Well, my mother, no one could ever take my mother's, how do you say, they walk in their footsteps or whatever. No one could ever do what she has done, you know, I mean she could do everything. And she, you know, was a very hard worker, and she could ride horses and butcher and you know make dry meat, or sew, she can preserve, knew all the foods. She
knew how to butcher. She knew all of the guts and stuff. See that's how, I was just going to say that our family would have been, my folks' grand folks, everybody down the line, that we grew up with, they would have been very proud of us because when Neets and Frenchy used to butcher, they used to come and get my mother to butcher, to help butcher because she knew all of the guts. So she taught them how to identify the guts and stuff. And so they used to give her the guts, you know, and so she would cook them up and everything for everybody. So now Frenchy and Neets know about the guts, because my mom taught them. So they get them cleaned, they hire somebody to clean them and stuff, and then so they give the guts to Beaver. So Beaver freezes them. And so when I come back, then she has a gut feed. Wednesday before the pow wow she had that feed when i got back. Because I was telling your mother, "Oh you just, you missed out on a big gut feed. But don't feel bad, there's leftovers, and Beaver froze those, she sure didn't answer that. So anyway, she made these, some lady, I don't know, if you know her or not, her name is Kim. She picked gooseberries and came and gave Beaver a gallon of gooseberries. And so Beaver froze them. And so she made gooseberry soup, you know that day she cooked that, the ... And I hadn't had gooseberry soup for probably 40 years. And so she made gooseberry soup and June berry soup and biscuits. And I ate three bowls of that gooseberry soup. Delicious. Anyway, like there's different ... I don't know how people do it now but way back when there was this, they're called ... What is it, the name of
those berries? Bull berries. And we used to take a tarp, like a tan tarp, and beat them, beat these bull berries, because they had thorns, it was hard to pick. So we beat thorn bushes. So all those berries used to fall on the tarp. Then we'd pull them out and make jam, mainly jam and jelly for the winter. And people, I don't think they do that anymore. But there's still bull berries there. And so, see my mom used to do all that. She was, she could do anything. She used to make all our clothes. She would, you know, make us wool skirts and tops. Well anyway, so I used to like to dress nice when I was 10 and 12. So with my babysitting money, then I would buy material, I'd save it and buy material, and so I would sew my own, you know, tops and stuff and so ...

Shalene: Your mom taught you?

Jewell: So that ... Yeah, so that's when I started sewing, but you know, from way, from then. And then my mother used to crochet stuff and knit stuff and, what else did she do? Done everything.

Shalene: Was she funny?

Jewell: Yeah, she was. You had to laugh at different things. You had to laugh. It was cry or laugh.

Through my grandma's stories of her life, and the stories of her mother, my great grandmother, and my family I have learned how to view the world. To be hard workers, to work for and with others. In this story it reminds me of why my siblings and I are the way we are. The
transference of knowledge has been told, but also shown. Our great grandmother’s wisdom has been passed through her daughter, to my mother, to me. We inherit traits of our relatives from many generations ago. Who we are genetically, has a lot to do with who we are as people. These inherent pieces of us are the vital components of Intergenerational Wisdom. I have been very fortunate and privileged to grow up with mentors who have helped me understand this world we live in. People who I have claimed as my family. I have since built on that wisdom from my Native Wellness family and would like to share the gifts that they have given me to share with others.

**Positive Male Role Models**

Male influences bring balance to the female influence and my mom made sure that I had both. I pay homage to the positive male role models in my life by including their teachings here.

Robert Johnston is a Muskogee Creek/Choctaw tribal member, founding member of the Native Wellness Institute, and an exceptional motivational speaker and a champion basketball coach. Living in Phoenix, Arizona, Robert has been a major influence on my view of the world as he was one of the pivotal positive male role models in my life growing up. He taught me many things including the strength as a Native man respecting a woman, the teachings of caring for one another, kindness, compassion and how regardless of your age. Robert is one of those people who you look to for guidance, but also fun. There is never a time where fun cannot be had. His collective knowledge he has obtained over his years has made him an incredible mentor to myself and others. His years of working in tribal communities, working as a basketball coach, traveling the world, and maintaining his roots has shown me how to maintain my own wholeness.
If we look at something strength based, like, what are your resiliency factors or whatever I hear, but also identifying what are your strengths as a person. And, what are the strengths that you have or your spouse has or your immediate family members have or something along the lines like that. Where historical wisdom is really about it's a value system that sometimes it's not even acknowledged. It's value system that's innate, that we don't talk about. You know, when you get these kids together, who come from all these different backgrounds, we don't have a formal training of how they're supposed to act and during certain things. They just naturally do. But, these are the things that we don't talk about. It's just the natural expectation for that happen. One thing that I always stood in my mind talking about being able to adapt with that knowledge of what historical wisdom is, is of how much does deficit thinking, or colonized thinking, really, has changed the way we teach values. During a training one of the elders there who kind of broke down in the middle of talking to the young people and started to ask them, "How many of you every been yelled at for doing something wrong at the lodge?" And, like, half the kids raised their hand. Half the kids raised their hand, and he asked, "How many of you never came back because of that?" The same kids raised their hand, and he started to cry. And, just simply said, we need to do things differently. We need to do things differently. You know, for him to be at that realization because that's where it's lost at. Because of deficit thinking, when people cling onto, you know, what even you talked about, ceremony is, "It has to be this way, when can't lose this way, it has to be this way, it has to be this way, we've already lost so much, we can't lose this." What we lose is the value behind it. What we lose is the intention behind it. If we lose intention, you lose purpose, you lose reason. And, your focus is too much on make it right way, that you
forget even on why are you doing it in the first place. Adaptive consciousness. It's that you're utilizing the thinking that has worked for you throughout your lifetime, and because of that you're limited. You're limited in that, and without new teachings, without new open perspectives, you're limited to just what you know, and I know I don't want to be limited to what I know because what I know isn't very much.

