

From Talking about to Talking with: Integrating Native Youth Voices into Teacher Education via a Repositioning Pedagogy

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In this article, Robert Petrone and Nicholas Rink propose a repositioning pedagogy framework for teacher education. They maintain that a repositioning pedagogy disrupts power dynamics by bringing secondary-aged youth into teacher education courses as compensated consultants and experts to teach future teachers about learning, classroom management, teaching, and other issues pertinent to schooling and the development of pedagogical practices. A repositioning pedagogy responds to the absence of youth voices in teacher education by centering youth and their perspectives in preservice teacher education. In laying out this framework, Petrone and Rink report the findings of a qualitative study in which Native youth attending an alternative high school on a reservation were hired to teach future English teachers about ways to build relationships and curricula to engender success for Native youth in schools. This research explains both the experiences of the youth consultants, which proved to be “transformative,” as well as the structures of a repositioning pedagogy that facilitated this outcome. The article also addresses several areas for further research and consideration to ensure reciprocity and safeguard against undue harm to youth consultants, particularly those for whom schools have historically been unsafe places.

Keywords: American Indian education, youth, repositioning pedagogy, teacher education, preservice teacher education

That felt great that people actually wanted to hear our story, that they actually wanted to know what our schooling was like. Never did I ever get in a whole group of people like that who actually wanted to listen.

—Ross, a Native¹ youth consultant for a teacher education program

When reflecting on that day [when Ross shared his story], I've come to the realization that this single day affected not only the way I approach my students but how I live my life. Talking and sharing in circle emphasized to me the importance of an individual's story. It also reminded me that everyone deserves to have their story heard.

—A preservice teacher

This article addresses a particular irony in teacher education: that while teacher education is replete with talk *about* young people, it rarely, if ever, involves talking *with* youth themselves. Though there are notable exceptions (e.g., Cook-Sather & Curl, 2016; Morrell, 2008; Rubin, Abu El-Haj, Graham, & Clay, 2016), by and large the actual voices and perspectives of young people are oddly absent from the process of preparing teachers to teach them. Thus, while youth constitute one of the most important stakeholders when it comes to teacher education, they have virtually no voice or representation in the development of the educational practices and policies aimed at them.

This exclusion is especially problematic for youth of color, who are further marginalized by schooling practices that rarely align with their “funds of knowledge” (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) and that operate from colonizing and racist frameworks (de los Ríos et al., 2019). For example, Martínez (2017) notes that many Black and Latinx youth are subjected to “linguistic violence” within schools that denigrates their languages and linguistic resources, which contributes to these students holding “‘deficit rationales’ about their language practices” (p. 183). For Native youth in particular, mainstream educational approaches often directly conflict with Indigenous Ways of Knowing (Grande, 2008; Kovach, 2009), and recent research reveals that the schooling experiences of many Native youth continue to be sites of cultural erasure, marginalization, and emotional distress—all of which reify disparities in and beyond schools (Lee & Quijada Cerecer, 2010; Executive Office of the President, 2014; Quijada Cerecer, 2014; San Pedro, 2015). For example, Quijada Cerecer (2014) explains how certain policies at a particular school simultaneously marginalized Native students’ knowledge systems and policed their bodies. Overall, the exclusion of youth voices and perspectives from teacher preparation doubly disadvantages the potential progress of public education because it “not only silences those most affected by educational inequalities, it also denies the research community valuable insights” (Bautista, Bertrand, Morrell, Scorza, & Matthews, 2013, p. 1).

Research has shown that when youth are taken into consideration in teacher education, they are typically filtered through the dominant developmental lens of adolescence, which maintains young people as ideational abstractions

and presupposes a set of constrained possibilities for youth as well as teachers and curricula (Lesko, 2012; Lewis & Petrone, 2010; Patel, 2012; Petrone & Lewis, 2012; Sarigianides, 2016; Sulzer & Thein, 2016). For example, Petrone and Lewis (2012) found that preservice English teachers' conceptions of their future students as dealing with what they understood as the naturally-occurring tumultuousness of adolescence established particular identities they imagined for themselves (e.g., pseudo-therapist) and informed their curricular reasoning (e.g., selecting young adult novels about dangerous topics). Another concern noted in this scholarship is that by positioning youth in these ways and excluding them from the processes which establish discourses that claim authority over them, the field of education is recapitulating both the adultism inherent in its policies and practices and a deficit rendering of youth as incapable and uninterested (Lesko, 2012).

Rooted in these concerns, we bring together previous work (e.g., Petrone & Sarigianides, 2017) with related scholarship (e.g., Cook-Sather & Curl, 2016) to name and articulate a *repositioning pedagogy* to help establish a more visible and humanizing seat at the table, so to speak, for youth when it comes to preparing teachers. A repositioning pedagogy involves inviting secondary-aged youth into the physical spaces of teacher preparation as educational consultants to teach future educators about issues related to schooling. The overarching purposes of a repositioning pedagogy are 1) to facilitate preservice teachers' development of practices grounded in assets-based and relational understandings of youth and their perspectives; and 2) to provide opportunities for secondary-aged youth to develop more restorative relationships to schooling and possibilities for personal growth (e.g., public speaking).

To illuminate this approach, this article reports the findings of a study focused on understanding a group of high school students' experiences participating in a repositioning pedagogy as educational consultants for a teacher preparation program. While attending an alternative high school, Firekeeper Academy, on their tribe's reservation, Native American youth James, Ross, and William were hired by a teacher education program to help facilitate a group of preservice secondary English teachers' understandings of sociolinguistics, systemic barriers and pathways to academic achievement for Native youth, and perspectives on culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogies (McCarty & Lee, 2014).

Drawing on the perspectives of these youth and the preservice teachers with whom they interacted, this study shows how participating as consultants in a repositioning pedagogy functioned as a transformative experience whereby these young men refashioned understandings of themselves regarding deficit labels related to schools and imagined new life possibilities (e.g., attending college). Moreover, this study reveals how various structures of a repositioning pedagogy and certain resources engender such opportunities for youth consultants. In illuminating how a repositioning pedagogy affords occasions for youth who have been failed by schools and limiting narratives to be positioned

and to position themselves differently, this research offers novel understandings of how teacher education can work as a space for youth development.

