

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE

SELF DETERMINATION THROUGH EDUCATION: THE EARLY HISTORY OF
THE LAC COURTE OREILLES TRIBAL COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

BRANDON PAYER

SUPERVISING PROFESSOR: JOSEPH ORSER

COOPERATING PROFESSOR: JERRY WORLEY AND SELIKA DUCKSWORTH
LAWTON

EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN

DECEMBER 2013

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Abstract

The Tribal College Movement began in 1968 as a way of bringing culturally based higher education to reservations. This grassroots movement faced great adversity to accomplish its goals. This paper looks to highlight the evolution of the Tribal College Movement, using the LCO Community College as a means to analyze the impact of the movement. Despite being severely underfunded, this grass roots movement built entire higher learning institutions from the ground up.

SELF DETERMINATION THROUGH EDUCATION: THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE LAC COURTE OREILLES TRIBAL COLLEGE

The Tribal College Movement is a growing phenomenon in this country that has shaped the contemporary history of Native Americans. This movement began in 1968 with the formation of the Navajo Community College in Arizona and continues today. The Tribal College Movement has faced many challenges from government, other higher education institutions, and Native American communities themselves. However, efforts of early leaders in the movement helped spark educational self-determination amongst Native Americans. Tribal Colleges struggled with being chronically underfunded and lacking necessary resources. Tribal Colleges' unique features include deep connections with historical, cultural, social, political policy and governance, economic/business, and educational institutions of their communities.¹ The movement took control of one of the essential aspects for all societies to thrive: education. This paper will analyze the history of the Lac Courte Oreilles Community College, the first tribal college east of the Mississippi River, as a means of analyzing the impact of the Tribal College Movement. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the individuals who faced great adversity to accomplish their goal of bringing culturally-based higher education to their communities. The early leaders were viewed as troublemakers by federal and tribal governments. Despite being severely underfunded, this grass roots movement built entire higher learning institutions from the ground up.

The Tribal College Movement has been an example of active Native resistance against the effects of colonialism. In the United States, leaders of the Tribal College Movement tried to

¹ Maenette K.P Benham, *The Renaissance of American Indian Higher Education, Capturing the Dream* (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), 5.

make attempts to decolonize the minds of students by changing the way Native Americans have been taught to think in a traditional sense, from European-American educators. Dorothy David said to students at the LCO tribal college commencement, “The first settlers in this country perceived us as roaming around, so freely and said ‘we must reduce them to agriculture.’ And subordination began by people who firmly believed that they were superior, and that they had the right to manifest destiny in which god had told them to do this. This belief system was institutionalized in government, church, financial and education bodies. We didn’t just cave in. We resisted all the way.”² The goals of colonialism were to render the Native American population powerless but dependent on the system. The United States government, state government, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs attempted to completely subordinate a continent of indigenous people. Colonialism also aimed to suppress indigenous peoples’ history and culture, trivialize their remembrance, take their economic base which was their land and suppress group identity. White Culture was defined as civilized while Native American culture was deemed savage. The tactics for subordination included using stereotypical images, trivializing sacred ceremonies, and teaching children to be grateful for all the good things that the BIA and the Churches did in their education.³ The introduction of a new model thinking of Native Americans would develop in the 1950’s and would help to empower a race of people who were by governmental design, supposed to submit to assimilation into white dominate society.

Native survivance is an active sense of presence over historical absence, deracination, and oblivion.⁴ Survivance is also an active preservation of cultural identity and heritage. The term survivance is a repurposing of a French word, first deployed by Gerald Vizenor, of

² Dorothy David, “De-colonize mind” LCO College, *Sawyer County Record*, April 1992.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Robert Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: narratives on postindian survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 326.

Anishinaabe heritage in his book, *Manifest Manners*. Beginning in the early 1990's, Survivance became an important literary movement amongst Native American authors, influencing many literary works that employed this idea. Survivance in a general sense differs from survival in that, Survivance is going above and beyond survival and that participants thrive. The original French word was first used after WWII, when Jewish Holocaust survivors emerged out of concentration camps. Many of the survivors who endured the horrific conditions credited their survival to taking an active role, in going above and beyond what other prisoners did. An example of this can be seen in Holocaust survivor and famous Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning*. He summarizes his response to the suffering "even under indescribably harsh conditions-sleeplessness, starvation, and the ever present threat of death-there was an opportunity to grow inner strength. In fact, this was the one thing that Nazis couldn't take away from a prisoner. In the camps, the Nazis controlled everything –your possessions, the lives of your loved ones, and ultimately your own life. But the Nazis could strip you of your determination to grow inwardly in whatever you had."⁵ Survivance is a reoccurring theme in this paper, in viewing the active role Native Americans have taken in their pursuit of self-determination of higher education. Through the Tribal College Movement, Native people were able to revitalize their culture and learn from their own people, dismissing European American educational philosophies. Although today there are over seventy-five tribal college campuses, many people in higher education and the American public know little of their existence and importance. With Native Americans having alarming dropout rates at Universities off reservations, tribal colleges have offered an alternative form of education that Native Students have been able to succeed in. Because of the cultural make-up of Native Americans and European Americans are so different, an alternative controlled by Native Americans is an

⁵ Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).

important strategy in securing success in education for Native Americans moving forward. Students of tribal colleges are able to pursue their education on their own reservation and receive tribal specific education including language preservation and cultural revitalization. The Tribal College Movement as a strategy of resistance would challenge the notion of legitimate control of education by mainstream institutions of higher education, as well as pressing federal governing agencies to address deeper issues of legitimacy.⁶ The Tribal College Movement was a response to the failures of mainstream education's lack of attention and failure to address the unique needs of Native American Students.

Historiography/Methods

This paper provides analysis of the rich history involved in process of essentially building a movement from the ground up. The concentration of this paper is the LCO Community College. However, it is important to understand the Tribal College Movement and the history of Native American Education to fully understand the circumstances that led do the development of the LCO Community College. The topic of Native American Education has many secondary source literatures specifically pertaining to the boarding school system and European America education. However, there is little secondary literature devoted to the topic of Native Americans in higher education. Those who have written about the Tribal College Movement have similar viewpoints. In the study of the early Tribal College Movement, one must recognize the importance of Wayne J. Stein. Stein published in 1992 the book *Tribally Controlled Colleges: making good medicine*, which is one of the most important historical writings about the development of the Tribal College Movement in its first ten years. Stein visited the six campuses that were the original tribal colleges associated with the first wave of the Tribal College

⁶ Benham, 4.

