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“Know Your Roots”: Development and Evaluation of an Oral History Curriculum for Native American Middle-School Students

JEANNE LACOURT, DARLENE ST. CLAIR, PATRICIA K. KOKOTAILO, DALE WILSON, BETTY CHEWNING

As Aaquumeh youngsters, we were constantly reminded to heed our elders, including the old ones who had lived before. We were encouraged to serve and respect them and to attend to their words, especially when they spoke of our heritage and past, so that we, in turn, could pass this knowledge on to the next generation.

—Simon Ortiz

American Indian children have systematically been denied the opportunity to learn about their origin stories and oral traditions in the mainstream American public school system and have suffered from approaches long documented as failing them.¹ In fact, *Indian Education: A National Tragedy—A National Challenge*, a summary report of a special Senate subcommittee on Indian education, criticized schools as being ineffective and destroying the identity of Indian children. The report stated that “the goal, from the beginning of attempts at formal education of the American Indian, has been not so much to educate him as to change him.”² The report emphasizes the need for more Indians to become involved in the education of their youth. Historically,

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Western European models of education did not take into consideration the rich resources available in American Indian communities, namely, elders and community members. Educators, researchers, and scholars genuinely interested in working with American Indian communities might do well to ask how traditional forms of Indian ways of learning about the world can be an integral focus of their work.

Eliot Wiggington's Foxfire project in the Appalachian Valley is perhaps one of the best-known examples of using oral history as an educational tool in a school setting. While its original intent was to teach students English skills, the Foxfire experience spurred an interest in oral history in general.³ Several types of oral history projects became popular across the country: oral histories on specific historical events such as the Depression, the world wars, and the civil rights movement,⁴ family oral histories,⁵ and oral histories attempting to connect youth with elders.⁶ In addition, with the onset of multicultural education, oral histories served as a vehicle to include "authentic" multicultural perspectives in the curriculum.⁷ Indian tribal communities also were implementing oral history projects in an effort to gather and preserve family histories and tribal knowledge.⁸

Tribal entities across the nation are making concerted efforts to revitalize Native languages and cultural practices. Language tables and conferences focusing on language and cultural revitalization strategies are increasingly common as the need for gathering information from community members becomes more apparent. Key to ensuring the continuation of traditional practices is involving our community's youth. As such, videotaped interviews with language speakers, tribal historians, community members, and respected elders have increased. While several oral history projects exist across the nation and within American Indian communities, there appears to be little, if any, culturally relevant oral history curricula finding its way into the schools, particularly those serving high populations of Native students. A review of published oral history literature did not locate a formal curriculum designed for a school setting where Indian youth gathered information from family and community members. To strengthen a traditional practice of indigenous education, we undertook the task of developing our own curriculum.

Our goals here are to describe the oral history curriculum developed by the Youth Intervention Project (YIP) and its evaluation. We present results of a survey of Indian students' interest and concerns regarding their tribal culture administered to sixth graders before the oral history program. Second, evaluation results of the curriculum are presented. At the most basic level, the YIP asked whether a culturally responsive Indian oral history curriculum could be developed and subsequently implemented by middle-school teachers in two rural Indian communities in the Midwest. Would the curriculum be accepted and seen as useful by students, teachers, and the community? Last, would the curriculum impact students' skills to conduct oral history in their communities?

ORAL HISTORY CURRICULUM

Curriculum Description

The first and most influential step in writing the curriculum, entitled “Know Your Roots,” was getting to know the two communities and their histories. This task was aided enormously when the authors worked with an existing oral history project under the direction of the tribal historic preservation office in one of the participating communities. The first two authors worked with this office to help document the nation’s cultural history. In addition, one of the authors had grown up in one of the communities. To augment this experience, we took into account research on American Indian learning styles, culturally relevant curricula, and instruction.⁹