By prioritizing the experiences of the youth consultants, this study contributes to a line of scholarship that similarly examines youth engaging with preservice teachers in the context of teacher preparation but that primarily focuses on the preservice teachers' experiences (Brown & Rodriguez, 2017; Cook-Sather & Curl, 2016). Specifically, this study raises concerns about the potential for colonizing educational practices to be inadvertently perpetuated through a repositioning pedagogy and thus offers suggestions to support youth consultants, particularly youth of color, in such endeavors to ensure reciprocity and cultural humility on the part of the preservice teachers.

Theorizing Repositioning Pedagogies in/for Teacher Education

A repositioning pedagogy is comprised of an epistemological stance and instructional approach whereby youth are invited into the physical spaces of university-based teacher preparation as educational consultants to teach future teachers about learning, curricula, teaching, and other aspects of schooling. It centers authentic dialogue between youth and preservice teachers, emphasizing *listening to* and *learning from* youth. In this way, a repositioning pedagogy actively works to disrupt power relations and adult-centrism within teacher education by calling into question whose voices, stories, and authority matter when it comes to preparing teachers. At its core, a repositioning pedagogy promotes equity and empowerment for all youth but has particular purchase for youth who are systematically marginalized by/in dominant schooling systems—youth of color, immigrant youth, LGBTQ+ youth, youth who are speakers of historically stigmatized varieties of English, and poor and low socioeconomic status youth.

Moreover, a repositioning pedagogy is part of a larger appeal for teacher education to rely on more comprehensive and inclusive renderings of young people as part of its process of preparing teachers—a shift *from* adolescent development *to* critical youth studies. A repositioning pedagogy offers an opportunity for teacher education programs to make visible the assumptions of youth that undergird them and to develop practices that bring about more equitable teacher preparation regarding conceptions of and relationships with/to youth. Thus, this article offers teacher educators both a practical pedagogical intervention and an epistemic staging ground for programmatic possibilities grounded in humanizing and equity-oriented approaches to working *with* youth.

Conceptually, we frame a repositioning pedagogy at the intersection of critical youth studies (CYS) and youth literacies. As an interdisciplinary field, CYS (Ibrahim & Steinberg, 2014; Lesko & Talburt, 2012) critiques developmentalist discourses of adolescence, argues for more inclusion of youth as participants in the development of practices and policies that target them, and

explores youth cultural practices and activism. In many respects, CYS provides an overarching framework and set of exigencies for a repositioning pedagogy.

A major influence on repositioning pedagogy is a line of scholarship that examines youth language, literacy, and learning practices as they exist across a range of contexts (Kinloch, 2011; Kirkland, 2013; Morrell, 2008; Paris, 2011; Patel, 2012; Williams, 2018). By locating myriad ways youth engage literacy and cultural practices, this scholarship informs a repositioning pedagogy in several ways. First, by taking seriously the ways literacy lives among youth in a range of contexts, it has pushed the limits of understanding where, how, and why youth literacy and identity development occur. This research has illuminated the vast learning ecologies that comprise young people's lives, many of which involve sophisticated literacy practices and exist beyond schools.

Research that examines youth literacy and cultural practices has demonstrated ways of seeing and knowing youth that extend beyond the dominant understandings of young people that tend to circulate unproblematically within educational discourses, revealing youth as capable, innovative intellectuals who draw on a range of practices to help them engage purposefully in contemporary society. By primarily drawing attention to youth from historically marginalized communities, this line of inquiry has been especially instrumental in recasting deficit understandings of these youth as well as offering critiques of the standardized academic measures used to determine student success.

Moreover, a range of pedagogical innovations designed to facilitate more equitable educational opportunities for youth has emerged from research on youth literacies, including culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris, 2012), pedagogical third spaces (Kirkland, 2008), restorative justice (Winn, 2013), and critical literacy pedagogies (Morrell, 2008). These innovations have opened up various ways educators can honor, value, and build on the resources students bring into classrooms.

Tenets of Repositioning Pedagogies

Thus situated, a repositioning pedagogy is an approach to working with youth that overtly positions them as capable and able and places them in spaces wherein they have opportunities to contribute to the learning of others—in this case, secondary preservice teachers. A repositioning pedagogy will look different in different contexts. It may involve youth teaching preservice teachers content knowledge (Pope, Beal, Long, & McCammon, 2011), pedagogical content knowledge (Petrone & Sarigianides, 2017), or relationship-building strategies (Brown & Rodriguez, 2017). Given variations for context-specific adaptability, it is more accurate to conceptualize a repositioning pedagogy as repositioning pedagogies that are guided by several principles.

First, repositioning pedagogies literally place youth within teacher education. By and large, youth are absent from teacher preparation. A repositioning pedagogy changes this by getting youth physically onto college campuses and

into teacher education classrooms. As explored in the findings section, this proves valuable for both the preservice teachers and the youth consultants for myriad reasons.

Second, repositioning pedagogies not only create space for youth within teacher education but center them in it. During their consultancy, youth are active and directive, often standing in front of the room and engaging teachers as learners. Since their consultancy emerges from their areas of expertise, the consultants are positioned as authorities in relation to the preservice teachers. When possible, youth consultants should be compensated for their time and referred to as “consultants” and “experts.” Nomenclature matters. By using these terms, normative naming and labeling of youth within teacher education gets disrupted.

Third, consultants have specific content they are sharing. Their consultancy is not a generalized or vague sense of “hearing youth perspectives” but instead focuses on particular expertise. For example, in this study the three consultants shared their “stories of schooling” to illuminate some of the ways westernized education impedes the academic achievement of Native youth. Thus, there were specific connections for the preservice teachers to make between their coursework and the content of the consultancy.

Finally, key to repositioning pedagogies is its emphasis on youth who exist on the fringes of schooling. The purpose for this is twofold. One aim is to create a situation in which preservice teachers have a positive experience with youth who are marginalized in and by the place that these preservice teachers usually first encounter them—school. The hope is that this experience will help reframe deficit labels such as “at risk” or “failing.” A second purpose is to create space within a school system wherein youth who are typically marginalized by school systems are actually central to it. Repositioning pedagogies explicitly aim to promote authority and honor knowledge and skills *within school* for those who are normally peripheral to it. As evidenced by this study, this aspect of repositioning pedagogies may engender some of the most powerful shifts for youth consultants. In addition to this study, others who have participated in previous iterations spoke about their surprise at having been asked to be a consultant, as they had rarely or ever been made visible for any positive reasons within schools. They often noted that they felt they were smart or talented but that their ways of being intelligent were not acknowledged or valued in/by schools, and so the consultancy was meaningful, in part, because they were able to share their expertise and contribute to others within a schooling context.