Movement. Stein utilized interviews, self-studies, and catalogs as his primary source materials. Stein helped in adding my own research in the topic of Native American Higher Education through my own analysis of the LCO Tribal College. Stein also contributed to the editing of *The Renaissance of American Indian Higher Education*, which is a collection from educators and people responsible in American Indian higher education. This is a source that is used briefly in this paper to provide historical background surrounding the Tribal College Movement. The source itself is concentrated on contemporary issues associated with Native American higher education. The leaders of the Tribal Colleges themselves are also important in history writing of the Tribal College Movement. Early leaders such as Lionel Bordeaux and Jim Shanley continue to contribute writings to scholarly journals such as *the Tribal College Journal*. There is no writing devoted specifically to one college in the third wave of the Tribal College Movement and that is why this paper about the LCO Community College is important to the study of the evolution of the movement.

Another important source pertaining to the topic of tribal colleges is the *Tribal College Journal*. This is a scholarly journal published quarterly by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. This source, which began in 1989, provides interviews with people involved in the Tribal College Movement, as well as educators who are involved in Higher Education of Native Americans. This is one of the most important contributors to the field of Tribal Colleges. This source is used in this paper to highlight some of the interviews of early leaders in the Tribal College Movement and show to the adversity they faced in starting a grassroots movement, which is also explored in this paper.

For the study of the LCO Community College, I traveled to the college itself to gather the primary sources utilized in this paper. I used some of the methodology that Wayne J. Stein used

in his own research. The focus of this study is primarily on the first ten years of the LCO Community College. The reason for this is I wanted to show the struggles associated with starting a college from the ground up and the influence from the original six tribal colleges. The primary sources that I was able to gather from the LCO Community College include newspaper articles, self-studies, annuals, and course catalogs. These artifacts have been pieced together and analyzed to tell the history of the LCO Community College.

The terminology used in this paper is reflective of my own understanding of Native American Studies and culture. The term American Indian is used interchangeably with Native American throughout this paper. The term Indian is a misusage of the word that Christopher Columbus used to describe the indigenous people of the Americas. I use this term as American Indian because today it is widely accepted by Indians and non-Indians. Tribal Colleges refer to two year colleges chartered and controlled by a federally recognized tribe. Its' principal mission is to provide comprehensive academic and occupational education which is culturally relevant to its tribal community.⁷ The term European American is used to describe Caucasians who were colonizers of the Americas, who left with them a cultural legacy and influence. In referencing European Americans, I am referring to the ideals, educational philosophies, and norms associated with this dominant culture. When I am referencing Tribes in this paper, I am referring to Stein's definition of a "close knit cohesive group of Indian people of common custom, language, and ancestry who live in the same geographic location. The term is used to identify those Indian tribal groups whom still see themselves as separate, distinct nations within the greater boundaries of the United States. They believe in tribal sovereignty and jurisdictions for

⁷ Wayne J. Stein, *Tribally Controlled College: making good medicine* (New York: Peter Lang,1992),4-6.

themselves separate from state governments based upon treaties they have with the federal government.” These terms are essential in the understanding of this paper.

Historical Background

These first forms of European English-style Education were widely unsuccessful and detrimental to the Native peoples. Their goals were to force Christianity on the Native peoples. The Virginia Company introduced the Henrico Proposal in 1618, being the first European-Style Education to Native Americans. In addition, the school was the first attempt in establishing a college in British America, known as The University of Henrico. This attempt at educating Native Americans ended in catastrophe when the indigenous tribe feuded with, killed the colonists, and destroyed the college. This event would be known as the Indian Massacre of 1622. The Henrico Proposal set the course for colonist attempts to use religion as a way to “civilize” Native people. The Henrico Proposal also demonstrated that large sums of money could be raised for colleges for “the children of the Infidels.” The Founding Fathers of early colonial colleges noted and used this lesson several time over in the establishment of their institutions.⁸

In 1654, Harvard established its Indian college with its purpose of “the education of the English and Indian youth of this country in knowledge”.⁹ Of the twenty Indian youth that went to Elijah Corlet’s Latin Grammar school in Cambridge, only two survived through Harvard and received their bachelor’s degrees. The other students died from sickness, change in lifestyle, and loneliness. This would be the prelude to horrific conditions that would take place in boarding

⁸ J.H Haymond, “The American Indian and higher education: from the college for the children of the infidels (1619) to Navajo Community College(PhD diss., Washington State University 1982)

⁹ Ibid.

school, when the education of Indians would become a responsibility of the federal government. Dartmouth College and several other well-known colonial colleges were established to provide or had a major part of their charter, a section, dedicated to Indian education. However, between 1769 and 1892, only fifty-eight young Indians received instruction at Dartmouth.

During the first century of U.S Indian policy, the federal government made provisions for Indian education through legislation and treaties. In 1819, Congress established the “civilization fund” which provided for a small annual sum for instruction. Although the federal government funded the education, missionary groups established and administered the schooling.¹⁰ This would be the first federal funding of Native American education. Beginning in 1871, the United States government ended the treaty period of relations with Native people and moved towards an attitude of assimilation. The Native American population was viewed as a great problem to European Americans attempting to settle in lands west of the Mississippi. Reformers made a conscious effort to heavily publicize events such as the Nez Perce retreat, the Ponca removal, and the flight of the Northern Cheyenne, as well as the intrusion of white settlers into Indian Territory. The exposure of graft within the Indian Bureau brought attention to congress that legislation was needed to change Indian policy.¹¹ The government viewed the remaining Native populations as a burden on this country calling it “the Indian problem”.

The government would set forth policy in attempts to destroy Native American culture, language, and a traditional way of life. The strategy of reformers was that if Native people were encouraged to leave reservations and own land, they would begin to assimilate and be Americanized. Native tribes were viewed by European Americans as a tight-knit organization of families. The federal government looked for ways to break up reservation communities.

¹⁰ Margaret Connell Szasz, *Education and The American Indian: the road to self-determination, 1928-1973*, (New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 8.

¹¹ Szasz, 9.

Congress adopted the Dawes Act in 1887, to divide allotments of 180 acres of land to Native American men who were heads of their household. The Dawes Act was created by reformers to achieve six goals: to break up tribes as a social unit, encourage individual initiatives, further the progress of native farmers, reduce the costs of native administration, secure parts of the reservation as Indian land, and open the remainder of the land to white settlers for profit.¹²

Native American ideology greatly differed from Euro-American views of land, because Native people did not believe in ownership of land and valued Mother Earth as a sacred identity. The Dawes Act furthered the necessity for Native Americans to gain a Europeanized education that taught fluency in English and vocational education such as agriculture techniques. This education would prepare Native people to farm their individual allotments of land and alleviate the burden of the United States government from the responsibilities of the Native Americans. The Federal government's attempts to educate the young Native population would be their solution to "the Indian problem," encouraging them to embrace dominant culture as a means of survival.