One important component we considered when designing the oral history curriculum was how to accommodate both shared similarities and differences that invariably exist among our communities. We recognized a need to tailor the curriculum to each community. For instance, we included photographs in the teacher’s manual and student workbooks of tribally specific ancestors who had been noted for having contributed to the life of their community, and we held discussions about the impact of their contributions. We also included photographs of contemporary respected elders, elders students were likely to see at community gatherings. Recognizing and identifying the elders in the curriculum further legitimated their role as sources of knowledge within the school setting. It also affirmed that we understood their importance to the community. In one of the lessons in the curriculum we compare a historical event, specific to each tribe, to an oral account of the same event from a community member. It goes without saying that the events differed for each community. When similar historical events were explored, such as attendance at government boarding schools, it was clear that the two tribal communities had very different experiences. Accounting for these differences increased the students’ ability to differentiate between their own specific cultural history and a more pan-Indian response to shared historical events. Students showed great interest in learning how they were related to their tribal ancestors and elders portrayed in the curriculum, and they were pleased to claim their family’s stories as their own as they repeated them to their peers.

The teacher’s manual included objectives, materials needed, time required for each lesson, an outline and description of the lesson’s activities, and all the worksheets included in the student workbooks. There were six lessons, each structured for a forty-five- to fifty-minute class period given over a three-week time span. Five of the six lessons were aimed at skill development and knowledge acquisition. The sixth lesson was dedicated to sharing the completed oral history interviews. Each of the first five lessons took into account and employed Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences, which states that intelligence is expressed and acquired in different forms, including verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kines-
thetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist.¹⁰ Consequently

each lesson consisted of a number of activities that specifically addressed these forms—hands-on, writing, reading, listening, and games.

Lesson 1 compares and contrasts the use and content of written and oral histories, reinforcing the validity of both methods. A written excerpt describing a historical event is examined alongside a videotape of an elder's oral account of the same event. In the second lesson the importance of elders and their role in tribal communities is explored. This lesson incorporates a common cultural practice among these tribes, making and offering a tobacco tie when asking for help or information from an elder. Lesson 3 explores the parts of an interview, focusing on the introduction and the conclusion. Students listen to examples from oral history interviews conducted by their peers. Lesson 4 helps students compose questions for their interviews. Students are encouraged to ask open-ended and follow-up questions, a strategy that provides for a rich interview. The fifth lesson asks students to critique a mock interview based on tips and suggestions covered in class for a successful interview. After completing these five lessons, students picked up their tobacco ties and blank cassettes, checked out a cassette player, and conducted their interview with an elder of their choice. The sixth lesson provided students with the opportunity to listen to one another's interviews, share comments, and ask questions.

Family and community support were important factors in the success of the curriculum. A sample letter to the parents and/or guardians describing the oral history project was included in the teacher's manual and sent out at the start of the curriculum. In addition, community receptions were held each year to honor elders and the students who interviewed them. Tribal and spiritual leaders took part in the event, encouraging students and thanking elders for their participation. Local media were invited to cover the event and to further promote the students' efforts.

Curriculum Implementation

The curriculum comprised four phases of implementation: the pilot phase, the model phase, the transition phase, and the adoption phase. Each phase is summarized briefly below.

In the pilot phase, during the 1993–94 school year, the oral history curriculum was developed and then piloted in two sixth-grade classes and one seventh-grade class in three separate schools. Adjustments were made based on this pilot test.

In the model phase, during the 1994–95 and 1995–96 school years, Lacourt and St. Clair modeled the curriculum for teachers by teaching the curriculum to sixth, seventh, and eighth graders (as well as a mixed class of cognitively delayed [CD] students in seventh through eleventh grade). This involved twelve separate classes in four schools. Suggestions for improvement from teachers and students were elicited to help Lacourt and St. Clair revise the curriculum. Results from the twelve classes and feedback from the classroom teachers indicated that the curriculum was best suited for sixth-grade students. An ongoing issue was the turnover of teachers between different school years. Lacourt and St. Clair trained new teachers in the use of the curriculum in the 1995–96 year

and implemented the curriculum in sixth-grade classes only. During that school year a total of seven classes were taught in three schools.