Scholarship on Repositioning Pedagogies in Teacher Education

Addressing the ironic lack of youth voice in teacher education, a small body of scholarship has begun to document the impacts of having preservice teachers interface with secondary-aged youth (Brown & Rodriguez, 2017; Cook-Sather,

2009; Cook-Sather & Curl, 2014, 2016; Cook-Sather & Youens, 2007; Pope et al., 2011; Rodriguez & Brown, 2018). In the most sustained attention, Cook-Sather and colleagues (Cook-Sather, 2009; Cook-Sather & Curl, 2014, 2016; Cook-Sather & Youens, 2007) have demonstrated that these encounters have positive benefits for preservice teachers. For example, Cook-Sather and Curl (2016) explain that when preservice teachers are given sustained opportunities to learn from and co-build knowledge with secondary-aged youth as part of their teacher education program, they develop new possibilities for attuning to their future students. Cook-Sather and Curl (2016) write: “When preservice teachers experience this kind of reciprocity in their preparation, they carry into their teaching a commitment to collaboration and shared responsibility and an openness to constantly evolving, as necessary, to meet their students’ needs as learners” (p. 69).

Other research focusing on bringing urban youth of color into teacher education to work with preservice teachers around issues of school climate offers mixed results. Specifically, Brown and Rodriguez (2017) and Rodriguez and Brown (2018) explain how preservice teachers mostly diminished the significance of what the youth researchers shared. The authors note that the preservice teachers “discounted, discredited, and disbelieved” (Brown & Rodriguez, 2017, p. 88) the youth presenters, and they argue that many teacher candidates lack the necessary “‘transformationist identity’ required to work with minoritized youth in productive ways. That is, they do not possess the cultural knowledge and experiences and the social-political and anti-racist orientations needed to recognize the tremendous value youth can bring to their work” (Rodriguez & Brown, 2018, p. 99).

While this scholarship has been instrumental in attempting to mitigate the marginalized role of youth in teacher education, several notable gaps exist. First, this research primarily (often exclusively) focuses on the experiences and perspectives of preservice teachers with scant attention to the impact these encounters have on/for youth consultants. The attention that has been given to youth has cursorily noted that the experience is supportive of empowering these youth. For example, Cook-Sather and Curl (2016) explain that the youth “better developed a sense of what they need as learners in the classroom and the world and an elevated sense of agency and confidence to ask for those needs to be met” (p. 71). Similarly, Brown and Rodriguez (2017) note youth participants found the experience to be “validating and empowering” (p. 89). Other than these examples, little to no mention has been given to the effects for youth participants, and youth have not been the focus of any systematic inquiry.

Second, with the exception of the work of Brown and Rodriguez (2017) and Rodriguez and Brown (2018), this line of inquiry has paid very little analytic attention to—or even at times mentioned—youth intersectional identities, particularly vis-à-vis preservice teachers’ identities and how these may inform repositioning pedagogies. This lack of attention is particularly significant given

Brown and Rodriguez's (2017) and Rodriguez and Brown's (2018) demonstration that the experience of youth interfacing with preservice teachers proved to be less valuable for future teachers than the experiences documented by scholarship that does not examine positionalities of youth consultants and preservice teachers. Moreover, as the teaching force maintains its status as predominately white and middle class at the same time that public school students are increasingly diverse, an emphasis on identity markers becomes imperative. How might a repositioning pedagogy, for instance, reveal ways white supremacy may be operating within teacher education and/or how to work against it?

Furthermore, while some of this research has highlighted urban youth of color, no attention has been given to Indigenous youth, particularly from rural communities, a population of students arguably the most in need of attention and the most neglected (Executive Office of the President, 2014). Therefore, this project promises to initiate a line of inquiry that attends to the unique circumstances for this demographic working with university-based teacher education, including the historical and current settler-colonial efforts that often make schools inhospitable spaces for Native students (e.g., Sabzalian, 2019). Thus situated, this article promises to make contributions to this emerging body of scholarship and to teacher education in general.

Research Methodology

This research project was guided by the “four Rs”—Respect, Responsibility, Reciprocity, and Relationships—deemed essential for conducting culturally appropriate research with Native populations (McCarty & Lee, 2014). Given the problems attendant to research being done *on* Indigenous populations by academic researchers, it is important to note that this project was developed from an ongoing collaborative relationship between the two authors and members of the tribal community and alternative school, including Charlie Speicher, a contributor to this project. The collaboration emerged organically from a relationship between Robert Petrone, a university faculty member in education, and Nicholas Rink, a teacher at the alternative school. Rink had been a student in the program Petrone coordinated, and during his first year of teaching at the alternative school invited Petrone to visit. From that visit, the collaboration was established, and eventually the idea for the consultancy developed.

Because Petrone is a white scholar and a cultural outsider to the community, the research team deemed it essential he build and sustain relationships with faculty, students, and community members over a long period of time to demonstrate commitment, goodwill, and reciprocity. It was not until after two years of consistent relationship building that he asked for permission to apply for a tribal Institutional Review Board approval to formally conduct research. During that time, under the guidance of Rink and other cultural insiders,

Petrone participated in school and community activities to build relationships and develop understandings of tribal histories and current issues.

Rink grew up on the reservation and graduated from its mainstream high school. He left the reservation to attend college but returned to raise his children and teach at the alternative high school. A descendant of the tribal nation, he has devoted himself to learning traditional tribal sciences; he runs a sweat lodge on the reservation and teaches classes in Indigenous art, Native studies, and physical education, emphasizing traditional Native games. Because of his position as both a cultural insider and teacher of the youth consultants, he was uniquely situated to facilitate a culturally appropriate study design and integrate important cultural considerations in data collection and analysis. For instance, he helped shape the interview protocols to cue for more storying, particularly in relation to the participants' families and the broader (school) community, and to emphasize in data analysis the value of relationships and trust related to these young men's experiences.

Speicher is a white school counselor at Firekeeper Academy and has led the school's aim of creating a healing educational space that simultaneously attends to academic success and mental-emotional health and wellness. Though initially an outsider to the local context, Speicher has worked and lived in the community for many years, during which time he has developed trusting relationships with families throughout the area and integrated into the community where he is raising his children. As part of the research team, his role in this project was pivotal in that he helped prepare the high school students for the consultancy, provided support during the experience, and engaged in debriefing sessions with the participants and research team.