The educational philosophy of the education system imposed by the federal government reflected the notorious line of Captain Richard H. Pratt "Save the Man, Kill the Indian". In 1879, Captain Pratt founded Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle Pennsylvania and founded both Haskell Institute in Lawrence Kansas and Croatan Normal School in Pembroke North Carolina in 1884. These schools would become the model for other institutions because of their success in assimilating Native American students. The schools were basically elementary, secondary, or vocational in nature without any real higher education.¹³ The focus of these schools was to provide vocational training for Native Americans to possess the necessary skills that would allow

¹² Lenard A. Carlson, *Indians, Bureaucrats, and Land: The Dawes Act and the Decline of Indian Farming* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press,1981),79.

¹³ Stein, 4.

them to farm or obtain industrial jobs outside of the reservations. By 1900, twenty-four off-reservation boarding schools and 129 on-reservation boarding schools existed across the country. The values imposed in these institutions focused on European American Protestant work ethic, dismissing traditional Native American way of life.

The Native Americans at Lac Courte Oreilles experienced similar experiences at their local boarding school, Hayward Indian School from 1901-1934. The main proponent of this off-reservation school was R.L McCormick, who was part owner of the North Wisconsin Lumber Company, the main logging company in the Hayward area and around the Lac Courte Oreilles reservation. McCormick was also president of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and president of the Hayward School Board.¹⁴ The boarding school was unique because most tribes across the country that attended boarding schools were far away from their communities. Students from Hayward Indian School, however, were only ten miles away from their homes allowing students the ability to return home every summer and remain close with their community. Following the directions of other boarding schools, Hayward Indian School lived by strict military discipline, and the educational goals of the school were based on assimilation. The Hayward Indian School would struggle to accomplish its goals of assimilation because of inadequate funding and severe overcrowding. For example, during the first year the school had only two teachers for 179 students.¹⁵ Their school day would consist of half of their day in the classroom learning English and basic education, and the other half would be dedicated to vocational training. Similar to other boarding schools, Hayward Indian School would support the needs of the school through free labor from the students. This was executed through the industrial education and efforts from the field, the barn, kitchen, and sewing rooms that helped

¹⁴ J.G Adams, *History of Education in Sawyer County, Wisconsin* (McIntire, Iowa: M.E. Granger, 1902), 190-191.

¹⁵ United States Of America, Department of the Interior, *Annual Report*, 1904, 457.

clothe and feed the children. Males were taught farming practices so that they could farm their 180 acre allotments. The problem with the Hayward Indian School is that the school lacked adequate instructors. The superintendent of the school noted, “We do not teach scientific agriculture because not a single employee of the school is qualified to do so.”¹⁶ The Hayward Indian School would be an example of the failures of the government’s policy of assimilation because of its lack of economic support and lack of regulation.

Beginning in 1926, Secretary of the interior Hubert Work turned to independent experts at Brookings Institution to avoid any governmental bias and to analyze the education program of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Commissioned by the Institute for Government Research and being financed by the Rockefellers foundation, the report was designed to be an unbiased investigation of the effects of the Dawes Act. The report would become known as the Meriam Report titled as, *The Problem of Indian Administration*. This report would be the first effort in reforming the Bureau of Indian Affairs educational system. Led by Dr. Lewis Meriam, the report relied on a team of experts to gather one of the finest studies ever made of a government bureau.¹⁷ The Institute for Government Research required team members to be “persons highly qualified as specialists in their respective fields, scientific in their approach, not sensationalist, and free from preconceived views and opinions that would interfere with their impartiality in gathering and interpreting facts.”¹⁸ Henry Roe Cloud, an enrolled member of the Ho-Chunk Nation, served as Indian advisor and was the only Native American member of the team. One of the most important contributors to the report was W. Caron Ryan Jr., an educator whose expertise

¹⁶ Narrative Report, 1912, 16.

¹⁷ Szaz, 16.

¹⁸ “Meriam Report: The Problem of Indian Administration”, National Indian Law Library, Native American Rights Fund. accessed August 29, 2013. <http://www.narf.org/nill/resources/meriam.htm>.

included seven studies of education systems from 1917-1929 in Saskatchewan, Canada, and the Virgin Islands, in addition to American Indian education.¹⁹

The Meriam Report attacked the federal Indian boarding school systems and private mission schools. The report recommended reform from the strict disciplinary approach of taking Native American children and totally immersing them into white dominant culture. The first failure that the report addressed was the boarding schools curriculum, which was substandard to the rest of the Nation. The curriculum also only focused on white cultural values. It also suggested that the education should reflect the unique differences in tribes, and classroom material should reflect this. The report stated, “Indian tribes and individuals vary so greatly, and that a standard content and method of education... would be worse than futile.”²⁰ Ryan made the first efforts towards cross-cultural education, in European American’s teaching methods of Native American students. The second issue that the report addressed was the age level of boarding schools. The report recommended that the boarding schools should eliminate pre-adolescent children from attending boarding schools.²¹ The report recognized the importance of students going to school near their homes and recommended that once a child approached adolescents, then it would be appropriate to attend boarding school and learn a trade that would enable him or her to have a job. The report also criticized the vocational training of the boarding schools, and that the training that was offered was not geared to meet the job market and was simply unrealistic. For example some of the trades taught in boarding schools were already vanishing, and others were not taught at a level sufficiently advanced to enable a student to get a job. The schools discouraged Native Americans from returning home and using any of their skills to better their own communities. The Merriam report strongly suggested bridging the gap

¹⁹ Szaz, 17.

²⁰ Meriam, 32.

²¹ Meriam, 34.

between white and Indian Culture.²² Progress would be slow in implementing the suggestions of the Merriam report, however from 1928-1933 twelve boarding schools would close including the Hayward Indian School, community schooling would emerge, and the beginning of cross-cultural education would be implemented.

The New Deal legislation that emerged during the Great Depression would have a positive impact on Native peoples. The policy of allotment was terminated, and the Indian Reorganization Act of June 18, 1934 would give tribes greater sovereignty. This act, sometimes known as the Indian New Deal, allowed Native Americans to return to self-government on a tribal basis. Native American education during this time would also benefit through attempts of implementing cross-cultural education in BIA schools. Through these concepts, Indian service teachers were taught to be sensitive to Indian cultures and to consider teaching methods adapted to the unique characteristics and needs of Native American children.²³

Following the end of WWII, the United States government shifted from the progress made with Native Americans during the New Deal era and enacted a policy of termination. Termination was based on the mainstream opinion during this time that Native Americans should have all the rights and privileges of citizenship so that the government could end their special relationship with Native Americans. This policy was executed after a 1943 governmental survey that concluded that living conditions on reservations were horrific, with residents living in severe poverty. The Bureau of Indians Affairs was blamed for the problems due to extreme mismanagement.²⁴ The government's solution was to eradicate Native Americans tribes and to once again assimilate Native Americans to mainstream society. The policy terminated its recognition of the sovereignty of tribes, trusteeship of Indian reservation, and exclusion of

²² Szaz, 19.