Words, perspectives and actions drive who we are. With Native people, the foundation is already built in. It is gaining access to that knowledge, to that wisdom, that then allows us to act as a nation. “One of their battlegrounds in the international arena has been the concepts of traditional knowledge. This is a shift of tactics in terms of earlier battles over the word ‘self-determination,’ or the struggle to have the ‘s’ recognized in terms of describing Indigenous communities as peoples’” (Smith, 2012, p. 221). I use this because Indigenous communities have always had their knowledge systems questioned and invalidated until studies have been done to prove them right. We as researchers can self-recognize our knowledge bases, our collective wisdom and how that influences our work. Robert is explaining intention; we as Native people have had to continue to adapt and change. Songs and ceremonies were gifted by other communities and we would learn those with the intention of using them for our own healing. That meant change, adding to a community, and we need to remember we are not a stagnant people, we change. We can continue the ceremonies we practice, but we need to practice without fear. Teach without fear. We need to be able to live as we please, within the familial structures and embrace our Intergenerational Wisdom. In an interview, Robert Johnson (AZ Interview) shared the following:

With academia, everything wants to be following procedure. Everything wants to be written down. Everything wants to be the end all. But, you really can't. That's not
realistic. It's like, to say we know everything about anything is ridiculous. We don't. We don't. Anyone that says, "okay, well I know everything there is know about this flower", I would challenge, "okay, what do the Ojibwa people call it? What do they use it for?" "I don't know, I haven't read that in the book". That's what I mean, we have to have them understand that in order for us to grow and develop. We don't know all the answers. It's just a mixture of knowledge that we gain and what we do to best help. If you tell somebody not to do something, what are you giving them? You're giving them nothing. You're giving them nothing. You're giving them void. That's all that you're giving them. In order to shift, what you've gotta do is share alternatives. That's how you become a master of healing work is you do your own healing. That's the only way that you can approach it because if you do your own healing work, you find out that, number one, there's more than one ways, and number two, you also find out more about what your strengths are and how to accommodate those strengths.

Intergenerational wisdom is abundance based, it is moving forward to the wisdom of the past. Sometimes that means asking the hard questions about ourselves. Where do we come from, what are the teachings of that land? It is also about ridding the shame of not knowing and asking about the language, asking about the songs in order to find our strengths and build from them. Use the time in academia to further your education. Some call it activism. “The activist struggle is to defend, protect, enable, and facilitate the self-determination of indigenous peoples over themselves in the states and in the global arena where they have little power” (Smith, 2012, p. ?). In the academy, where there is still a power struggle, it is the time to let these stories be heard. To write about and facilitate change through Indigenous people, whether that be our own histories or giving voice to the indigenous people involved.
I think wisdom has to be something other than knowledge, because we're not learning it properly. But yet it's still something that we resonate with. It's still something that we identify with. I think that's what's remarkable about ... what we do is give opportunities to heal because through healing we still may not be able to define it or put it into summation but what we can do is attached to it. I think that's what people feel when they come into our conferences, come to our events is that, they may not understand why but they're there. Sometimes it may not even be to learn, it's just to be there. It's very rare you actually do hear people say like afterward like, “oh wow, I have so much knowledge I'm taking back.” We hear that but it's pretty rare. What we hear people saying is like, “I felt so great here. This is the best training it's helped me out so much” because it resonates, because we do it that way, we look to tap into what's already there. And we can't tap into what's already there, if there isn't anything there. We don't know what they're coming in, we don't know their education, so why is it consistently that we're tapping into the right places? It's because what we're trying to do is tap in again that word historical wisdom, what we feel what we know is we are all related.” - Robert Johnston (AZ Interview)

Charles TailFeathers, NWI Board of Directors, worked 20 years for the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs where he assisted in creating a family wellness court system. He also served as a Victim of Crime Advocate, Elders Advocate and Juvenile Advocate. He has provided training and technical assistance to tribal court systems. He has provided Native wellness and healing training in Indian country for over 35 years. He is a Vietnam war veteran, champion powwow dancer and a culture keeper of his Cree ways.

Charlie has been pivotal in my growth for years, as an elder in my life he has been able to teach me many viewpoints from his worldview. We have hit the pow wow trail together,
attended contemporary gatherings of Native peoples, we have trained together and more importantly, he has helped me grow. With English being his second language, he sometimes speaks Cree because it makes more sense. Charlie is one of those elders with mass amount of wisdom that naturally flows out of him as the one liner wisdom bombs that I sometimes don’t realize how significant it was until much later. While reading Research is Ceremony by Shawn Wilson, I heard Charlie's voice. There is a shift, which happens with every growing generation, “a growing awareness of the similarities of experience of Indigenous peoples worldwide has reshaped the terminology used to define our own lives” (Wilson, 2008, p. 54). The following is an excerpt of the gems Charlie has gifted me, to then gift you.

Those you're not going to find in the books because it's not what the writer wants to write. They would rather write something about themselves to gain to sell the book. It's not about the truth. So we have to be aware of that too when we are talking about these. That's why a lot of people just like the History Channel that you look at, all of these anthropologists and all of these scientists finding but they can't really get to the wisdom of the tribes cross the United States because they don't know. They only assume what that wisdom should be to them individually not to a tribe.

Those things are very important to us. Here is ... what is the wisdom of the people of the let's take spirituality. What is the wisdom of the spirituality with the people of Fort Belknap? So we can talk about that because each tribe has a different process of that wisdom to conduct part of the ceremony. So those kinds of wisdom is other things just like family wisdom. In each of these tribes is a little different from each one. In reality when we look at it they're basically the same but we practice it in a different way as that wisdom to each of these tribes and bands of people.
The wisdom of roots, medicines. Each of these tribes have different areas of medicine they know we don't know. So those medicines are used for particular things that we don't have today. It's different from the Cree side, and the Assiniboine and the Sioux. And that's why we shared these stories, that's where we made the trades to see what these medicines were so they can probably benefit from their tribes.