Given this context, this project was framed by a participatory design whereby members of the school were actively involved in shaping the project, interpreting results, and communicating their implications, including the development of this article (Stanton, 2014). Aware of Petrone's affiliation with a westernized and westernizing institution of higher education—which Rink continually reminded him of with the refrain, “But Rob, you're from a westernized and westernizing institution!”—the team wanted to be mindful that community interests drove the project. For instance, attention to reciprocity and relationship building was one way normative western-centric perspectives were attended to in the development of this project. Specifically, members of the school ensured that the consultancy would contribute to the high school students' understandings of college, including the specific support structures in place for them as Native students.

Furthermore, to overtly work against the “damage-centered” (Tuck, 2009) emphasis of much research related to Indigenous communities, the aims of the study were based on the premise that research ought to do more than illuminate the problem of inequality; it must also point toward effective responses. To work against the ways Native students are typically rendered “a

research asterisk” in educational scholarship (Shotton, Lowe, & Waterman, 2013), this study focused on a small number of participants to ensure in-depth perspectives and alignment with humanizing (Paris & Winn, 2013) and relational (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017) approaches.

Participants

By virtually all mainstream measures, the three consultants—Ross, William, and James—were “typical” statistics for Native male youth, particularly those on reservations: they were failing or behind in school, they had had issues with law enforcement, and their lives had been profoundly touched by poverty, trauma, and death. These young men were selected by the research team for two main reasons. First, they each had powerful stories of schooling, and the team thought their perspectives would provide the preservice teachers with rich understandings of the complexities of many Native youths’ lives, particularly in relation to the endemic racism embedded in mainstream public schools in the US. Second, their counselors and teachers agreed that the three were ready for the experience and that it would prove generative for their development. Specifically, each was in a position where an external experience such as the repositioning pedagogy could, as Speicher, their counselor, said, “stretch them out of their comfort zone” and help them prepare for life beyond high school.

Though not the focus of the study, it is important to note that the participating preservice teachers reflected the nationwide demographic of teachers—white, middle-class, female (there were a few male students). This is significant because an important component to analyzing repositioning pedagogies relates to the interplay of positionalities between youth consultants and preservice teachers. In this case, the preservice teacher demographic demonstrates that the youth were asked to consult in a predominantly white space.

Data Sources and Analysis

The main data sources consisted of participant observations of the repositioning pedagogy; semistructured, in-depth interviews with the consultants, school counselor, and focal preservice teachers; less-structured communications via texting and social media; participant observations during visits to the school before and after the consultancy; and preservice teacher reflections. Debriefing sessions occurred at different points after the consultancy to assess longer-term impacts; youth consultants debriefed with the research team within days of the experience, after six months, after a year, and then again after two years (during the development of this article).

Given the participatory design of the study, data analysis relied primarily on collective sense-making sessions. Specifically, the two authors and Speicher generated and discussed field notes based on the consultancy to develop both a thick description of the experience and a list of prominent themes pertinent to the consultants’ perspectives. A key focus of analysis was on the language

used by the youth—namely, any changes or shifts they articulated—in relationship to their experiences, school, and lives. Throughout data analysis, use of westernized analytical language and concepts was kept to a minimum to not marginalize Indigenous Ways of Knowing or otherwise engage in “colonial epistemicide,” which “manifests as failure to take up non-Western concepts as analytic tools and metalanguage” (Wandera, 2019, p. 2). In this way, emic perspectives and language were maintained in generating themes and findings. For instance, the term *transformative experience*, which emerged from the collective sense-making sessions, was used as a way to capture the overarching experience of the consultants.

Analysis also relied on Indigenous Knowledge Systems to create new understandings (Brayboy, 2005). For example, alongside the emergence of the findings about how the participants repositioned themselves, the research team also noted how these findings could just as easily be understood from assimilationist colonizing perspectives. Thus, data analysis was a multilayered process to ensure a “braiding” of western and Indigenous epistemologies (Kimmerer, 2013) to create multiple, at times conflicting understandings. In this way, the aim of analysis was not neat conclusions but, rather, depth and complexity.

Findings

Setting up the Consultancy for Success: A Holistic Approach

The project team brought James, Ross, and William to the university as part of the English Department’s Distinguished Speaker Series. The university covered all expenses and paid the consultants an honorarium. The youth arrived the evening before with Speicher, their counselor, and Rink, and the group went to dinner at a Japanese restaurant so the youth could try sushi for the first time. The consultancy began the next morning with an official tour of campus, and then each student sat in on a class of his choosing. After the classes, they met with American Indian Student Support Services to learn about programs and meet Native students on campus.

The morning concluded with the three serving as guest speakers in a sociolinguistics class. The session began with Rink presenting a short overview on language revitalization within the tribal nation. The youth consultants then briefly introduced themselves before engaging the preservice teachers in activities that involved speaking words in the language and learning about related cultural aspects. From these activities, the consultants fielded questions the preservice teachers had. After this class, the consultants had lunch with eight preservice teachers in one of the campus dining halls. During this time the group discussed college life and life on the reservation, among other topics.

The centerpiece of the consultancy was when, after lunch, Ross, William, and James spoke to a literature methods course for future secondary English teachers. For this course, the preservice teachers had read D’Arcy McNickle’s

novel *Wind from an Enemy Sky* (1988), which is a fictionalized account of the building of Séliš, Ksanka, and Ql'ispé Dam (formerly the Kerr Dam) on the Flathead reservation in the 1930s. The preservice students had also viewed the documentary *More Than a Word* (Little & Little, 2017), which explores the controversy over the Washington, DC, NFL team's racialized mascot. The course curriculum also included presentations by a local Native high school English teacher, Melissa Horner, who developed a unit that brought together McNickle's novel with the Indigenous-led, nonviolent direct action movement related to the Dakota Access Pipeline, #NoDAPL (Horner, 2017; Horner, Petrone, & Wynhoff Olsen, in press), and by Rink, who, in a session prior to the students' consultancy, discussed historical trauma with particular emphasis on Native schooling in the US.

The research team and Horner decided on the texts and activities for the preservice teachers and provided this context to the youth consultants to help them generate their narratives. It is also important to note that the preservice teachers were invited into the process of creating the repositioning pedagogy, and they played an important role in coordinating events and activities, including arranging thank-you notes and small gifts.