²³ Szaz, 59.

²⁴ Szaz, 23.

Indians from state laws. From 1953-1964, 109 tribes were no longer recognized by the federal government and federal responsibilities and jurisdiction were turned over to the state government.

The Native Americans would persevere through the termination era through efforts of Native Americans who were beginning to take an active role in fighting back against atrocities of the American Government. Like the black civil rights movements, a strong group of Native American leaders would emerge to challenge the government's mistreatment. World War II played a large role in the progression of self-determination movement of Native Americans. WWII would for the first time expose large numbers of Native American men to life outside of the reservation. Families were also moving to urban areas to contribute to the wartime economy. According to Stein's text, "These people upon returning to the reservation after the war, had greater expectations from life, were inclined to endure overt or covert racism, wanted greater freedom from the authoritarian interference of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in their daily lives, and wanted educational opportunities for themselves and their children."²⁵ Native American service men recognized the importance of gaining an education and the benefits of gaining vocational training. The Bureau of Indian Affairs was encouraging Native Americans to relocate to urban areas. However, low paying jobs, lack of advancement possibilities, and the pressure of urban life caused many to seek a return to their home reservations, where they could maintain their own language and culture.²⁶ The post WWII period would set the stage for the Tribal College Movement.

Section II: The Movement

²⁵ Stein, 4.

²⁶ William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011),167.

The climate of the tumultuous 1960's, which included the Civil Rights Movement, anti-war, and anti-establishment movements, brought forth radical ideas of change for minorities such as Native Americans. In the 1960's, President Johnson's Great Society and war on poverty promoted community action programs on Indian reservations that the social and political environments became conducive to the radical notion of tribal governments chartering and operating institutions of higher education for their own people.²⁷ Early leaders of The Tribal College Movement understood that being proficient in English literacy was crucial to their participation in the American economy. However, Native Americans wanted their participation in the economy to benefit in the best interest of Native American communities as a whole. Native American values still differed greatly from European Americans, and they wanted their participation in the contemporary economy to reflect these values. They realized that self-determination in education would be crucial in balancing both worlds.²⁸ The early leaders of this movement would develop colleges that were centered on culturally-based education and legitimizing traditional Native American teachings.

Navajo Community College (now known as Dine' Community College) was developed in 1968 and would set the lead for all other tribal college to follow. After WWII, the Navajo realized the importance of higher education and established a scholarship fund in 1957. Financed by oil royalties, the fund was designated to send qualified Navajo to college.²⁹ The program would be a disappointment with over 50% of students returning back to the reservation after their freshmen year. This high rate of dropout at off-reservation Universities would continue nationally and to this day be a contemporary Native American problem. One of the main contributors to the alarming dropout rates would be the extreme cultural differences. The

²⁷ Benham, xiii.

²⁸ Benham, 3.

²⁹ Stein, 9.

self-determination movement of the 1960's was moving fastest on the Navajo reservation due to it being both the largest reservation with total land mass and population, as well as the Navajo possessing the most political power which other large tribes (Sioux, Ojibwe) could not produce.³⁰ The United States utilized the complex Navajo language with their special unit, known as "code talkers." Their service gave the Navajo service men an honored place in the non-Indian world which further built pride, leadership, and tribal government. These conditions led several young Navajo leaders in 1963 to ask, "Why don't we control our own educational system?"³¹ The Navajo Community College opened its doors in the spring of 1969 to 309 Navajo tribal members. Of the three hundred and nine students, approximately 60% made it through the semester with a passing grade. Given that normal attrition rates are approximately 20% in non-Indian higher educational institutions, 60% would seem high until one realized that attrition of Native American students at non-native institutions was approximately 90%.³² The fact that the Navajo Community College suffered only a 40 % loss the first semester was a major success story.

The curriculum offered at Navajo Community College was revolutionary because it offered curriculum that was, at its core, culturally-based and differed from the BIA schools. For instance, Navajo history and culture, a three-semester course in which the final semester dealt with current tribal problems, was taught in Navajo with one section offered in English. Also this course offered sections that dealt exclusively with Navajo affairs where courses in Navajo culture change, the Navajo language, and Navajo creative writing. In addition, the curriculum concentrated on a wide variety of materials pertaining to the American Indian, courses in the

³⁰ Stein, 5.

³¹ Stein, 5.

³² Stein, 16.

history of Indian affairs, and Anglo-Indian relations were offered.³³ Navajo Community College also necessitated a broader curriculum in order to prepare its' students for transferring to a four year university. Students who considered transferring to a four year university were encouraged to take Navajo Studies programs, where course work was designed in a way that college students would not have to suffer from an identity crisis once they were to transfer.³⁴ This identity crisis and culture shock of Native American Students continues to effect students who have had to adjust to life at a four year institution off the reservation. Student body president, Raymond Brown observed "Navajo Community College is what we have always needed. It teaches our young people to become leaders among our own people. It teaches what we, the American Indian, want to learn."³⁵ The Navajo Community College would serve as a role model for other tribal colleges to follow.

The American Indian Higher Education Consortium would be known as "the glue which held the Tribal College Movement together during its first decade" according to its first president, Gerald Monette.³⁶ Leaders of the early Tribal College Movement realized that unity amongst all the colleges was essential in order to promote tribal colleges as a viable option for Indian people in higher education. In addition, to stifle those who would use tribal differences to create havoc within the unique movement.³⁷ Members from the first wave of tribal colleges, which included Deganawidah-Quetzalcoatl University, Standing Rock Community College, Navajo Community College, Turtle Mountain Community College, Sinte Gleska College, and Oglala Sioux Community college, met in October 1972 in Washington D.C. to discuss the founding of a national organization that would bond the tribal colleges. The colleges found they had five

³³ Szaz, 178.

³⁴ Szaz, 178.

³⁵ *Albuquerque Tribune*, April 22, 1971.

³⁶ Stein, 147.

³⁷ Stein, 110.

unique traits in common, they were located on or near Indian reservations which were isolated geographically and culturally, the Institutions had Indian boards of regents or directors and a majority of their administrators and faculty were Indian, Indian student bodies were small ranging in numbers from seventy five to 800, all the institutions suffered from chronic under-financing and funding unpredictability, and student bodies and the Indian communities surrounding the institutions were from the lowest income areas in the United States.³⁸ The American Indian Higher Education Consortium brought a level of professionalism and legitimacy that was crucial for tribal colleges to survive. The American Indian Higher Education Consortium managed in 1978 to get support from congress and eventually President Carter to sign Public Law 95-471, which is known as the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act. The act provided crucial funding for tribal colleges and brought forth a new wave of tribal colleges, which included the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College.