In the transition phase, during the 1996–97 school year, the goal was to have teachers implement the curriculum themselves and use Lacourt and St. Clair simply as consultants. This year all eight teachers were updated and made aware of changes in the curriculum; the curriculum was fine-tuned, and Lacourt and St. Clair supplied the teachers with all the materials necessary to implement the curriculum in their own sixth-grade classes. By the end of this school year all of the sixth-grade teachers had completed the curriculum with nine classes successfully. This was an important achievement since teachers had to implement the curriculum without the presence of Lacourt or St. Clair in their classrooms.

In the final adoption phase, during 1997 and 1998, all eight teachers adopted and taught the curriculum as a regular component of the sixth-grade curriculum, without Lacourt or St. Clair as resources. By the end of the project each Native community had its own, culturally specific, oral history curriculum and the experience of successfully implementing the curriculum on their own.

METHODOLOGY

Several types of data collection were conducted during the evaluation of the curriculum. Each of these will be discussed separately in the Measures and Results sections along with their samples. Approval for this evaluation project was obtained from the University of Wisconsin Clinical Health Sciences Center Committee on Human Subjects and from the parents/guardians of the students. The following sections provide more detail about the sample, specific measures, their objectives, and results.

The YIP sample was composed of students drawn from four schools on two American Indian reservations in the upper Midwest. Consistent with the cultural heterogeneity between American Indian reservation communities, our two reservations varied culturally from each other in Native language, tribal history, and cultural traditions. However, they were similar in several demographic characteristics, including gender, income, age distribution, and percentage of American Indian. Since the oral history curriculum ultimately was aimed toward sixth graders, it is useful to describe this group demographically, particularly during the years that the pre- and posttest curriculum evaluation measures were collected, from 1994 to 1996. Across the four participating schools, 96 percent of all students in grade six surveyed from 1994 to 1996 reported they were American Indian. Twenty-two percent were eleven years old, 63 percent were twelve years old, and 15 percent were thirteen years old. Female students made up 46 percent of the group.

Measures

There were four primary measures used to shape or evaluate the curriculum: (1) annual YIP survey, (2) “Know Your Roots” oral history curriculum pre- and

postquestionnaires, (3) student journal entries, and (4) teacher evaluations of the curriculum. Each is described below and detailed further in the appendix.

YIP survey. As part of a larger project, prior to the development of the curriculum, a YIP survey was administered schoolwide in classrooms during the school day. This survey served as a baseline and was helpful for documenting the need for the curriculum. It also identified several characteristics relevant to shaping the oral history curriculum itself. The survey questions asked about the extent to which Native languages were spoken in the home, about where and how often students learned about their culture and tribal history, about their knowledge and interest in tribal culture, and about the extent of their concerns regarding losing tribal rights and traditions.

Oral history curriculum pre- and postquestionnaire. For the purposes of curriculum evaluation, a fifteen-item student questionnaire was administered in the classroom before and after the “Know Your Roots” oral history curriculum was implemented in 1994, 1995, and 1996. The purpose was to gather information needed to evaluate whether the curriculum impacted student skills and comfort conducting oral history. Student perceptions of curriculum usefulness and favorite curriculum elements were also identified.

Student journal entries. From 1995 to 1997, 173 student journal entries were gathered and used as qualitative data. An open-ended question asked if and why students thought oral history might be important to them.

Teacher evaluation. Last, all eight teachers using the curriculum independently during the 1996–97 school year filled out a five-item questionnaire to evaluate their experiences teaching “Know Your Roots.” Teachers kept student attendance records for each oral history class in order to identify success in reaching the target student audience.

RESULTS

YIP Survey. The 1994 baseline survey provided key information to describe the sixth-grade sample with respect to cultural issues and the need for an oral history curriculum. There was a 95.5 percent response rate for the total of 127 sixth-grade students enrolled in our four schools that year.

Of the students surveyed, 88 percent knew their tribe, 61 percent knew their clan, and an American Indian language was spoken in 44 percent of their homes. Students were asked where they heard stories about their tribes; they reported being most likely to hear stories about their tribe from relatives (48 percent) and elders (41 percent). Many fewer reported hearing stories from teachers (24 percent), most of whom were non-Indian. One-fifth of the students indicated that they learned stories about their tribe in books.