Preparing the future teachers in these ways was designed to mitigate concerns expressed in related scholarship (Rodriguez & Brown, 2018) about preservice teachers dismissing youth consultants and also to help provide the preservice students with varied frames of reference to integrate the consultancy into their coursework and their thinking about teaching. Specifically, the research team hoped that the aforementioned texts and activities would help the preservice teachers develop a sense of the historical and contemporary context for Native students in public education and concrete possibilities for pedagogical practices. More importantly, though, the consultancy was structured this way to engender and demonstrate the importance of a relational approach to education that values students' stories and perspectives.

Sharing Stories of Schooling: A Repositioning Pedagogy in Action

The young men's consultancy involved them sharing their "stories of schooling." Specifically, each delivered a narrative that highlighted his journey in mainstream schools, the circumstances leading up to his enrollment in Firekeeper Academy, and the supports that facilitated his success there. The session began with the consultants asking everyone to sit in a circle, and then, as practiced at the Academy, they passed around a "talking piece" so that everyone had an opportunity to share.

The talking piece started with Rink, who sat on one side of the three young men, and then moved around the circle. Rink began by asking everyone to share how they felt on a scale 1 to 10 and then to explain one positive or negative experience from their secondary schooling. Retrospectively, one preservice teacher noted that the class "quickly became a vulnerable space as the talking piece circled around from person to person." Eventually the piece

landed with Speicher, who sat on the other side of the three consultants. He provided context for Firekeeper Academy, explaining the overall ethos which prioritizes well-being and cultural connection over and as a precursor for academic success.

When he finished, Speicher handed the talking piece to William, the first of the consultants to share, and when William held the piece and looked at everyone, the entire mood of the room shifted. William froze, nervousness getting the best of him, as he later explained: “It was hard. I used to have really bad anxiety, and you know how anxiety can be—it messes with the body.” Speicher helped him move through the anxiety, and after a deep breath William began his narrative.

“I could have died that day.” He paused. “I was in an open field, surrounded by cops, and they were yelling for me to put my hands up in the air. I knew they had the crosshairs of their guns on my head.” All eyes were glued on William as he took the class along on his journey, the climax of which involved him standing on school grounds with police officers, guns drawn, surrounding him. He explained his hearing with the school board, his near expulsion from the district, and how, to that point, he had not been treated well in school and had been known as a “shit kid.” William explained how this changed when he landed in the alternative school. “The Academy had pretty much given me a second chance, and they didn’t see me as some fuckin’ loser, asshole kid.” He paused. “If it wasn’t for the alternative school, I wouldn’t be anywhere near where I am now. I’d be a dropout, and I wouldn’t be here talking to you.” He concluded his story by telling the group about how a teacher at the school got him into working out, sharing with them that he won a state record in the deadlift competition for fifteen-year-olds. He closed, saying, “One thing I like about the school is that they’ve done a lot for me.”

The talking piece then moved on to Ross, the shyest of the three young men. Ross almost always had his head down, his face buried beneath his baseball cap, scribbling in his notebook and creating an imaginary world inspired by his love of comic books. Soft spoken, Ross stutter-stepped at first, explaining later in a debriefing session that “anxiety almost got the best of me.” Eventually he found his voice. “White people don’t take us Natives on the reservation serious. We get pushed aside. Coming up on the reservation isn’t always easy. It can be hard there, with drugs and stuff like that.” He then opened up about his experiences in school before Firekeeper, telling the group about his challenges with traditional academics and being labeled a “struggling” and “failing” student. He explained how he was “going nowhere at the high school” and that he eventually left the high school to try Firekeeper, where he flourished.

It’s like a home. The staff always makes sure we are okay, and they always put our needs before theirs. Most of the students, including me, see the staff as family. We call the male staff “uncles” and the female staff “aunties,” or when Carmen is there we call her “grandma,” which she doesn’t like. [laughs] I really love Fire-

keeper—that’s why I hope it keeps going and stays the same. It will really help with some students.

Ross closed with advice for the future teachers—“Just be you. If you work with the students, the students will work with you. Help them.”

Ross passed the talking piece to James. Visibly nervous, James scanned the white faces around the circle. He looked to Speicher, his counselor, and then at the ground. In a debriefing session, he, too, noted that the situation was at first “nerve wracking for me. The whole time I was sitting there, I had sweaty palms, and my feet kept shaking, and I couldn’t calm myself down.” He eventually lifted his head and began. “In school, I really felt that I didn’t belong there.” He paused. “When I was in fifth grade I had a teacher tell me I’d be a bum on the street.” With his story he took his audience to the basement of the home he had shared with his grandmother before she passed away. “My grandma was both of my parents—my mom and my dad—and when she passed away, that was a really big thing for me.” He explained how, after losing his grandmother, he increased his own drug use, stopped going to school, and holed up in the basement playing video games and smoking weed to numb the pain. At several points in his narrative, James paused and let out his pain through tears.

James explained how he ended up at the alternative school, where he began to trust and open up to people. He talked about the love he felt and the healing he experienced there:

They care about your opinion, they care about what was going on at home, they care if you were eating or not. They care if you have a kid and can’t bring it to school—they will say you can bring him. They work around you, and they help with anything you need . . . They are definitely my second family that I care deeply for.

He pointed to Speicher, and said: “If it wasn’t for him saying I could come back [after missing so much school after his grandmother passed away], I probably would have continued going down the path I was going down.” He ended his talk with some advice for the preservice teachers: “Students have emotions—they can’t be emotionless when they’re at school. There’s always going to be someone who’s got something going on. And to be understanding about it is where you’re going to win.”

When James finished his story, a collective sigh rose and met in the center of the circle. One preservice teacher said, “Thank you,” and applause filled the room. When the class ended, the consultants were swarmed by future teachers who wanted to continue the conversation. Afterward, each of the consultants commented on how this reaction was as powerful as the sharing of their stories. Ross recalled how “even after our big circle, all of them were all still interested and asking us questions and wanted to know more about our stories. I was pretty amazed that they actually wanted to know more.” After the

last of these informal conversations, the three consultants and the research team went to dinner to debrief and celebrate.