The *Tribal College Journal*, which began in 1989, is a quarterly scholarly journal that provides information about Native American higher education issues. Published by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, it provides a forum for tribal college administrators, faculty, staff and students to address the needs, successes, and evolving mission.³⁹ Like The Tribal College Movement, the Tribal College Journal is culturally-based. One of the most important assets of the journal is that it provides interviews with participants who were leaders in the movement. These interviews are important to analyze because they offer firsthand accounts of the struggles early leaders faced including institutional racism and highlights distinct survivance using education as a medium.

³⁸ Stein, 72.

³⁹ "A History of the Tribal College Journal," <http://www.tribalcollegejournal.org>. 2008, accessed September 14, 2013.

Elden Lawrence, former president of Sisseton Wahpeton College Sisseton, SD, recalls “Being an Indian was like being born with a curse. Even if you managed to get an education and get a good job wearing a business suit, you were still viewed as just an Indian”. Lawrence, like many other Native Americans, has faced an uphill battle in this country to overcome racism and adapt to modern society. Lawrence lived off the Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota reservation for five years, being an alcoholic on skid row in Los Angeles. Lawrence viewed the tribal college in Sisseton Wahpeton as his only hope. Lawrence arrived at Sisseton Wahpeton College in the early 1980’s, only possessing a 9th grade education from Flandreau Indian School. Lawrence described his experience: “The people at the college believed in me at a time when I didn’t believe in myself. The college offered hope, acceptance, and the help to move forward. There finally came a time when I realized I didn’t have to think and believe like the white man in order to be successful.” Lawrence went on to earn a doctorate at South Dakota State University and served as president of Sisseton Wahpeton College from 1998 to 2000. Lawrence’s story is just one of many of Native Americans who used tribal colleges as a way to rise up and overcome the negative effects of European Colonialism.

For many Native Americans, tribal colleges are the only chance to pursue higher education. “Since the beginning, tribal colleges have been a study in American Indian tenacity of spirit.”⁴⁰ Lionel Brodeaux Sicangu Lakota, president of Sinte Gleska University, Mission South Dakota for the past 40 years, said during an interview for the American Indian Higher Education Consortium’s 1994 film, “TCUs: Origins from Indian Country.” Brodeaux and other courageous leaders helped spark a movement in this country to bring higher education into the hands of Native people. Founders of tribal colleges were met with racism and opposition from white

⁴⁰ Mary Annette, “Forty Years of ‘Fire in the Belly’ Looking back-and ahead-tribal college leaders share their wisdom”, *Tribal College Journal* 24,no.2 (2012) : 20.

leaders in higher education and government. Brodeaux recalled asking South Dakota state representative for support for creating a tribal college: “That is a very noble and honorable idea, but you Indians need to stick with the arts and crafts; you are so good with your hands.” The lawmaker suggested that if he and the tribal college pioneers really wanted to do something meaningful for Indian Country, they should “flood the reservation with chicken coops and hog pens.” Catty Monette Turtle Mountain Chippewa, president of Turtle Mountain Community College from 1974 to 2005, recalls a similar experience when he approached a commissioner of North Dakota’s State Board of Higher Education for support. H was told, “What do you guys think you’re doing. Indians can’t create a college.” Native people were creating a path for success and self- determination and educational sovereignty. However, lawmakers failed to recognize the need for government support. This grass-roots movement would forge ahead without much government support, instead relying on the survivance of Native Americans who would go to great lengths to support this idea of self-determination. With chronic underfunding and resistance from outside institutions, the will of these leaders to make entire higher education institutions from the ground up should be viewed as a remarkable accomplishment. This movement would slowly spread across Native American communities and eventually influence the creation of the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College.

Section III: The LCO Community College

The Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College is important in the study of tribal colleges because it provides an example of the positive effects of the Tribal College Movement. LCO Community College influenced other tribal colleges such as Wisconsin’s only other tribal

college, the Menomonee Tribal College in 1993. The research in this section focuses on primary source documents that were gathered from the LCO Community College. These sources include LCO Community College self-studies, annual reports from the college, and newspaper articles from the Sawyer County Record (the local newspaper).

In understanding the attitudes of Native American community members before the emergence of the LCO Community College, one can look at the activism and active resistance that began to take place on the reservation in the 1970's. In 1971, members of the LCO tribe, with support of the American Indian Movement, protested the 50 year license renewal of the Winter Dam near the LCO reservation.⁴¹ The Winter Dam, which was built by Northern States Power Company in 1921, flooded an entire LCO village, which effects included loss of thousands of acres of land, destroyed rice beds, and flooded grave sites. The remains of these people continue to show up along the shores of the Chippewa Flowage. LCO tribal member Eddie Benton-Banai commented on the significance of the protest, "The take-over of the Winter Dam was a daring move by a small group of Lac Courte Oreilles members, because it told the power company, the BIA, and the State of Wisconsin that this tribe wasn't going to let a multi-national corporation push us around anymore".⁴² After these protests, intervention from the Governor of Wisconsin led to a decade long negotiation process between the Northern States Power Company and the tribe. The end result the return of 3,000 acres of prime real estate along the reservoir, and apology to the descendants of the evacuated Ojibwe, monetary compensation, and the rights to build a power generation plant at the dam. Although it took ten years to get a resolution, the impact of the protest helped spark active resistance in the LCO community.

⁴¹"Ojibwe Indian Patriotism: The Lac Courte Oreilles Record" Reconnecting the Circle, accessed December 12,2013, <http://www.reconnectingthecircle.com/2012/10/22/ojibwe-indian-patriotism-the-lac-courte-oreilles-record/>.

⁴² Eddie Benton-Bani, "Honor the Earth Pow Wow, Lac Courte Oreilles Indian Reservation, Hayward Wisconsin", Master of Ceremony (Emcee), July 17, 2007.

In 1974, LCO members, brothers Fred and Mike Tribble, were arrested for spearing fish on Chief Lake near Hayward. The brothers' protested against what they believed was the illegal prohibition of hunting and fishing rights that were reserved by the Wisconsin Ojibwe in the early 19th century. When the brothers attended college, they were taught by an Indian law course that Wisconsin Ojibwe chiefs clearly held on to their property use rights even though they ceded or gave up their land to the United States in treaty negotiations.⁴³ The brothers notified a Wisconsin game warden that they intend to spear fish through the ice in the customary fashion off the reservation and were arrested and convicted of violating a State game law. U.S District Judge James Doyle St. ruled the LCO had lost their rights to hunt and fish and gather off their reservation in the 1854 treaty.⁴⁴ The tribe appealed this ruling and won in the 7th U.S Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago in 1983. The appeals court ruled the tribe's right still existed on public lands in the ceded territory. Following the ruling, people from around the Hayward area took to protest against the ruling, feeling that the LCO treaty rights were unfair and threatened the fish population. These protestors went to extreme measures, threatening LCO tribal members' lives and protesting at boat landings. Members of the LCO community ignored these sometimes violent protests and exercised their treaty rights. The activism that took place by the Tribble brothers and the Winter Damn protestors provided the necessary momentum for educational self-determination in the LCO community.