So all of these wisdoms there are ... There are so ... when you say wisdoms you know there's ... it's so vast. So we want to take particulars which one are we talking about. History. What is the wisdom of the history, what happened? We know that. Well, what about personalities and behavior wisdoms? What was those spirituality wisdoms? What was the wisdoms of the song? What were they for?

So those kind of the wisdom, historically speaking, that's what made us who we are as people because we practiced it then. So we're in a different. We're in a different century, different time and we're trying to practice those but in a different manner. What's happening is you're basically. Really doing it in a modern way of wisdom. And that's kind of hard to comprehend because that's what it is. It's modern time.

- Charles TailFeathers (GR Interview)

Charlie is pointing out the many types of wisdoms we have, and where they come from. I am not here to give a specific definition, rather give contextualize examples. Like Historical and Intergenerational Trauma there are a lot of causes and deep roots. What we are getting at here is the same for Historical and Intergenerational Wisdom. It is there, sometimes we just have to go looking for it. The following conversation helps further explain this concept, and why creating a definition is not the end all goal here. It is not the accumulated and collected aspect of wisdom, yet the application of Wisdom we accrue.
Charlie: To live it and feel it and understand it and apply it. To me like he says, “Wisdom.” I said wow man, that's more than what we can talk about tonight because everything has wisdom as in people as tribes. But the white man just uses one word. See that's the part that we need to understand about the wisdom itself. So you're going to say wisdom has many parts to life. That we have to live in order for us to be in balance like you said there Jillene, in balance, that's what that balance is about. It's all of these things that go together. The white man always asking is, “Wisdom, which part do you want me to talk about wisdom?” Then they're not going to know which part we just talked about wisdom. That's why I say, geez, whew, (laughs)

Robert: It's a good summation because when you think about it the Eurocentric use of the term out there is collection just like accumulate as much as you can that's your Eurocentric. The accumulation or the collection of knowledge is wisdom and that point of view. When you're talking about indigenous it's not about collection of knowledge, it's about application of knowledge. It's about knowing what you need to know and talking about balance. I mean, what I see as historical wisdom for example is when you have ... Well, let's just say this is ... we understand what balance is and we understand that being off balance what that is. That's that part that is passed on, I think that's part that we all feel. What we're losing is through the trauma is that aspect of how to teach what to do about it.

My Peers and Mentors
Chelsey Luger is from Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa and Standing Rock Sioux Tribes. Chelsey studied Global Indigenous History at Dartmouth College then later Digital media at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism. Chelsey is a facilitator and trainer for the Native Wellness Institute as well as co-founder of the Well for Culture movement as well as a power house mother to baby Alo, and mentor to many.

Chelsey is another strong Indigenous woman who I greatly look up to. She stands tall and from the day I met her it felt like we had already known each other for years. I tend to forget it's only been about 3 years now. When I first met Chelsey, she got to know me pretty quick as I was applying for this program at UCLA. We talked about it and instantly she offered to help. We spent time together and she made sure to let me know she would support me attaining my goals and dreams. That was the moment I knew she was someone genuine. We have had this amazing relationship since, full of laughs, tough but educating conversations, and sharing experiences with that I will forever be thankful for. Her baby Alo has been a major blessing to the family, that girl is so loved by all of us and it’s another reminder of why this work is so important.

Balance

Chelsey reminds me of balance. When I am at a low and she may not even know it, she has these words that really resonate. She reminds me that school is more than a mental game, it affects every aspect of ourselves and movement and what we put into our bodies is a vital component. Never in a shaming way, but in a constructive let's talk about it kind of way, her insight into overall health and wellness has helped me become a better person, and to love myself at another level, past what is physically seen.

*I think that there are so many elements of native culture in native life in native communities that have had this unfortunate circumstance where outsiders, or people that*
are looking in, or even ourselves, are falsely imposing this deficit mentality on basically every element of our culture and every element of who we are. With wellness, again, there are all these elements of our cultures, of our history, that if we just shift our perspective on looking at them, and choose the more empowered narrative that everybody else has accessed the more empowered narrative, right? Like, non-native, like Americans, non-native people who are from America they have the privilege and the liberty to look at their own history in a positive light. Like, they know that there's genocide, they know that their ancestors did a lot of horrific things to a lot of different things to a lot of different groups of people in order to come to this place of power that they are in today. But, they don't have any problem with just, like, picking and choosing the heroic elements of that history and just emphasizing that. It does help them in their daily lives, right? It does help them to feel who they are, it does help them to connect to their culture in a positive way, right? So as native people, we can do that, too. We can re-shift the thinking. So, for me, that's been a big healing element. And, that's one thing that I see with Native Wellness Institute. Pulling the positive elements about where we come from and kind of, like, not ignoring the trauma, but helping it all come together in a narrative that makes sense so that we can understand our history and our circumstances but also that we can pull the positive elements out of it. There are just every aspect of nature culture and native teachings there's a way to look at it that's positive and that's healing for ourselves and for others. I think, we have the right to understand that and to be empowered by that as native people, and I think it's important for non-native people to understand that because that will help them to have more respect for our culture and for our communities. - Chelsey Luger (AZ Interview)
An empowered narrative can change the way we see a situation, or research. Lester Rigney (1997) explains that “Indigenous people are at the stage where they want research and research design to contribute to their self-determination and liberation struggles, as it is defined and controlled by their communities” (p. 3). Rigney (1997) explains that this is because, “Indigenous peoples think and interpret the world and its realities in different ways to non-indigenous peoples because of their experiences, histories, cultures, and values” (p.8). (Smith, 55, 2012). There is value in our histories, which are largely told through a colonized lens. Our formal education growing up socializes us to think a certain way, to be proud of America, by telling one side. We know the generalization of genocide in America, and many other countries, but it has been desensitized to where we do not acknowledge the real history, or the land we occupy.

Worldwide, a new level of awareness is growing as the academic climate changes (Wilson, 2008). The shift has begun, awareness is happening as we speak. Education is key and there is always space to question the type of education we are obtaining, where is it coming from, and is there another side?