A Transformative Experience: The Youth Consultants' Perspectives

Simply put, the overarching finding of this study is that these young men's participation in a repositioning pedagogy constituted a "transformative experience" for them. In this instance, *transformative* illustrates how this experience engendered important shifts and new possibilities related to their past, current, and future lives, including a sense of confidence, personal growth, and healing; newfound aspirations for attending a university; reimagined social relations; and a deeper sense of purpose. In many respects, these young men's participation in the consultancy facilitated a recasting—or a repositioning—in relation to the deficit discourses directed at them, particularly related to schooling. Thus, these findings illuminate how a repositioning pedagogy has the potential to engender new possibilities for youth who participate.

—James: "My life changed for the better that day"

For James, participating in a repositioning pedagogy had a profound impact on him and the course of his life. Looking back at the experience, he said the consultancy

was the start of a lot of things for me, like starting to talk in front of people. It got me out of my comfort zone . . . It's kinda crazy to think, but if it wasn't for me talking to that class full of students, I'd definitely not be able to, you know, be where I am today.

Specifically, James credited his participation as the catalyst for several life changes, including his healing from the pain of losing his grandmother. He explained how by sharing his story he was able to move through past pains: "It helped me get over what was stuck in my head with the situation that happened about my grandma. If I didn't talk about it that day, I'd possibly be dealing with it still to this day." In fact, he said that he has kept the thank-you notes he received from the preservice teachers "as a reminder to keep going from where I came from."

He also pointed to how his participation helped him engage with people with more confidence, including his engagement in a job-training program, for which he even gave a valedictory speech, and his ability to perform better in job interviews. "It made me very confident in where I came from, and what I was going to do." In a message to Petrone, who asked James if he had anything he wanted to share with a group he and Rink were giving a presentation to about the consultancy, James wrote:

My life changed for the better that day. I am now 20 years old, I have a beautiful young daughter who is 8 days from being 1 month old, I have 4 thousand dollars in my bank account, and I am on crew with the best opportunity in my life right

ahead of me because I spoke about my life to a room full of people I didn't know because I was willing to come out of my comfort zone. I still have the thank-you card from that day that I will never forget.

It is important to note that prior to the consultancy, James was, by his own admission, “a really shy kid” who had never done any public speaking. Moreover, because he was labeled a “troublemaker,” he had never been asked to participate in any school-related activities. In fact, he was quite surprised that he was asked to be a consultant in the first place:

I was definitely surprised, and I'm pretty sure Ross and William were as well. Like, out of all people, we didn't think we would be the ones to be asked to speak to a group of soon-to-be teachers . . . For some people that might not even be that big. But for me that was huge.

Overall, James's experience had quite a significant impact on not only his external life but his internal sense of self. When asked in a debriefing session if he thought the authors should coordinate another consultancy involving other youth, he indicated yes, saying, “It could be something that will change their life.”

— Ross: “It made me feel good about myself to share my story”

Ross “felt changed” by the consultancy—“I felt more comfortable with myself as a person and realized I had a story to tell.” More specifically, he explained that he developed an increased sense of himself and his life as a result of his participation. He said,

[Before the consultancy] I just wanted to prove to myself I could get through the rough patch in my life and graduate. I didn't have a plan or anything. But after the experience at the university, I felt better about myself. I actually felt more alive than I did before, and I felt like I could be someone in the world. It made me realize I could be more.

Similar to James, Ross's experience promoted new understandings of himself and new possibilities for his life. Before transferring to Firekeeper, Ross had been cast as a “struggling” and “problem” student, but as a consultant he was viewed as someone with knowledge to impart and a story that would benefit others. In this way, the repositioning pedagogy aided Ross's shifting sense of his schooling and his story.

A key aspect of Ross's experience was the connection he made with the pre-service teachers and the ways he felt heard by them. In debriefing sessions he expressed a deep sense of affirmation and an overall “good” feeling about having shared his story:

[I] was amazed because I didn't think anybody would take that much interest in our stories like the students did. They were excited to hear our stories, and this made me feel happy because there are not too many people who want to hear the truth. But what I took away was that there are actually people out there that

care and want to make schooling better and make better situations for other people.

The consultancy also contributed to a shift in Ross's perception of white people. He noted that prior to the consultancy he "really didn't like white folks too much," given his experiences with racism. He explained how, when his family would leave the reservation, white people "would be staring at our family just because we are Native" and that white people would follow them around in stores and even tell them to "get over it—we share the land now." He said that the shift he experienced happened, in large part, because of how he was received by the preservice teachers at the university and by Petrone. He explained how he did not feel judged because of his skin color and instead felt as if the preservice teachers "actually wanted to get to know" him. This experience helped him "realize that not all white people are bad out there."

In this way, the repositioning pedagogy opened up new possibilities for Ross to connect with people. While we address concerns about the racial dynamics inherent in this situation in a later section, we highlight here how this experience facilitated a broader sense of connection and relationship building, particularly with people Ross had never imagined being connected to. It also increased his sense of the value of his story and his contribution to others. For Ross, the transformational elements of the repositioning pedagogy cohered around relationships, contribution, storying, and being heard.

— William: "Ever since then I've been getting a little bit more interested in college"

For William, central to his transformative experience was his orientation toward higher education. Prior to the consultancy, William had never considered college or been encouraged to give it serious thought as an option. The schooling system never considered him among the "college bound"; in fact, throughout his schooling experiences prior to *Firekeeper*, he was positioned as a "loser" student. Nor had he ever been asked to participate in school activities beyond the required ones.

But it was the consultancy experience, William said, that "opened my mind to college." When asked in an interview if he thought the two authors should do this project again, William replied:

Yeah, I think that'd be really good, because I didn't have any interest in college—like, I *never* went on any college trips. That was the only college trip I ever went on. Now ever since then, I've been getting a little bit more interested in college. If I go to college, I'd want to go to that university. I don't know, it just seemed so, I don't know. I like that college—I actually know something about it now.

His consultancy experience shifted his conceptions of himself and his sense of possibility regarding college.

Integral to William's newfound interest in college was being physically on campus, learning about some of the nonacademic aspects of the university,

sitting in on a class, and building relationships with college students. In these ways, the transformative benefits of the experience were rooted less in the formal aspects of the consultancy and more in the informal components. The experience, he said, “taught me about college and made me understand it much more, because I didn’t really know anything.”