The first efforts to provide secondary learning opportunities for LCO community members revolved around a field-based teacher training model conducted in the K-12 school system, which was aimed at state certification of Native American teacher aids.⁴⁵ The LCO

⁴³ "Moving beyond argument : racism & treaty right,"Odanah, WI : Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission, Public Information Office, 1989.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ History: LCO Community College Annual Report, 1987.

Ojibwe School contracted nearby Mount Scenario College in Ladysmith to provide instruction to thirty adult students, funded by a grant from the LCO Office of Education from 1978 to 1983. A needs assessment survey conducted on the reservation indicated that the community displayed a need for adult vocational education. This would be one of the contributing factors in the development of the LCO Community College.

In 1982, a task force of Native American educators and parents were assembled in response to the biased treatment of Native American students in the Hayward Public School system. The task force began to explore educational options and opportunities for Native American students.⁴⁶ The direct result of these meetings would be tribal school on the LCO reservation. The progress made towards providing tribally-based education for the LCO youth would lead to the formation of LCO Community College. On July 15th, an evaluation team consisting of the Bureau of Indian Affairs officials from Washington D.C came to work with the LCO Community College task force to make recommendations for the founding of a community college. These members of the evaluation team consisted of other Native Americans involved in higher education, including Ed Lone Fight community college evaluator, Don Standing Elk, Washington higher education specialist, and Joe Mooney, Great Lakes Indian Agency education representative. After conferring with the college task force, the BIA officials made recommendations to develop a charter, organize a board of trustees and directors, and set up a policy and philosophy statement including goals and objectives to establish a curriculum for the college and a catalog of courses to be offered for the 1982-83 school year.⁴⁷ Criticism came from members of the LCO task force arguing that “some actions and decisions were being made too

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

fast in a rush to push the college in place.”⁴⁸ The tribal council also had some criticism, citing lack of specific information concerning budget information and the status of financial aid for the college.⁴⁹ The College would be chronically underfunded the first few years and one can argue that the LCO Community College would have benefited from waiting to allocate funds and further plan the college before opening in July of 1982.

The first semester begin with a budget of only \$132,250, being funded by the American Indian Community College Act of 1978.⁵⁰ Faculty members were drawn from a local pool of educators and cultural specialists that would not be paid for the first semester. The following semester they were given a small subsidy from the LCO department of education and the Indian Vocational Education Grant. All high school graduates or GED certificate holders who lived in the sounding Hayward area could enroll for 8-14 credits for free. This decision was made in an effort to “acquaint area residents with the new community college” and to “hopefully garner community support for the college.”⁵¹ According to the first acting president Prof. John A Anderson, the college didn’t even have its own facility. Classes were held the first semester at the LCO elementary school and high school. The following semester, the college would move to the tribal center where they would be provided with limited space. Sylvia Barker, who worked as executive secretary and personnel and public relations directors commented: “It was unbelievable. We had this one tiny space for administration. At first we had only one full-time classroom that doubled as a library.”⁵² Early faculty of the LCO Tribal College endured, dealing with very limited resources. They persevered because they believed that what they were doing

⁴⁸ Paul Demain, “Council Passes Community College Charter,” *The Lac Courte Oreilles Journal “A Voice of the Ojibwa Nation”* Volume 5, No. 8 August, 1982.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ *Sawyer County Record*, March 24, 1996.

⁵¹ “LCO college to open next week”, *Sawyer County Record*, July 1982.

⁵² Rachel Matheis, “Those involved look back as college prepares to observe 10th anniversary,” *Sawyer County Record*, July 1992.

was important for the future of the LCO community. Former LCO tribal chairman Gaianshkibos, who was one of the first instructors, recalled his experience: “There were just a handful of us.” He taught psychology in a classroom at the LCO High School: “I had three students, and two dropped out. I ended up teaching one on one.”⁵³

The first semester offered classes that would be seen in a traditional community college; however, there were classes that were specific to the LCO’s unique culture and history. These classes are examples of survivance because they are an active way of preserving LCO Native American identity. These special classes included History of the American Indian, Intro to Ojibwe, intermediate Ojibwe, and history of the Ojibwe Nation.⁵⁴ These courses were designed after other tribal colleges from the first and second wave like the Navajo Community College. The classes that were being offered were a way to decolonize the minds of students through building on the idea of regaining the rich culture that was lost through boarding schools. These actions for educational self-determination would help reduce the damages that occurred through attempts of forced assimilation of just a few generations earlier.

In February 1987, the LCO Community College was granted candidate status for accreditation by the North Central Association of Colleges and School. This sixth year accreditation process resulted in full accreditation of all programs by February 1993. Credit transfer agreements with the public and private colleges and universities were signed and two plus two agreements in Nursing with UW-Eau Claire and Natural Resource Management with UW-River Falls were developed to facilitate transfer of LCO Community College students to baccalaureate programs.⁵⁵ Accreditation process ensured legitimacy to the education that was

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ “LCO college to open next week,” *Sawyer County Record*, July 1992.

⁵⁵ “History,” Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College, accessed December 12, 2013, <http://www.lco.edu/about/hist>.

being provided at the college. With credit transfer agreements to other schools, student enrolment would expand. Through analysis of self-studies of the LCO Community College, there were plans set in place in the late 80's and early 90's to get accreditation to bring four-year bachelors programs to the university. However, these plans to expand would be denied twice and never be approved by the North Central Associate of Colleges and School.

The LCO Community College was designed not only to get students ready to transfer to four-year universities and receive vocational training but more importantly to gain a pool of skilled Native Americans to contribute to the Lac Courte Oreilles reservation community. Dale Copper, an enrolled tribal member said, "I want an education because I want to work for the Tribe."⁵⁶ Dale also attended the University of Wisconsin: Eau Claire but dropped out after his freshmen year stating, "The experience was too overwhelming, and I really don't think that I was prepared well enough."⁵⁷ Dale is like many other Native American students who have struggled to adapt to a traditional university atmosphere off the reservation. With dropout rates as high as 90% across the country, the LCO tribal college provided an opportunity for Native Americans to succeed because of reasons such as community support, convenient location, faculty familiar with tribal culture, and providing a touchstone for traditional values and ideas.