**Compassions, Consciousness, Spirit, and Energy**

Anthony “Thosh” Collins (O’otham, Haudenosaunee), raised in Salt River, Arizona is a board member for the Native Wellness Institute. Also a co-founder of the Well for Culture movement. Thosh is a professional photographer, facilitator and trainer for the Native Wellness Institute. In my eyes, above all, he is a great example of what it is to be a Native father.

Thosh has been a major influence on my healing journey in life and has taught me to be protective over my energy. He has truly seen the highs and lows of life and he continues to stay consistent. His view of the world through a literal camera lens is outstanding. He finds beauty outside of the socially constructed boundaries. When it comes to the male mentors I have had in
my life, Thosh has been one of those Native men that helped me create an understanding of balance. He was always ready to listen, learn, to ask questions, and give his perspective. Thosh has always been a teacher for me, and I trust him like my brother. Teaching me how to box, educating me on the teachings behind foods, going on these adventures with me like paddling in a canoe to Canada. We have learned so much together and from one another and the wisdom that he has chosen to share has helped shape this exact paper.

While in the progress of forming this paper, we began speaking of different types of wisdom, all of us forming pieces of what it meant to be wise, what lessons have we learned over time, what do we want to share. These conversations were in depth and a lot came from them and continue to resonate with our work. These conversations created deeper thinking in all of, which is another part of historical wisdom. Thosh, in this following excerpt, speaks on his view of wisdom as consciousness. In terms of the work that we do and people coming to our trainings to feel what it is we do rather than trying to explain through words.

“Compassion is consciousness. What connects us, the energy field in between each and every one of us that’s connected is that compassion particles. Energy is spirit, whatever you want to call it that consciousness, same thing in my mind, is all around us and its real and the more we put ourselves in the place of accessing it we put ourselves in the place of better connecting with those people.

You should ask those questions, you should ask but you should come and feel it. You should come, you should come see. You should listen, you should taste, you should physically feel it. You should come over and you know how’s it goin you know feel it. You know. Eat the food that we give, listen to the songs that are sang, listen to the prayers and the words that are done, see the energy, see the interactions, you know and put all
these, these senses together, then pretty soon that sixth one will come in they then wow this makes a lot of sense now.

So I think that Native Wellness is successful cause we, we do that, were flexible, I think the biggest thing is to be flexible and be like water. A way of facilitating a healing process by being by being driven by your consciousness by being driven by your hearts intuition. And and just trusting that. Trusting the spirit once again.” - Anthony Collins (AZ Interview)

Thosh has been on his healing journey for years, as well as learning about the connection to consciousness. Compassion is consciousness. “In an Indigenous ontology there may be multiple realities, as in the constructivist research paradigm. The difference is that, rather than the truth being something that is “out there” or external, reality is in the relationship that one has with the truth. Thus an object of a thing is not as important as one’s relationship to it. This idea could be further expanded to say that reality is relationships or sets of relationships (Wilson). Relationality is then the basis of everything, our knowledge, our education, and the work we decide to engage in. If we begin to change the way we think about our work and think of it as heart-work, then our relationality changes.

Self-Care

William Penn is an enrolled member of the Squaxin Island Tribe and also descends from the Quileute Tribe, both of Washington State. He served in the U.S Army for ten years as a combat medic. He has served on his tribal council, as a tribal health director and in the fisheries arena. He provides training and technical assistance for the Native Wellness movement and at the moment is also busy healing from cancer. He is an avid outdoorsman and hunter, enjoys fishing, spending time with family and being a new grandpa.
Will has taught me about the importance of self-care, being OK with pondering life lessons including the lessons we may have missed and how the lessons repeat until we better understand. Will is an example of what it means to live a life through compassion and to have patience with all people; we all have a story we may know nothing about. We constantly learn and grow and while we have a foundational belief system, there is always room for growth.

*Because wisdom is always evolving. What I was just going to share was, from the way that my brother used to give gifts, to the way that we got brought up on giving gifts was totally different from the two-time brand. Because when he used to give gifts, he'd give a whole duck or a whole turkey or a whole grouse to somebody they'd be appreciative. But in our age of growing up if we give somebody a whole duck or a whole fish or a whole something without it being cut up and ready to eat, it wouldn't be appreciated as much because it has work to go with it. That wisdom is always evolving, and we just evolve with it and it's like ... That part of my teaching was if you're going to give a gift you don't want to make to that extra work because that's the old way that that was done but we're in a new time frame now. So we got to adjust to that. When we give birds or something, fish it already all cut up and staked out. Or if we gave meat it was all ready ... It wasn't a whole deer or something that had to be skinned then cut out and stuff. - William Penn (GR Interview)*

Gift giving is an essential part of Indigenous cultures. This thesis for example is a compiled written gift. Each person I have had the opportunity to visit with has gifted me with their words, time and teachings and allowed me to gift them to you the reader. We have changed and adapted to the types of gifts we give and receive. Sometimes it is a material item and
sometimes as simple as a compliment. There is a give back, a relationship that we build and acknowledge.

Jackie Blackbird is a member of the Gros-Ventre and Assiniboine tribes of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation of Montana. Her traditional name is ‘Itha-Gibi-That.’ Translated from the Gros-Ventre language to English means ‘Walking Woman.’ Jackie earned a bachelor’s degree in business. Jackie is a program manager for Nike at their world headquarters in Beaverton with their Office of Diversity and Inclusion. For the past ten years she worked with Nike N7, the Native American Business program at Nike and all together has been with the company for 15 years. She volunteers with the Native American Youth and Family Center and the Native Wellness Institute.

Jackie has taught me a lot in my young life. She has shown me that the glass ceiling that the patriarch has developed are simply challenges for us to break through. To witness her grow and flourish in corporate America while still maintaining her cultural values by practicing and living our traditions as an A’aniiih woman, has inspired me to do the same. Jackie has taught me about the duality of life, about maintaining balance and nourishing the important things. Jackie is a force in the world with the ability to create change in spaces Indigenous people are rarely found.