Other items tapped students’ knowledge and affirmed their interest in their history and culture. Of students surveyed, 84 percent indicated that their families encouraged them to learn about tribal history and culture. In response to questions about their knowledge and interest in tribal culture, 82 percent reported knowing “a little” to “a lot” of their tribal culture and history, and only 9 percent reported no interest in learning more about this. About half (55 percent) indicated being very interested in learning more

about tribal history and culture. Two-thirds of the sixth graders worried “very much” or “quite a bit” about losing tribal rights and traditions.

Oral history curriculum pre- and postquestionnaire. An important evaluation question was whether the oral history curriculum reached the intended student audience. Attendance records indicated that 90 percent of the 350 students who were enrolled in participating classes completed three of five lessons from 1994 to 1996. Of this 90 percent, a little less than two-thirds (63 percent) completed the oral history interview of an elder. By the end of the project, students generated more than two hundred taped oral history interviews, which were cataloged and placed in the school libraries.

From 1994 to 1996 a total of 241 students completed both their pre- and posttest surveys to evaluate the oral history curriculum. After receiving the curriculum, on their posttest survey, the majority of students (91 percent) reported they learned “something” or “a lot” from “Know Your Roots.” Among those who completed the interview with an elder, that figure is 98 percent. Seventy-one percent of students who interviewed an elder answered that they learned “a lot” from the curriculum, which was the highest response category. Students were asked which parts of the project taught them the most. Again students reported that the interview with an elder was the most educational element, compared to the workbooks, discussion, cassettes, or videotapes in the curriculum. Similarly, when students were asked what part of the intervention they enjoyed the most, they said interviews were their favorite part. The course videos of tribal members were second, cassettes third, and workbooks and discussion tied for fourth. Of the 133 students who completed the interview, 62 percent indicated their interview was their favorite segment of the curriculum. In contrast 17 percent said the videos were their favorite portion.

A primary evaluation question was whether students’ understanding of key concepts and skills relating to oral history increased as a result of exposure to the “Know Your Roots” curriculum. To evaluate this, students were asked on a pretest and posttest questionnaire to compose both follow-up and open-ended questions such as would be used in an interview. Two raters independently coded the responses. To ensure the two raters’ judgments were consistent, their ratings were compared. Their agreement was high (.88 using a standard Kappa statistic). The percent of students able to compose follow-up questionnaires increased significantly at the $p \leq .0001$ level (pretest = 67 percent; posttest = 78 percent). The same was true for open-ended questions $p \leq .0003$ (pretest = 54 percent; posttest = 61 percent). In addition, when students were asked to list some ways in which they could learn about history, in the prequestionnaire only 50 percent listed an oral method. In the posttest this increased to 71 percent who mentioned oral methods. From pre- to posttest there was a strong significant increase from 67 percent to 87 percent ($p \leq .000$) who could identify the correct definition of oral history.

Students were surveyed on the ways to find out about history in the pre- and postquestionnaires through an open-ended question that allowed unlimited answers. The responses were coded into twenty categories developed to represent the range of responses. The categories of interest here include the variations of oral ways of learning about history versus written

Table 1
Ways of Learning about History as Reported by Students

Ways of Learning	% Pre ^a	% Post ^a	<i>p</i> value
All students (<i>n</i> = 241)			
book, reading	58	50	.035
libraries	7	7	.835
oral	50	71	.000
Students who completed interview (<i>n</i> = 133)			
book, reading	58	47	.013
libraries	8	8	.394
oral	50	77	.000

^a Percentages exceed 100 because students often reported more than one way of learning about history.

ways. The following oral ways of learning were combined into one “oral” category: ask elder, ask someone, ask parents, ask grandparents, ask teacher, and ask other family members. Student responses to this question can be found in Table 1, which compares responses from all the students versus the students who completed the interview with an elder.