The LCO Community College designed several programs with intentions of adding workers to the LCO community and essentially building up their own economy. In March of 1991, the college developed a new two-year associate-degree program designed to provide skills for workers to find jobs in carpentry, electrical work, and masonry construction. A one million dollar grant was set up for a three year period to build up the program. One of the issues that have existed on reservations in the 20th century is the lack of skilled workers within Native

⁵⁶ "New Era for Reservation Education Community College in Wisconsin leads in providing Indians better class room opportunities" *The Christian Science Monitor*, Monday September 30, 1991.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

communities, forcing many members of the community to hire people from outside the community to perform skilled labor. On the LCO reservation, in particular, unemployment rates have fluctuated between 70 and 90 percent. Students in this program would work up to six weeks on construction projects, getting paid on stipend based on attendance and earning points towards a tool kit worth four hundred dollars upon graduation.⁵⁸ This industrial education differed from the education provided at the boarding schools because the training was sufficient enough for students to put their skills to good use. Much of the training offered at the vocational schools during the boarding school era was obsolete and not conducive to the work climate of the era. In order for Native American's to thrive in contemporary society, proper industrialized training in boarding schools was essential.

Dr. Rick St. Germaine, a retired Professor at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, was one of the leaders in the movement to bring a Tribal college to the LCO community and a participant in Native American survivance. Dr. Rick St. Germaine grew up on the Lac Courte Oreilles Reservation in a log cabin in the late 1940's. It was not until 1960's that electricity and paved roads found their way into the Boulevard/Barbertown community where he lived. St. Germaine stated in an interview by *News From Indian Country*, "Life was a lot better back then; Culture and traditions are almost lost today. Back then, there were elders who said the prayers and spoke the language used in the Bid Drum (Chideweigan) ceremony. They were warning us back in the 1960's if the language disappears, we wouldn't be Indians anymore." St. Germaine also stated, "The last speaker who grew up fluent with the language passed away several years ago. On his death bed, he called me over to his house and said, St. Germaine nobody's doing this he said. I'm going to leave this prayer for you to learn." St. Germaine and two others LCO members made extensive efforts to revitalize the Ojibwe language in their community. St.

⁵⁸ *Sawyer Country Record*, March 1991.

Germaine talks about life on the reservation in the 1950's and 1960's, growing up in a community where few members had jobs. Few employment opportunities existed in the area. He stated that "there weren't role models or job skill in that way, most families eeked out a living. There were fishermen or those making crafts to sell out in Hayward. Many moved to the cities, when they came back, they brought that part of urban culture with them." St. Germaine became exposed to the American Indian Movement when he first met leaders of AIM Eddie, Clyde, Bellecourt, and Denis Banks in Hayward, Wisconsin. These men had a profound influence on St. Germaine and becoming involved in active resistance. Early leaders of the movement consisted of ex-cons, carouses, and bar fighters; however, it was the student involvement that helped to legitimize the movement. In the summer of 1970, he joined the Native American students in the occupation of Alcatraz Island. St. Germaine described his experience, "It changed my life, and then I came back to the reservation and took a job in a tribal OEO poverty program. The first real employment opportunities the tribe had was in the 1970's. We started a Head Start program and a newspaper." Following the creation of these programs, the new tribal chairman encouraged St. Germaine to start a school on the reservation. In 1975, St. Germaine went to Arizona State University to earn his Ph. D. in School Administration, allowing him to help start a tribal school in the LCO community.⁵⁹ St. Germaine also was responsible for writing the LCO Community Colleges' first self-study which allowed the college to receive accreditation.

The tenth American Indian Higher Education Consortium Conference was held at Telemark Lodge, Near Hayward Wisconsin in April of 1991. The conference theme was *Embracing the Past, Envisioning the Future*. The conference can be seen as an active form of survivance, in the way it celebrates and brings attention to the continuance of self-determination through education.

⁵⁹ Chris Graef, "Dr. Richard St. Germaine: Our Elders Warned Us." *Indian Country News*, November 28, 2007, accessed September 3, 2013, http://www.indiancountrynews.net/index.php?option=com_content.

Six hundred participants from twenty seven tribal colleges participated in the four day event. The event included college presidents, members of college boards, students, and faculty. The fact that the LCO Community College was the host of such an important event provided legitimacy for the tribal college and brought attention to the college nationally and statewide. Tommy Thompson, the Governor of Wisconsin at the time, even visited the event giving a speech about the future of Native American education. Thompson stated, “Tribal colleges offer students an opportunity to learn in an environment that fully respects their heritage and ideals. Native Americans can develop skills for self-sufficiency and economic prosperity and to promote an environment for good will to grow between various aspects of communities.”⁶⁰ The governor pointed to Lac Courte Oreilles as a model for Wisconsin in the community relations. The idea of re-building community relations between the LCO community and the Hayward community was important because a few years earlier, Hayward residents were furious at Native Americans who were showing acts of resistance by exercising their treaty rights to spear walleye. Relations between Native Americans and white community members was at a breaking point, and the tribal college would be a way to repair this relationship by allowing Hayward residents a chance to gain an education at the LCO Community College.

Dr. Minhas would become the President of LCO Tribal College in 1988, bringing in important changes to the young college that would solve some of its previous problems such as allocating funding and retention of students. Dr. Minhas talked about many of the problems he faced in his first few years as President in an interview conducted by Christian Science Monitor in 1991. Dr. Minhas describes the tumultuous experience he faced: “When I came here in 1988, I didn’t know the college was \$45,000 in the red. I had to go to the bank and borrow money to pay

⁶⁰ David Holmstrom, “Cultural Hope”, *Sawyer County Record*, April 1991.

salaries. The collateral was a letter from the BIA saying we would get the money.”⁶¹ The building that classes were conducted in was described as “a barn like building,” according to Dr. Minhas. He identified the college as failing, stating, “Enrollment was around seventy students but was declining. It was a college by name only.”⁶² When the interview was published, the enrollment of the college was at 250 full-time students, which can be seen as a considerable improvement in three years. Dr. Minhas identified that pursuing grants and funds with tight fiscal management was necessary for the college to experience growth. Construction on the current facility began during this time through these new revenues and from the efforts of vocational students at the college who aided in the construction of the building. Distance learning also came into existence during this period through a \$130,000 grant from the Mac Arthur Foundation in Chicago. Students were first able to receive instruction from Professors at the University of Wisconsin through distance learning, increasing the number of courses offered at the LCO Community College. Dr. Minhas describes the unique opportunity that the tribal college provides stating, “We are giving students a second chance, giving equal opportunity to people mostly in poverty. We have lived this way so long that it is part of our strength that we are able to survive on so little and do so much.”⁶³ He also talked about how the LCO Community College had an intimate relationship with its students “going the extra mile” having secretaries and officers call students to ask them why they were not attending class. Sometimes faculty would go to the homes of the students if they were not attending class.