So when I started going to Joe’s and listening to what he had to say, and he's always said the same thing every time we went into a ceremony for our sun dance lodge for our sweat lodge and he would talk about being good to one another. Being kind to one another. Respect one another. Help one another. Love one another. When I think about that when he says it, it gives me the chills. It's very simple but I think about NWI
that way because those are all the things that NWI is about. Those are all the things that people that come from deficit thinking do not have.

I feel like as people were attracted to those learnings and what we know inherently in your ghost genes, or from your people, or from the land what we need to be a part of and what we need to be around. When I was thinking about coming here and why I was so excited ... it probably wasn't just me that was excited, it's all my ancestors knowing what I would be hearing from Charlie and the songs that these men are bringing from Canada to share the medicine that's being brought to us. - Jackie Blackbird (GR Interview)

Relationality and creating space has been a major component of this topic, Intergenerational Wisdom. “People are in relationship with the Creator and with what might be called positive and negative spiritual forces. These forces are labeled differently by various traditions” (Hodge, 2009, p.217). We find experiences in our lives and label them according to the relationship we have with those experiences. Better, it's something we strive for as people, as communities, as researchers.

The Energy We Bring

Jordan is from the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma on the Kiowa Comanche Apache Reservation and the Kingdom of Tonga. She has a master of Museum and Heritage Practice from Victoria University of Wellington as well as a Bachelor of Design from Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. Jordan is an artist, culture bearer and advocate for Native Women. Over the years, Cocker’s artwork and research has navigated the intersections between Native people and social, political, and historical climates through a female lens. Jordan’s artwork has been exhibited at local, national and international institutions including the Auckland Art

She works for the Native Wellness Institute as a Project Co-coordinator of the Indigenous 20 Something Project and works to create healing pathways for Indigenous people in her generation through ancestral knowledge collaboration.

Jordan in this last year has become more than a friend, she is family. We have spent so much time together for work and just bonding, creating this deep-rooted relationship full of compassion and empathy for each other and the people around us. Her Intergenerational Wisdom from her matrilineal Kiowa side and patrilineal Tongan side comes through and shines bright. Jordan has helped bring my creative side back to life. She reminds me to think critically and to remember that there is purpose behind everything. One of the most profound things she has said to me is the question, “Did you have a bad day? Or did you have something bad happen and you milked it all day?” Something so simple yet we don't give too much thought to. We get so used to our day to day norms we don’t question them or ponder what we could be doing differently. Being mindful of our energy, what we carry, what we bring to a place, focusing on how do we care for that energy, for that space, giving love to those elements we cannot see; in essence, just being mindful. “We are the latest version of our ancestors. Our generation deserves to have the tools to lead healthy dignified lives.”

*There's a saying in the Pacific and its tau hi vā, teu le vā. Vā is part of that is everything ... it means, space that connects. Not empty space, but space that relates. So the vā- can be between person to person, but also can be person to object, person to land or any two things in the whole world is the VĀ. That phrase means to care for the space between. So it's said in parting, it's something that you say as counsel. You'd say that phrase so that people will remember to care for the space between. Really it's like when*
we were watching Star Wars and I have this moment when he was explaining the force. That Luke Skywalker is explaining the force and I was like he's explaining the vā, he's explaining that thing that relates everything in the world. All matter even, inanimate things.

There's a word for that and like all throughout the Pacific. In Maori it's wa, Japanese it's wa. But it's that thing that, it's an energy, that thing that makes people do things. And caring for the vā is one of the most essential simple ideas of ancestral wisdom... people and life is all related. I also think that, even using that language, the word vā is so important too because it goes back into all of these other different things like Robert was saying like different wisdoms that are lost. But once you get to hear it, or once you see people doing it teu le vā. That resonates and you can feel that's right. And so I think for me ancestral wisdom is just something that wakes you up in the morning, and also that thing that when you hear a ceremony or see a ceremony makes you remember who you are and where you come from. I think that it's stitched and one way or another into all of our DNA. When you have those moments of recognition and acknowledgement, when you see that abundance manifesting of ancestral wisdom... you feel that vā, you feel that connection.

I think that's ancestral wisdom, it's that abundance, fullness to be able to care for this space in between versus having a deficit. Disrespecting the land through mining, drilling, and seeing the natural world as a never-ending resource to be used. Is connected to disrespecting people, disrespecting life, is the opposite of abundance which deficit. The loss of abundance is a burden that all colonized people have to carry is that deficit kind of thinking. - Jordan Cocker (GR Interview)
Jordan is explaining the importance of energy; we are responsible for the energy we bring into a space. The energy that follows us from the places we have been. It is important to protect that energy and acknowledge that energy. To be aware of the abundance that comes from that, recognizing that everything has energy and our energy meets that energy. So, bringing respect to those relationships with people, with land, with the projects we decide to give our time.

Josh is from the Kiowa, or Ka’igwu people in Oklahoma and the Kingdom of Tonga in the South Pacific. He is a certified outdoor instructor and facilitator, with an associate’s degree from Whitireia Polytechnic in Wellington, New Zealand. He has traveled extensively in the South Pacific for work and service including: Papua New Guinea, Tonga, and Australia. Most recently he has worked in the Tonto National Forest in Arizona as a trail walker, coordinator, and trainer for an outdoor behavioral healthcare foundation. From the age of 14, Josh was given a position in a military society of his tribe, and trained as a youth leader to preserve and share traditional knowledge with his generation. He seeks to honor and share that knowledge with everyone. “My hope is that I can help reintroduce people from all walks of life to our First Mother in all her wisdom and beauty. I hope to inspire healing, harmony, and connection through the use and passing of traditional skills in the outdoors.”