The experience offered William pragmatic information related to higher education, a taste of the college experience (“attending my first official college lecture”), and a connection to a particular place and people. Thus, the consultancy provided an experience of college that moved it from an abstract idea to something concrete, personal, and relational. In these ways, the repositioning pedagogy facilitated in William a recasting from someone who was not college bound to someone who knew something about college and had aspirations to attend.

*“That was one of maybe five days that really affected my view of teaching”:
Preservice Teachers’ Perspectives*

The repositioning pedagogy had clear transformational outcomes not only for the youth consultants but also for the preservice teachers. In fact, one of the preservice teachers, in a debriefing session more than a year after the consultancy, said the following regarding its impact: “If I look at my undergrad experience, that was one of maybe five days that really affected my view of teaching.” Though the focus of this article is on the consultants, we note outcomes for the preservice teachers to illuminate how the consultants were received and to reveal a fuller sense of the transformative possibilities for a repositioning pedagogy in teacher education.

Nearly every preservice teacher noted that a major takeaway was how central relationship building was between teachers and students and how deeply relational teaching is. Of course, they had each heard this in their classes and espoused it themselves, but they left the consultancy with real-life examples of it and a model for how it can be done—the supportive environment of Firekeeper Academy and the relationships built there between teachers and students. As one of the preservice teachers reflected, “The students were an example of how that wall can be broken down and a relationship can be developed between a teacher and a student that makes a really positive influence on that kid.”

Perhaps the most significant finding related to the preservice teachers was how their participation in the repositioning pedagogy facilitated a degree of personal introspection about their own positionalities. One teacher explained how hearing the consultants’ stories forced him to recognize how he, as a white male, did not have to deal with the same systemic issues the consultants did: hearing their stories “confronted me with just how easy I’ve had it . . . I’ve lived in somewhat of a sheltered mind-set in terms of what kids have to work through . . . I’ve been fortunate in a lot of ways I didn’t realize.”

Similarly, a white female preservice teacher explained how this experience revealed implicit biases: “I hadn’t realized what a bias I had . . . I don’t feel like I am racist, but these thoughts and behaviors [I was having] are racist.” She explained that this experience provided her “an opportunity to be self-reflective,” to wonder “How am I thinking of other people?” and “to acknowledge the privilege I have because of my race and my background.” She commented on how this experience “really challenged me in my beliefs on how I had been raised and gave me another perspective to look at the world” and led her to consider the importance of challenging colonial and racist ideologies in her own classroom. She explained that in the semester after the repositioning pedagogy, she student-taught in an all-white community near the reservation and was able “to work with students there and push them to consider where their [racist] thoughts were coming from.”

Factors That Facilitate a Repositioning Pedagogy

The transformational outcomes of the consultancy were enabled by both the structure of the repositioning pedagogy and the ways the consultants drew on available resources.

Enabling Features of the Repositioning Pedagogy

The structure of the repositioning pedagogy facilitated transformative experiences in several ways. First, it centered the young men in a space and place that often marginalizes and/or denigrates them. For students like William, Ross, and James, there is tremendous power in *being asked*, *being centered*, and ultimately *being received* within an institution that has attempted to invalidate and marginalize them, individually and collectively. In this way, their consultancy was a political act, an act of dissent, and a humanizing, uplifting act—one that engendered a reattributing of themselves in relation to the very structures that normally position them in deficit ways. James remarked:

I thought it was crazy. Out of all people, us three little rejects who didn’t go to regular high school were the center of future teachers . . . I never thought it would be me to go there. I’ve always been looked over, no matter what. I’ve never been the one to be asked.

In this way, the repositioning pedagogy functioned to recast these young men from deficit renderings and subvert normative educational practices.

On a more concrete level, the repositioning pedagogy provided an opportunity for Ross, James, and William to be pushed out of their comfort zones and experience generative discomfort for personal growth. Their counselor, Speicher, said:

We [at the alternative school] build them up and do our best to help them heal and work through whatever they’re working through, and it’s experiences like

that, getting in front of people from a different community and trying out some of those skills and seeing what happens. And then they were validated in their experience there, so psychologically that was awesome.

Related, the consultancy provided the youth an audience for their stories, which gave them the opportunity to expand their range of public speaking, meet new people, and contribute to the betterment of others. In other words, these young men who had been deemed “struggling” in school were actually facilitating other people’s education.

Another feature of the repositioning pedagogy that proved pivotal was the social component that enabled relationship building. For William, it was during the informal conversations he had during casual walks across campus that he got to know the university students and ask questions about college life. Yet even in the formal moments, opportunities were built into the consultancy experience to engender relationships. For example, the sharing of stories activity began with all participants engaging in an ice breaker, which, for Ross, was useful in establishing some comfort with the university students: “I really liked that part because we got to know the students a little bit before we got into anything too serious.”

For the preservice teachers, the less formal components of the repositioning pedagogy similarly proved significant. One preservice teacher credited having lunch with the youth consultants with rapport building that helped produce such dramatic results at the circle. Though we had planned the repositioning pedagogy to include these experiences, that they were so generative for everyone was a surprise to the research team, and they have become a significant consideration for further project design.

Finally, important to this repositioning pedagogy is what happens before and after the consultancy for both the youth and the preservice teachers. We framed the repositioning pedagogy as an integrated aspect of the preservice teachers’ curriculum. In addition, we invited them into the process of designing the pedagogy; they helped put together the itinerary and organized several of the events. We invited the youth consultants to participate only after they had established a relationship with Petrone over the course of most of a school year and only with support from trusted adult allies. After the consultancy, we maintained communication with the youth to answer any of their questions and facilitate their integration of the experience into their academic and personal lives.

Support Systems & Resources

Though the repositioning pedagogy established the space for transformational experiences, there is more to be attributed to its success than the aforementioned features. The work these three young men did was brave and courageous. That James, Ross, and William were willing to put themselves in such a vulnerable position is a testament to them, their stories, their family, and community networks. It also speaks to the ways schools (like Firekeeper Acad-

emy) and educators who emphasize relationships can become resources for youth to draw on in their process of resisting interpellation into dominant discourses to refashion new understandings and possibilities. Thus, in addition to the structures of the repositioning pedagogy, these young men recast themselves into new roles by drawing on their stories and relying on trusting relationships.