Beginning in 1991, the LCO community began to prepare its students in high school for post-secondary education, with the understanding that the percentages of Native Americans who were

⁶¹ “New Era for Reservation Education Community College in Wisconsin leads in providing Indians better class room opportunities.” *The Christian Science Monitor* Monday September 30, 1991.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

pursuing secondary education were still the lowest amongst races in the United States. Fourteen high school students participated in the first pre-university program during the week of June 3-7 that was sponsored by LCO Community College.⁶⁴ The program was developed to introduce Native American students to university education early in their high school years and to encourage students to plan for post-secondary education. The programs included classes and workshops that prepared students for college and included culturally-based education. These culturally -ased classes included introduction classes to Native American folk tales, traditional ethnic songs, cooking, dance, and Native American History. One of the highlights of the week included a field trip to the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire. This program provided hope that the current generation of Native American high school students would change the low percentage of students that pursued post-secondary education.

One of the effects of European Colonialism that can be seen today is in the high rates of alcoholism amongst the native population. This problem also contributed to high rates of premature death and unemployment. The LCO Community College looked to deal with this issue head on through a program called Inward Journey in March of 1991. This program offered services such as self-awareness, self-efficacy, addiction prevention, and communication and listening skills.⁶⁵ This program infused traditional Ojibwe cultural and spiritual teachings in its approach for sobriety. Survivance can be seen as Elders worked with the students utilizing traditional teachings about life and traditional values as a way to council. Once a month, the Elders and counselors would have a traditional feast and would show an empowering Native American film, having a question and answer session at the end. Elders would give advice and apply traditional religion and ceremonies to help participants not only stay sober but to be able to

⁶⁴ "LCOCC Pre-University Program," *Sawyer County Record*, June 26, 1991.

⁶⁵ "Inward Journey Helps LCO College Students Begin Healing the Hurts," *LCO College News*, March 27, 1991.

practice Survivance through practicing their culture. The program operated under a two year grant from the US department of Education. The program had bold intentions of reducing alcohol use amongst staff and faculty by 30 percent. Participants were to sign a contract to abstain from using drugs and alcohol or demonstrate socially responsible alcohol use.

In 1994, LCO Community College received Land Grant Status approval in legislation passed by the U.S congress within the Tribal College Act Endowment which was signed into law by President Bill Clinton.⁶⁶ This made the LCO Community College the only other land grant college in the state besides The University of Wisconsin Madison. This status was significant because it allowed expansion of the LCO curriculum and helped expand facilities particular in agriculture and technology. State congress men Dave Obey stated, “Congress has not made such significant progress in education since 1965.”⁶⁷ Land grant funds were first established in 1862 by the passing of the Morrill Act which authorized states to use income from public land to support colleges that offered programs in agriculture and mechanical technology. The second Morrill Act was passed in 1890, establishing 17 institutions that provided agricultural training to African Americans. Advocates for offering tribally-controlled colleges the opportunity to apply for land grant funds felt that it corrected a “gross historical inequity” because Native Americans were the first people to occupy the land but the last to receive grant funds and status. Bill Clinton stated, “They will be provided opportunities for individual self-improvement in a rapidly changing technological world, while maintaining the culture integrity of the anishinabe people.”⁶⁸ Through added funds, the LCO Community College was able to add an 8,000 square

⁶⁶ “College Receives Land Grant Status,” *Sawyer County Record*, October 28, 1994.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

foot addition that houses a large laboratory, a conference room, a large classroom, a book store, a student store, and a production studio for distance learning.⁶⁹

Through analysis of the LCO Tribal Colleges one can understand the significant obstacles tribal colleges faced in their beginning. Today the LCO Tribal Continues to bring culturally based learning, and economic opportunities to the LCO community. Tribal members have shown active survivance using the LCO Community College as a means of preserving their unique heritage. LCO has also influenced the creation of another tribal college in Wisconsin, the College of Menominee Nation.

In conclusion the growth of tribal colleges has slowed since the expansionist era of the 1970's. However, tribal colleges are constantly evolving to meet the unique needs of students, and the tribal communities. Through the Tribal college movement American Indians have laid the foundation for self-determination, and educational sovereignty. The Tribal College Movement has proven that Native Americans can take control of their own education. Today there are more than 75 tribal college campuses serving 230 federally recognized Indian tribes.⁷⁰ However, it is difficult to fully measure the success of tribal colleges. One of the most important statistics to take into account is the number of Native students enrolled in colleges and universities. This number has more than doubled in the past 30 years, along with the number of associates, bachelors, and master degrees obtained by Native Americans over the past 25 years.⁷¹ Although these gains are significant Native Americans are still the most underrepresented minority in higher education, accounting for one percent of those who have earned a bachelor's

⁶⁹ "Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College," accessed December 12, 2013, <http://www.lco.edu/about/hist>.

⁷⁰ "Tribal Colleges and Universities," AIHEC, accessed December 14, 2013, <http://www.aihec.org/colleges/>.

⁷¹ "About American Indian Education," American Indian College Fund, accessed December 14, 2013, http://www.collegefund.org/userfiles/2011_FactSheet.pdf.

degree, compared to 71.8% of whites 9.9% of African Americans and 7.9% of Hispanics.⁷² One of the reasons for this is Native Americans students are having difficulty graduating high school. While major gains are being made amongst black and Latino high school students with graduation rates reaching record levels, Native American students are experiencing a decline in graduation rates, with only 51 percent of Native American students graduating from high schools in 2010. With many Native Americans living far below the poverty line still at 27 percent, Native Americans are continuing to look for solutions to solve their economic and educational problems. Tribal Colleges have proven to be an important tool in solving these problems. Tribal Colleges have provided opportunities for the Native Americans community to take control of their own futures.

The Tribal College Movements success should be analyzed by how much it has created, with little support. This grass movement created entire learning institutions from the ground up in addition to changing the educational philosophies of Native Americans. Culturally based learning has allowed Native Americans the opportunity to preserve their heritage, while obtaining a degree. Native American survivance can be seen throughout the Tribal College Movement with the active pursuit of self -determination through higher education. Native Americans have been successful in revitalizing their culture, and bringing hope to reservation communities with support from Tribal Colleges.

⁷² Kelsey Sheehy, " Graduation Rates Dropping Among Native American Students," US News, accessed December 15,2013, <http://www.usnews.com/education/high-schools/articles/2013/06/06/graduation-rates-dropping-among-native-american-students>.

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