For students surveyed, both the broader group and the subset of those who completed the oral history interview, the percentage of students identifying oral ways of gaining knowledge about history increased in the postquestionnaire. For those students who completed the oral history interview with an elder, 77 percent list an oral method as a way to find out about history at the posttest, compared to only 50 percent at the pretest ($p \leq .000$). Within the combined “oral” category, the largest percentage of students identified “ask elder” as an oral way to find out about history, with a prequestionnaire number at 28 percent and postquestionnaire at 39 percent ($p \leq .009$). For the subset of students who completed the interview, 27 percent identified “ask elder” at the prequestionnaire and 44 percent at the postquestionnaire ($p \leq .015$). The percentage of students identifying books went down but remained high. The percentage of students choosing libraries remained relatively low.

Student journal entries. Throughout the unit students kept journals and at the end of the oral history class were asked if they could “think of why oral history might be important to you?” Many indicated it had been important to learn about their past, their tribe, their language, and their culture. Students also wrote that it was important to learn from the elders so that they could pass on the information they learned. Some students’ entries were quite poignant in how they viewed the value of oral history: “Because if we don’t pass it down our culture will die. Talking to elders can help.” “If we don’t know our clan or language we will forget our oral history.” Some students expressed gratitude to the elders they interviewed: “To thank elders for

there trust.” A number of students expressed the continuing value of learning oral traditions: “To carry on the tradition.” “So we do not die out.”

Teacher evaluation. Teachers evaluated the curriculum positively. The ease of teaching the curriculum was reported as “very easy” by 75 percent and “quite easy” by 25 percent of teachers. All eight teachers using “Know Your Roots” recommended continued use of the curriculum. When asked what problems occurred, 75 percent reported students’ not returning the tape recorders on time as a difficulty; 25 percent reported other problems including not enough time to finish all the activities in one class period. Teachers reported no major deviations from the curriculum, although 12 percent reported bringing parts of one lesson into another day because of lack of time.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Community, student, and teacher response to the oral history curriculum was positive. With the adjustments to the curriculum made on the basis of pilot testing, teachers successfully implemented the curriculum. It appeared that the curriculum helped address an important need. Two-thirds of the sixth graders had reported on the baseline survey that they worried “very much” or “quite a bit” about losing tribal rights and traditions. The majority of students were interested in learning more about their cultural traditions and history. Given that students said their elders and other relatives gave them stories about their tribes’ past much more than teachers did, it appeared that the community could offer an important collaboration to help address students’ concerns.

The outcome evaluation found a significant increase in the number of students who had necessary skills for using oral history as a way to learn about their families and communities. Their ability to ask follow-up questions and open-ended questions increased. A majority of students (91 percent) reported learning “something” or “a lot” from “Know Your Roots,” and among those who completed the interview that figure is 98 percent. Students noted that their favorite lesson in the curriculum was the actual interviewing of family and community members. Their enthusiasm couldn’t have been more apparent when they listened to each other’s taped interviews in class. They were eager to let others know their relation to the person being interviewed, and they often showed great pride in sharing with their peers the stories gathered. Students monitored one another’s behavior and demanded silence and respect from each other when listening to their prized treasures.

During their interviews with elders, students seemed to want to compare schools, family, living conditions, and chores in the earlier era versus now. Almost every interviewer asked elders about their families, their school life, and what they had done for fun. Elders relayed stories about their childhood and sometimes of their struggles. Often stories were humorous, but several had deep sadness. Elders described what it was like to go to local religious schools or boarding schools and quite often emphasized the strict nature of both. Some elders in boarding schools mentioned their loneliness and inability to speak their Native language when teachers were around. Boarding

school experiences of these elders varied. While some described the boarding schools in neutral or positive terms, others felt they were still recovering from the boarding school experience many years ago. Elders described having had significant chores and at times reflected on how they had been educated to treat people respectfully perhaps more than the current generation. Elders often described how large their families had been, with ten to twelve children, and described a good range of hunting, fishing, crafts, and sports for fun. Nature was very much part of their life. They reported having somewhat unusual pets, such as porcupines, deer, and bear cubs. One elder described riding a pig around the house for fun. Humor was very much part of these interviews. Some of the discussion in the interviews revolved around challenges that were faced in these communities. Topics included how mining industries have attempted to acquire and ultimately destroy natural resources and how elders experienced prejudice and racism in their lives. It was not uncommon to hear students voice their admiration for individuals and their life stories and show compassion as sad stories were also shared.