The Land We Walk On

Josh has been my partner in healing along with his sister Jordan. We have been traveling into tribal communities facilitating healing work on behalf of the Native Wellness Institute. We are putting our Intergenerational Wisdom to use and sharing with others. Josh has taught me that we are connected in some shape or form to others through the land we walk on, that is our constant. The connection to land varies, but we all have the ability to connect and appreciate the land we walk on. The land being our first mother, we need to treat her as so, with respect and
love. We only get one earth and to be mindful of how she is treated. The connection to the way the land is treated is connected to the way Native women are treated in today's society and if we can find ways to reconnect with the land, we can find ways to reconnect as humans.

**Charlie:** So what are the four words that you can define wisdom in your tribal setting?

**Josh:** Mom always knows best.

**Jackie:** What the, tribal setting he said

**Josh:** Yeah, mom always knows best, (Says in Tongan)

**Charlie:** Now tell us. How do you define that in English?

**Josh:** Yeah, Mom always knows best.

**Charlie:** Remember now, mom does not always know the best.

**Josh:** I'm not talking about like my actual ... like my mom that I came from. I used four words like our first mother like the land she was the original teacher. In the Kiowa way we're told that she teaches all women how to love their children perfectly. There's a place for all creation. And she supports and enables and helps us to thrive not just to survive. So that's what I think of when I think of intergenerational knowledge, when I say mom I mean like a first mother.

**Robert:** Could you put that into one word though?

**Josh:** Mana.

**Jackie:** Wisdom.

**Robert:** Mana?
Josh: Mana. Which is a spiritual power, It's a piece of God that is given to all of us and we can push that out just like he might push that out to us.

Charlie: Now we're getting somewhere.

These types of conversations are our norm, to ask the questions needed and also be able to have open dialogue. Here everyone is giving meaning, from their personal worldview what wisdom is and includes humor. The conversation never really came to an end. It was more like, “to be continued.” This conversation happened on the territories of the Grand Ronde people, who we have created a strong relationship with. In some ways it helped shape this conversation, the relationship we have made with their land. We acknowledge the territory to bring our energy to the space. Culturally competent work, “we need to recognize that this is an important part of how all people think and know (not just Indigenous people). Once we recognize the importance of the relational quality of knowledge and knowing, then we recognize that all knowledge is cultural knowledge” (Wilson, 2008). Culture being what we know and recognizing there is more to be learned.

To our younger generation,

You are our future workforce, our future mothers and fathers and grandparents, the future aunties and uncles and role models who are going to shape and guide the generation coming behind you. You are a leader today and you matter. I had a profound and genuine moment where I realized, you are why I work so hard. I watch, and I see the healing work that has been done for my generation, and I want to continue that work and amplify it. I want to continue that legacy and the transference of Intergenerational Wisdom. I watch my grandma work hard, which shaped and molded my mother and what she has done to shape and mold me. Now I have the responsibility to do that myself. Today I held my niece Christine, and as we stood
in the Portland City Hall we watched the Mayor sign and pass a proclamation to make May 5th a day to acknowledge Missing and Murdered Indigenous Woman. Tears rolled down my face as I witnessed people who make policy for this city, acknowledge colonization, acknowledge harmful policy, acknowledge the wrongdoings of America and ongoing settler colonialism, and I witnessed them make a corrective action. As the tears dropped, I also had a smile on my face. I looked at my niece and she smiled back at me, touched my tears and I could only imagine that she was figuring out what the tears were for. I stood her up, in her little red ribbon skirt, fuzzy jacket, and moccasins, and I knew this was a day I never want to forget.

The Mayor made it a point to share that this day would impact policy and a push in congress would be followed. This movement began as an idea that was then put into action and in 2 weeks, 6 Native women who knew they could do it, did it. My mother and very good friend were a part of these 6 Native women. They work for the next generation and for all generations. I was watching history happen in front of me, all while holding my less than one-year old niece. Natives filled this colonial space, dawning red ribbons skirts, ribbon shirts, beaded necklaces and wrapped in red shawls; their pride filled the room. The people in power sat behind their colossal desk and spoke about their surprise to the alarming statistics, about their commitment to more action needing to be taken on this important issue. I watched their emotions, the way they spoke, what they were saying and how they listened. Then I knew, this was a step in the right direction.

Let this lesson of activism be a reminder for you. When we embrace our Historical Wisdom, it allows us to find our voice and use it. When we see something that needs to be done, our Historical Wisdom whispers in our ear and encourages us to take action. When we learn how to be still, we hear the whispers.
I believe in you. I will be your biggest cheerleader and when you feel down, know that I will be there.

Many blessings,

Shalene

Historical Wisdom itself has changed and transformed over time and throughout the generations. It has kept cultural values and systems intact, it has negotiated treaties, fueled resistance, dodged bullets, it has fought for sovereignty, it has kept us gathering, and gave us the tools to think and act like our ancestors, it has kept us laughing and smiling and moving forward, it has kept us in ceremony, it has kept us alive. We as Indigenous people, we move together. We thrive in community, we have an understanding of one another, with the hundreds of communities we have, we still have this understanding and similar value system. Different language, ceremonies, lifestyles, foods, but still a connection to the land and ancestors before us. We keep the Intergenerational Wisdom alive through living, through teaching through action. My greatest blessing has been allowed the opportunity to pass my own wisdom to my new niece, Christine.

To my Christine, beebs, my tiny,

You are the reason I work so hard. You gave love and life a new meaning. At the age of one and a half, you have taught me so much about the importance of intergenerational wisdom; it’s not just a concept, it is a verb. Your own Intergenerational Wisdom has shined through by just you being here. You remind me that kinship is vital to who we are. That the work that we do now will affect and is affecting you. The work that we don’t do, will affect you. Watching you grow up has been one of the most rewarding and immense blessing in my life. You make us check
ourselves and ask what more we can do. What I do will be passed to your generation, and what I pass down is more important now than ever.

The knowledge that I have obtained over the years, the wisdom that has been transferred, the knowledge systems that have shaped my behaviors and worldview will now be bestowed onto you. That is the Native way, to transfer knowledge and wisdom. I have come to an understanding over the years that everything we do will affect our next generations. This includes everything we don’t do as well, what we don’t do (like drugs, alcohol, lateral oppression, violence, chronic negativity) will affect our next generations, I can’t stress that enough.