Indeed, throughout their consultancy and the debriefings, the youth referenced trusting relationships with key people as essential resources that made it possible for them to participate and succeed in the repositioning pedagogy. Specifically, they noted that the “family” at their alternative school engendered a sense of confidence and trust. As Ross said, “When Nick asked me if I wanted to speak at the university, I knew I could trust him.” The young men also pointed to each other as important resources: “It’s like I said, we were all nervous . . . We all kinda supported each other on the way there, saying things like, ‘Don’t worry about nothing, we’re going to be alright.’ We were trying to keep each other motivated because we all felt nervous.”

Though much can be shared about storying within this context, we draw attention to how these youth consultants drew on their personal and collective stories as the central means to teach future teachers and, in many respects, to disrupt normative teacher education practices. In this way, these young men engaged in a political act whereby the “form and content of [their] stories differ from the types of knowledge privileged by educational institutions,” thus serving “as a way to orient oneself and others toward the world and life” and creating an opportunity for the youth consultants’ oral knowledge to be “listened to, remembered, thought about, meditated on” (Brayboy, 2005). An important implication of this work is the potential for the use of storywork (Archibald, 2008) within teacher education, particularly with the aim of facilitating teachers’ development of culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogies (McCarty & Lee, 2014).

Considerations and Implications for Repositioning Pedagogies in Teacher Education

While these findings reveal powerful experiences, they are not without potential concerns. In many respects, there is a fine line between integrating Native voices into a university setting as part of the broader project of dismantling white supremacy and settler-colonial attempts at assimilation whereby Native youth might leave their cultural communities. Might this function, for example, as yet another way to assimilate Native people into dominant society? It could be argued that an experience like this, one that inspires a sense of possibility for college without also layering into that exploration an analysis of the inherent racism in primarily white institutions, could actually set up these young men for failure, or worse. For instance, if William decided to attend the university he visited, he might enter the institution expecting to be valued and

supported as he was during the consultancy; however, he would more likely encounter the racism and marginalization that is inherent in such institutions. Without drawing attention to systems of oppression regarding these injustices, these types of experiences could easily be individualized and further detrimental notions of grit and meritocracy that locate the source of systemic problems and solutions within individuals rather than broader social systems (Golden, 2017). A similar argument could be made regarding Ross's newfound sense of possibilities in building connections with white people.

It can also be problematic to bring Native youth into a primarily white institution in such a capacity since, regardless of intent, it may function as tokenizing, exoticizing, or othering. Might such an enterprise be problematized as Native people being brought into a white, colonial space and being looked on with the "imperializing gaze" (Simmons & Dei, 2012, p. 69) for the benefit of white preservice teachers? Might this promulgate "damage-centered" narratives and reify deficit-oriented stereotypes even while attempting to move toward "desire-centered" work (Tuck, 2009)?

This study also raises questions about the problem of valuing and validating. The consultancy is set up whereby these youths' stories were being valued by cultural outsiders and members of the dominant social group. But what if these preservice teachers had not valued these young men's stories, a result reported in related research (Brown & Rodriguez, 2017)? Might it have led to a recapitulation of school-based trauma for these young people? In this sense, there is a fine line between healing and harm, between transformational and assimilatory outcomes.

In this iteration of a repositioning pedagogy, we attempted to optimize the positive components of the experience for all involved. This included the framing of the consultancy for the preservice teachers and the high school students before and after it took place. For the preservice teachers, it was important to situate the consultants' stories and perspectives within the context of the broader systemic issues of historical trauma, Native education in the US, the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism, and Indigenous perspectives of survivance and storying. Essential for the youth consultants were ongoing relationship building and opportunities to share about the experience.

The findings of this research support both the affordances and limitations of similar research that examines youth participation in teacher education. The benefits for the three young men were evident in how their participation created a space in which they experienced transformational outcomes. At the same time, this research reveals the inherent vulnerability and potential risks for youth who participate as consultants. Thus, the following implications are meant to facilitate more effective enactment of repositioning pedagogies and to mitigate the potential risk of inadvertently harming youth consultants.

First, more research needs to be conducted to understand the experiences of youth participants. As this line of inquiry moves forward, building youth perspectives into the design of projects is imperative, not just to learn how

to better do this work but also to address the ethical responsibilities inherent in it. This is particularly essential given the risk of not only tokenizing youth but also reproducing school-sponsored harm and/or unwittingly interpolating youth into an assimilationist project. We need to emphasize reciprocity and ask, Who is this benefiting and at whose expense and/or labor?

Additionally, more attention needs to be paid to the positionalities of youth and preservice teachers. Disrupting power dynamics, which is an overt aim of repositioning pedagogies, can be uncomfortable, challenging, and disorienting and may engender unpredictable and intense affective responses, particularly from those whose power (and, by extension, identity) is being challenged. Thus, ensuring support structures for youth before, during, and after their consultancy is essential. This is particularly true for youth who come from historically marginalized communities where schools may have had harmful effects on them personally and culturally. Beyond specific mechanisms of support, building trust with youth participants and including allies who have the trust of youth is crucial. A question to consider in preparing to do this work might be, What resources are available for youth to do the work of repositioning, and what are the conditions for this repositioning to happen? Similarly, setting up the experience for preservice teachers is also essential. Beyond recognizing the courage it takes for high school students to enter the university context, particularly when the context itself might be inhospitable, preservice teachers need to be engaged in dialogue that demonstrates how systems of oppression are embedded and operate in structures of schooling in the US.

Repositioning pedagogies have much to offer teacher education. However, more research is needed to better understand the perspectives of the youth involved. In the end, our hope in offering a repositioning pedagogy framework is to encourage teacher preparation programs to more systematically examine potential applications and implications for integrating youth perspectives into teacher education.

Note

1. The nomenclature typically used in academia to identify Indigenous peoples is often problematic, particularly as it tends to perpetuate settler-colonial perspectives and misrepresentations. Ideally, researchers would use terms Indigenous peoples use to identify themselves, particularly given that broad terms such as *Native American* or *Indigenous* can engender a pan-Indianism that homogenizes distinct groups of people and renders invisible tribal-specific characteristics and ways of knowing. However, naming particular tribal affiliations and locations, particularly small population sizes, potentially compromises issues of confidentiality. Therefore, the research team, in consultation with the participants of this study and community members, use pseudonyms for all people and places throughout this article. And though problematic, we use *Indigenous* and *Native* to encourage solidarity across Nations and *Indian* to align with policy language. We do, however, recognize that *Indian* in particular is a troubling term given its history and the history of efforts to restrict Indigenous educational self-determination.

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