In effect, students were listening to models that motivated personal connection and took great pride in their connection to family, community members, and tribal history. Many students asked specifically if the elder knew their clan, Indian name, Native language, or Indian stories, which some referred to as healing stories, stories about bad or good spirits, or legends. Many elders knew their clan, and some could explain how clan membership was passed on through father or mother. Relatively few discussed the meaning or special responsibility of their clan, and several were unsure themselves. Some interviewees shared their Indian name and what it meant. With respect to stories, some of the older interviewees told students they knew the “singing” stories and explained how they could be told during winter when the animals couldn’t hear them. The entire class benefited from the taped interviews of elders since the students listened to each tape as a group. Several students asked questions about an honored ancestor, for example a highly respected elder, medicine woman, or man who was described, and the information elicited was shared with pride. Interviewees occasionally offered limited information about the herbs, roots, and flowers used by ancestors for medicines. The age of the elder was important as to whether the elder shared this more traditional information. This was also true of discussions regarding traditional skills such as beadwork, cooking, carving, canoe making, maple sugar harvesting, and ricing. A message from these elders was their commitment to passing on ways and traditions and the importance of this for young people. In the words of one elder, “Try to learn the traditional things, the spiritual side; it gets so important as you get older. They all come back here searching for it. Get a head start.”

The most telling success of the oral history curriculum lies in both student and community response. Incorporating oral history into the school’s curriculum as a legitimate and valued way of learning was welcomed, celebrated, and honored. Students enthusiastically showed great pride toward one another and in their writings as they learned more about their family, community, and tribe. Journal entries focused on few key themes: the importance of

lived experience as passed on orally, the significance of elders, and cultural survival. Seeing elders, family, and relatives as valuable, contributing members of the community and legitimating them in a school setting validated ways of knowing about the world indigenous to Native communities.

For each community a special evening was dedicated to thanking and honoring those elders and community members who participated in the oral history interviews. Students invited their families to a reception where portions of people's interviews were shared. Photographs were taken of the students with the individual they interviewed, and local media covered the event. It truly was a joyous occasion. Bursts of laughter, heads nodding in acknowledgment, and looks of nostalgic, memory-filled faces filled the room as excerpts of stories from taped interviews were played aloud. The room buzzed with elders, aunts, uncles, and others reminiscing about both hard and good times, and faces beamed with pride as community members witnessed their youth maintaining an age-old tradition of passing on knowledge orally.

The curriculum attempted to reflect the cultural uniqueness of each tribe and to reinforce the community's importance in educating its students. Indian students and their elders determined the questions asked and stories collected. Together they created a repository of tribal history. Because the tapes were then cataloged and placed in the school libraries, family members, elders, and teachers can continue to listen to these stories and add to the repository. In fact, years later, a previous student expressed deep gratitude for having had the opportunity to participate in the oral history curriculum. She explained that her grandmother had recently passed and that she often listens to her taped interview, if only to hear the sound of her grandmother's voice.

The partnership between YIP and the rural American Indian communities reflects growing efforts of state universities working with tribal communities and tribal colleges to conduct projects and research that are culturally appropriate and respectfully reciprocal.¹¹ The project had a strong commitment to an ethical, successful partnership. The YIP project staff included Native people from each of the participating communities and from the university who offered important cautions, opportunities, and wisdom. Community members' continual involvement in advising, sorting through problems, and deciding among options proved invaluable. Early in the project a focus group with elders identified what they considered successful outcomes for adolescents in their community. This was an important foundation for the project.

YIP respected its status as *invited guests* of the Native communities. We attended community functions and volunteered on projects that the community considered important, including grant writing. In addition to making lasting friendships, we learned historical, cultural, economic, political, and social factors pertinent to each community.

This project faced several challenges and limitations. Teacher and administrator turnover was relatively high, requiring new staff training and annual orientation. Another limitation of the project was that this intervention was implemented in only two rural communities in the upper Midwest. Although these two communities are not of the same nation, their languages and cultures share many commonalities.