The healing work that is being done within our family and greater community is strengthening the field, contributing to the field, and enhancing the field, so much that you may one day take it even further. We are trying to find a balance in this academic space. One day, if you so choose, academia will be a different place for Native students; we will have done the work needed to help find a balance to create healthier spaces while you continue this educational journey. I can imagine you, Christine, and your friends Alo and Ryder, making your own moves in your own time and thinking about the future generations coming behind you. That’s just how it works.

Christine, know that you are worthy. You are worthy of benefiting from the work that is being done. You are worthy of these knowledge systems that have been built and expanded upon. You are worthy of love, compassion and the historical wisdom that flows so far back we can see it in the future. You are so worthy. You are a product of those before you, and that wisdom will find a way to shine through. Believe in it, believe in you and those inherent characteristics of where you come from will help you to always shine bright. Your beautiful smile, curiosity and zest for life are already an indication of your true self.
I appreciate the opportunity to influence your path, just as many have influenced mine. Your choice and agency is something you will have the privilege to practice throughout your entire life. I hope that if anything, you are unapologetically you and you embrace the goodness that has been passed down from your ancestors to now. I can’t wait to watch you grow and I can’t wait to see what kind of positive contributions you will gift the world.

Love you always,

Your auntie Shay

**Historical and Intergenerational Wisdom**

Historical and Intergenerational Wisdom literally permeates every part of life. It’s a topic for deep thinking. By first teaching our young ones about Historical Wisdom, we are creating a positive narrative for them to embrace. And by balancing the amount of literature between historical trauma and historical wisdom, academia will be better suited to knowingly or unknowingly, change the negative narrative and stereotypes of Native people. Further, it will assist Native people to be seen and heard from in a contemporary context and not just kept in the past. Historical and Intergenerational Wisdom is the anecdote to Historical Trauma and they must go hand in hand. Healing is the answer to trauma and Historical and Intergenerational Wisdom embraces and embodies the tools for healing. By taking our narrative in our own hands, by embracing our leadership role and embracing our healing journey, we are embracing Intergenerational Wisdom. As Lumbee scholar, Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy (2015) explains, “Indigenous leadership; for me, this is directly rooted to the idea of legacies, including what we, as individuals and community members, inherit and leave behind” (p. 50). This is an important component when in academia, the work we do here will then be used, it is out there and could affect the thinking of many, internally and externally.
While I began my journey of writing this project I began getting a lot of feedback, which was welcomed and appreciated the whole way. There became a question of difference, between that of Intergenerational Wisdom, and Ancestral Knowledge. Although that is not the point of this project by any means, I thought I would let others explain, good friend and scholar Kapua L. Chandler (2018) wrote a heartfelt and amazing article that embodied a lot of what I am trying to explain here. Chandler (2018) writes:

This story is an example of the many ways ancestral knowledges are valued and passed on among Hawaiian communities. Kame’elehiwa (2010) responds to the question, where are ancestral bodies of knowledges found?

They are found in the heavens; each of the stars is an ancestor and a god, and a body of knowledge. They are found in the earth; each animate and inanimate thing of the earth is an ancestral God, and a body of knowledge. They are found in the oceans; every living creature of the sea, the reefs and its fecundity, and all of the seaweeds are ancestors with lessons to teach us. (p. 53)

Ancestral knowledges are highly valued as Native Hawaiian communities strive to pass on such wisdom and lessons from generation to generation. These knowledges passed down by elders within our communities are sacred and must be kept safe, as they are the ‘poignant reminders of the failures of elimination and living witness to the multitude of crimes against their humanity’ (Grande, 2016, p. 3). Family genealogies link Native Hawaiian peoples to their ancestors: astronomers, navigators, planters, weavers, fishermen, engineers, healers, artisans, and educators. Ancestral knowledges are the basis for agriculture, food preparation, protocol, health care, education, conservation, and sustainability and are typically transmitted by word of mouth and cultural practices from generation to generation. Ancestral knowledges are all around us no matter where we are;
evident and valued in every setting, whether out on the reef or in a four-walled classroom (p. 178).

I took in every word Kapua had written, agreed with it, and for the sake of academia I began to ponder the idea of difference.

*What is the difference between ancestral knowledge and historical wisdom? This is how I would describe it. It’s kind of like epigenetics. The study of epigenetics so far, is just focusing on how trauma impacts our DNA. And it’s doesn’t really impact our DNA, it’s the proteins around our DNA. And what they’re saying is that the trauma that our ancestors experienced is passed down through that blood memory, if you will, OK. So is the historical wisdom. So it’s that innate sense, that guiding north star, if you will, that is inside of us. Ancestral knowledge is like knowledge to do a particular craft. Knowledge to navigate by the stars. Knowledge to know what berries to pick and not to pick. That’s the knowledge, the teachings. And the wisdom, is related to knowledge but it’s like, inherent, the inherent knowledge. Why it’s inherent is that the bigger picture of historical wisdom is trusting the process. And what the process is, is like the creator and the ancestors and all of the energy of the universe, and that energy always wants good for you. That’s why you trust the process because everything will always be as it should.* - Jillene Joseph (Interview)

To me, there is no room for arguing the two, they are similar, they both work towards the goodness that we hold. The acknowledgement of our people from generations. We have wisdom that we then turn to knowledge base systems that we pass on to the next generation. What does it mean to tell our stories, are we conveying the message clear enough? It is a journey we all take, through discomfort, growth, and release we find our way through academia for the betterment of
our communities. This thesis has been a challenging one, to dig deep into my personal life for a
place like the academy that can be harmful and hyper critical, to tell my story as I saw fit, not
solely for the benefit of academy, but for those of us in it. There was not a way to remove myself
from the story, to something so close. So by sharing my accumulated wisdom, and built
knowledge from family, friends, communities, academics, allies, and mother earth, was the birth
of this thesis. Through the process of writing letters, conversing with NWI family, and reflecting
on stories, I developed a definition of historical wisdom and identifying some of the processes
and characteristics that support historical wisdom.

Historical wisdom is the deep understanding of the universe’s love for you and the innate
information and teachings embedded in our blood memory passed down from generation
to generation. The universe is the Creator, our ancestors, the stars, planets and the
energy of all living things. Tribal languages, songs and ceremonies are the proof that our
people were positive thinkers. Positive thinkers are positive doers. Tribal languages are
action oriented and do not contain hurtful or derogatory words. Ceremonies work to
heal, uplift and honor. Historical wisdom then, provides a framework to love- to love
yourself, your family, ancestors, each other, land, culture, etc.

Historical wisdom is…

➤ Trusting that everything happens as it should
➤ Knowing that everything will always be OK
➤ Believing that the Creator and your ancestors always want good for you
➤ Having the courage to honestly look at yourself and your behaviors as a result of trauma
➤ Embracing cultural values and lifeways and continually seeking to better understand
them
➤ Understanding spirit, or energy, and how to clear what is not serving us in a good way
and embrace what is
➤ Gift giving or generosity- time, wisdom, stories, lead by example
➤ Community based collaboration
➤ Living in balance physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually
➤ Early formed positive norms
➤ Togetherness, identify and belonging
➤ Remembering who you are and where you come from
➤ Being open minded and open hearted
➤ Learning on the go
➤ Creating space for healing
➤ Trusting the process
- Expanding your world view through travel, role models and mentors
- Taking time for reflection
- Thinking positive, being positive, cultivating positivity
- Creating space to bring people together
- Finding your voice and tell your story
- Upholding yourself and family
- Having a vision for yourself and your people
- Understanding that children born into resilience, have parents who cultivate resilience, live in resilience
- Embracing love, vision, drive, compassion, respect, understanding, strength, perseverance
- Minimizing trauma from conception forward
- Recognizing the power of the matriarchy in your family
- Having a drive to be a better person than you were yesterday
- Knowing that the answers lie within you, in your blood memory
To my fellow academics,

First of all, I need you to know that I am proud of you. This challenging journey that you have decided to embark on is mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually worth it. The work that you do matters. You add to the growing wealth of knowledge and wisdom that then influences future academics’ thinking and opinions and changes academia and the scholarship as well. To my Indigenous academics, I am proud of you for walking into a place and space that did not have you in mind when it was created. We acknowledge those who have walked the trail before us and smoothed down the grass so that our work may be more easily accepted. By reading this letter, it means you have since read the other letters I have written, letters that I have poured my heart into. These letters are pieces of me, put into a written form to show my own societal and environmental impact. The impact that Intergenerational Wisdom has had on my life is what I held on to and what helped me to finish this program. I had professors and advisors, who through their own Historical and Intergenerational Wisdom encouraged me to finish on my terms and I translated that to mean that I “Indigenized” my thesis and process by integrating my topic of Historical Wisdom into the work. By focusing on my life experience and the process of analyzing my life through an academic lens, I feel really good about leaving this for others to read and be inspired by.

As you move on from academia, you will encounter more space to flex and contribute your Historical and Intergenerational Wisdom. You will continue to add to the work that will continue to change those around you and society for the better. Change is a constant in our lives and we are always adapting and overcoming. The academy could use some of this change we speak of. I was fortunate enough to sit in while Dr. Eve Tuck spoke to a room of academics, she reminded us of balance. She asked the crowd how much of our time is done doing things we
actually want to do, and not just the academy’s work. To recognize as researchers and
acknowledge and ask, who is the work benefiting? Indigenous communities? The academy? Or is
it both? We need to do better at what our relationship is, to the land, to the people whose land
we occupy.

The academy, as you know, can feel like it just keeps taking, which is why we as
academics need to be mindful of our place and our experience while here. Most importantly, we
cannot give what we do not have. By that I mean we can’t exhaust ourselves to burnout for a
grade. Speak up, ask for help. Create an understanding, a relationship with your peers, mentors
and professors, because odds are, they have been through it themselves. Dr. Tuck dropped
intense knowledge on us, she said the work in the university is making us sick. Harmful
institutions can make us sick. So, we need to be mindful of how much we exert and why. We have
to practice self-care in times of need and make it a daily norm. Be careful how we spend our
time. These lessons I have shared through the stories of others and myself speak a lot on the act
of self care, embracing the goodness, and self awareness of our energy.

We have a responsibility to the academy, but more importantly to the people we come
from, ourselves and our families. The very people who helped to get us to where we are now and
the people we represent. If you are conducting research on a people, here are some pointers to
do more abundance-based work: 1. Acknowledge whose land you are actively occupying, on
campus and places we travel to. 2. Question yourself, are we harming this community in any
way. 3. What give back are we enacting by doing this research in a respectful way. This should
be a give and take, not one sided for the benefit of the academy or our self. 4. Acknowledge
yourself, where do you come from, like really actually originated from. Trace your lineage as far
as you can, hone in on that identity and learn about yourself. 5. Are we as researchers taking
space, this is more specifically for our allies, is there a space to bring in the importance voices to
the table, and or taking the space where a Native person should be? This is some of the wisdom I
have gained while in the academy, it is always better to ask first than apologize later.

This thesis is to bring awareness to an additional way of writing about Indigenous
peoples. For our Indigenous academics, this is another way to think about writing about
ourselves in order to change the narrative. Academia will challenge you, in all sorts of ways.
Transformation happens, it is a place where you can explore ideas and learn from people who
live this work, use that. You are worthy of success. You are worthy of love. And again, I am
proud of you for the work you are putting in. There is a pool of knowledge waiting, and a pool of
knowledge that has been accumulating for thousands of years behind you. That
Intergenerational Wisdom is there.

Best of luck,

Shalene Niltinna Joseph
Bibliography


Arizona Interview (AZ Interview)


Grand Ronde Interview (GR Interview)

Grandma Interview