Several implications for further work emerged from this project and its evaluation. This curriculum shows promise for use in Indian communities and may provide a model for non-Indian communities. It proved to be a successful way to involve elders in the education of students. Students enjoyed interviewing elders and found that aspect of the project to be most useful. The curriculum in this way fostered communication between generations and between family members.

To generalize the curriculum further, it will be important to test it with diverse and larger urban communities. To assist its transferability, the "Know Your Roots" curriculum could be revised by making the content less tribal specific while retaining its cultural relevancy. Lessons should be added that address unique cultural issues to new participating communities. Further, lessons should be added to help teachers incorporate the already taped oral history interviews into their ongoing class lesson plans. There is always a danger that the tapes will sit unused in the library without this curricular addition. Other ethnic groups have expressed interest in the curriculum. The value of collecting stories may be especially powerful with other groups who have a strong oral tradition or strong respect for elders and their survival stories.

An original goal of the curriculum was to promote oral methods as a valid form of learning in schools. Our results have shown that the curriculum can be easily implemented and that it was well accepted by students, teachers, and the community. This intervention project offered a bridge between the home culture and the school culture. Ways of learning that were most common in the home culture were integrated in the school culture and legitimated as valid and significant. Students learned more about their tribal history and culture by obtaining information from those who knew it best: community members, family, relatives, and tribal elders. Hopefully this is just a beginning for these students, many of whom now report they are more comfortable talking to parents and elders about tribal history. For as Debra Calling Thunder states, "Words are gifts, our grandparents say, and they give us many words so that we will remain a nation, a circle of people. . . . The transmission of these words is how we keep the oral tradition alive. . . . The words of the grandparents have bound us together."¹²

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APPENDIX
MEASURES SUMMARY

Youth Intervention Project Survey (administered 1994: grade 6)

Background description of students (languages spoken at home, etc.)

Where students hear stories about tribe

Knowledge and interest in tribal culture

How often students received information on tribal history and culture

“Know Your Roots” Pre- and Postquestionnaire (administered fall 1994–96: grades 6 through 8, and 7 through 11 [CD])

What is oral history? (multiple choice, 3 options)

Name a few topics you can learn more about by your tribe’s history? (open-ended)

What are ways to find out about history? (open-ended)

How comfortable are you talking with your friends about your tribe’s history?
(very uncomfortable, little uncomfortable, comfortable, very comfortable)

How comfortable are you talking with your parents about your tribe’s history?
(very uncomfortable, little uncomfortable, comfortable, very comfortable)

How comfortable are you talking with elders about your tribe’s history?
(very uncomfortable, little uncomfortable, comfortable, very comfortable)

Here is a question you just asked your aunt: “How many children do you have?” Your aunt says that she has 5 children. Now please list some follow-up questions you could ask your aunt.

Here is a question you just asked your uncle: “Do you hunt?” Your uncle says, “Yes.” Change this into an open-ended question.

Items added to postquestionnaire:

How much did you learn about oral history from this project?
(nothing, very little, some, a lot)

How much did you learn about oral history from class videotapes?
(nothing, very little, some, a lot)

How much did you learn about oral history from class cassettes?
(nothing, very little, some, a lot)

How much did you learn about oral history from class discussion?
(nothing, very little, some, a lot)

How much did you learn about oral history from class workbooks?
(nothing, very little, some, a lot)

How much did you learn about oral history from the interviews?
(nothing, very little, some, a lot)

What part did you like best? (choose one)

Class videotapes?

Class cassettes?

Class discussion?

Class workbooks?

Interviews?

Student Journal Entries (collected 1995–97: grade 6)

Now that you've finished with the oral history project, can you think of some reasons why oral history might be important to you? (open-ended responses)

Teacher Evaluations (administered 1996–97: grade 6 teachers)

Was the curriculum easy to use? (Likert scale 1–5; 1 = not easy, 5 = very easy)

In general, would you say the curriculum was successful? (Likert scale 1–5; 1 = not successful, 5 = very successful)

Would you recommend continued use of this curriculum in your school? (yes, no)

Were there any problems that occurred? (checklist of problems and “other”)

Did you change or delete any activities? (yes, no; please explain)